

## “Tribal Development Problems and Prospects of India”



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We have completed 60 years of India's Independence and are planning for the Fifth Five Year Plan; it has become necessary to think over the social policy guidelines for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and denitrified 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 of exploitation and social injustice.

Believing that there is a similar pattern of poverty and exploitation, two ethnic groups of Scheduled Tribes/Castes have been 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 steps taken for their amelioration become inadequate and faulty. Ecologically, castes are exposed. Demographically, the farmers are concentrated in certain continuous geographical areas, while the latter occupy the lowest rung in the caste hierarchy and suffer from social disabilities and loss of self-respect. To a social doctor they will appear as two groups suffering from two distinct types of maladies

deserving different therapies. Here, I will be chiefly concerned with the policy regarding the Scheduled Tribes of Bihar.

Since independence, we have actively thought and planned for the upliftment of our tribal people. Our beloved leader, the late Shri Jawaharlal Nehru gave 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 and expressed his disapproval of our false idea to call some people primitive and to think of ourselves as highly civilized.

For the past 25 years the central and the concerned state governments have made efforts to alter the fate of 38.2 million 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 like the annual reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes from 1950 onwards, report of the Backward Classes Commission 1955, reports of the study team on social welfare of Backward Classes 1959.

Forty Eighth Report of the Estimates Committee of Parliament 1959, report of the Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Development 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 the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes 1970 and a few reports released by the respective state governments. From all these reports as well as our personal experience about the tribal scene in the country it becomes evident that the desired results have not been achieved and our objective, to do good to the tribals, has suffered all three levels (i) Policy; (ii) Implementation; and (iii) Recruitment and Training of Personnel.

Reasons for Poor Impact:

The Principal deficiencies of the earlier plans in brief are:

1. Lack of special attention to tribal and scheduled areas in spite of Constitutional provisions;
2. Very inadequate allotment of funds in both general and special sectors to cover all aspects of development of the tribal areas. As for example, in the Third Plan the per capita expenditure on the tribals comes to Rs. 13.081 when both State and central sectors are added together.
3. The major programmes of Tribal Development Blocks with a coverage of 25,000 tribal population per block was not significant enough for carrying to the tribal areas all the services essential for their full developments;
4. Inadequate administrative machinery to integrate all the sectoral programmes. Coupled with it is the lack of coordination and integration and inter and intra departmental levels within the state, as well as at the sectoral levels of the state and the centre;
5. Lack of effective personnel policy of the government which is reflected in the frequent transfer of key personnel in administration, inadequate incentives to work in and for tribal areas, lack of specialised training in tribal culture as well as non-inculcation of the spirit of social service in them.
6. Failure on the part of the Government to adopt scientific planning and to ensure implementation based on research materials and findings; and
7. Excessive politicisation of the tribal issues and failure on the part of tribal societies to throw up dedicated, articulate and enlightened local leaders.

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. The then Minister for Social Welfare, Prof. Nurul Hasan in his recent inaugural address at a conference of anthropologists in New Delhi observed:

I have an uneasy feeling that our approach to tribal welfare and development has become reutilised and it is not producing results. In the meantime, 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.

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