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RURAL POLICIES, GOVERNANCE AND TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY OF SCHEDULED AREA

Dr. Raj Kumar Khosla

ABSTRACT:

The rural policies are directly links with the rural development of the country. The term 'rural development' carries significance for the developing countries for the large segment of their population live in rural areas. The quality of life and its sustenance remain central to the concept



of rural development. The Scheduled Tribes live in contiguous areas unlike other communities. Promotion of all round development of tribals inhabiting the length and breadth of our country has received priority attention of the government in independent India. However, due to several factors like, tribal people are voice not

heard, dominance of influential persons, lack of awareness, illiteracy, proxy representation, non-coverage of media on tribal issues and the bureaucratic apathy the tribal communities could not achieve the fruits of development of the country.

KEY WORDS: Rural Policies, Tribal Development, Scheduled Area.

INTRODUCTION:

Rural policies are not a recent invention. The cultural, socio-economic and geographic diversity and the smaller scale of social organisations have provided fertile ground for rural-based policy experiments. There is no common term exists for policies that require some form of articulation with a

locality or rural area. The most widely used terms are community-based policy, place-based policy and grassroots management for public policy. The term community-based policy generally refers to policies that directly engage an interaction of communities. Wilkinson (1970) describes such fields as developing when people living in a defined territory with shared social and economic institutions collaborate to address common concerns. Wilkinson emphasized that the community-based policy is more inclusive of the general interest of people living in a community (Swanson, 2001: 2-3). The rural policies are directly links with the rural development of the country. The term 'rural development' carries significance for the developing countries for the large segment of their population live in rural areas. Rural development can also be seen as a process of developing and utilizing natural and human resources in rural settings. The quality of life and its sustenance remain central to the concept of rural development. In addition to economic growth, the process of rural development can bring about changes in popular attitude and in many cases even in customs and beliefs of the people (Singh, Katar 1986:18). To achieve the very objectives of rural development, rural policies have been formulated where the issues of Scheduled Tribes has been prominently focused in the policy documents of the country.

BASIC ELEMENTS OF DEVELOPMENT

Participatory approach to development is the most widely accepted strategy for socio-economic growth of every society. Irrespective of specificities of geography, culture, historical contexts, three elements are basic to the meaning of development. These elements can be seen as minimally necessity without which the term development cannot be fully grasped. These are as follows: i) Life Sustenance; ii) Self-respect; iii) freedom.

i) Life Sustenance:

People have certain basic needs without which it would be impossible or very difficult for them to survive. These basic necessities include food, clothes, shelter, healthcare and security. When any of these are absent or critically in short supply, it can be understand that the condition of absolute underdevelopment exists. Provision for these life-sustaining requirements for everybody is a basic function of all economies whether they are capitalist, socialist or mixed. In this sense, it can be claimed that economic growth (increased availability of basic necessities) is a necessary condition for the improvement of the quality of life, which is development. The absence of the minimal requirements in most developing countries, including India, creates different levels of expectations of the poor people towards the notion of development. for everybody is a basic function of all economies whether they are capitalist, socialist or mixed. In this sense, it can be claimed that economic growth (increased availability of basic necessities) is a necessary condition for the improvement of the quality of life which is development.

ii) Self-respect:

Every person and every nation seeks some basic form of self-respect, dignity or honour. The relationship between self-respect and development is quite complex. Often, deprivation causes low self-esteem among the people. A notion of equality is somehow central to the notion of self-respect. In the modern age a notion of believe has been existed that every individual, at least in principle, is endowed with reason and with capacities to direct his/her life the way he/she chooses. Absence or denial of self-esteem indicates a lack of development.

iii) Freedom:

Freedom in this context refers to political and ideological freedom and freedom from social servitude. It has two dimensions: negative and positive. The negative conception refers to the absence of constraints that individuals experience in society. It implies the state and other institutions should not impose unreasonable restrictions on individuals' freedom. Although important, the presence of negative freedom is not enough. One ought to treat freedom as an exercise concept. In other words, it is important to realize that the exercise of freedom on the part of the individuals is vital. The relationship between freedom and development is constitutive. Achievement of more freedom is the goal of development and at the same time without a minimal presence of freedom it is difficult to undertake developmental initiatives in society. The conventional goals of development such as poverty-reduction, reduction of inequality and so on can be seen as essentially freedom-enhancing (Singh, Katar 1986:19-21).

TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES:

Historically, tribal populations have been subjected to exploitation in their social, economic and political life. During the colonial period, the British government has formulated policies to modernize the rural setting of the country but they did not emphasize to ameliorate the socio-economic conditions tribal people. However, the government has adopted the policy of isolation and tried to keep the tribals away from the mainstream of Indian society. The Scheduled District Act of 1874 had kept most of these areas administratively separate. The same situation was allowed to continue under the Government of India Act of 1919 and 1935.

Promotion of all round development of tribals inhabiting the length and breadth of our country has received priority attention of the government in independent India. The Constitutional provisions prompted the policy-makers and the planners to accord high priority for the welfare and development of tribal communities' right from the beginning of the country's developmental planning, launched in 1951. The Governments at central as well as state levels have made sustained efforts to provide opportunity to these communities for their economic development by eradicating poverty and health problems and developing communication for removal of isolation of their habitats (Padhi, Kulamani, 2005:72). The Dhebar Commission (1961) recommended an integrated approach based on the minimum essential items like food, drinking water, employment, educational, health and village road. The task force on Development of Tribal Areas constituted in 1972 suggested that the ecological, occupational and social structure of the tribal population should be properly assessed for formulation of a policy and its implementation so that a steady flow of benefits could be assured to the tribal people. The Dupe committee in 1972 tried to define a new strategy for tribal development and suggested that the problem of tribal development should be defined at the national level and national efforts required for tackling it, worked out. It also suggested an integrated area development approach in consonance with the genius and aspirations of the tribal people (Padhi, 2005: 73-74).

Article 275(1) [Specific to Scheduled Tribes] Grants-in-aid from the Consolidated Fund of India each year for promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and administration of Scheduled Areas. Under Article 335, the reservation of seats for the STs in the democratic institutions, educational institutions and in services is another measure of positive discrimination in favour of these groups. The Article 339 (1) directs for the appointment of a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the states. Article 330 and 332 specified for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of People and Legislative Assemblies of the states. Article 243 D states for the reservation of seats for the Scheduled

Castes and Scheduled Tribes in every Panchayat. Further the Extension of the 73rd Amendments of the Constitution to the Scheduled Areas through the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 to ensure effective participation of the tribals in the process of planning and decision (Hasnain, 2015: 343-349).

LOCAL GOVERNANCE IN SCHEDULED AREA:

The Scheduled Tribes live in contiguous areas unlike other communities. It is therefore an area approach development activities and regulatory provisions have been given emphasized. In order to protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes with regard to land and other social issues, various provisions have been enshrined in the Fifth and the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. The Fifth Schedule under Article 244(1) of the Constitution defines "Scheduled Areas" as such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas after consultation with the Governor of that state. The Sixth Schedule under Article 244(2) of the constitution relates to those areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram which are declared as "Tribal Areas" and provides for District or Regional Autonomous Councils for such areas. These councils have wide ranging legislative, judicial and executive powers. There are four criteria for declaring any area as a Scheduled Area such as (i) preponderance to tribal population, (ii) compactness and reasonable size of the area, (iii) a viable administrative entity such as a District, Block or Taluk, and (iv) economic backwardness of the area as compared to the neighboring areas (Annual Report 2009-10: 33-34).

The history of local governance has been recorded since the date back of Gandhiji's Gram Swaraj. After independence, with the emphasis on rural development, decentralization of the planning process assumed greater importance. The decentralized planning, it was rightly argued, can be successful only through people's participation. Participation was considered both as a mean as well as an end of the developmental initiatives. The CD programme was launched with high ambition to meet the challenges of rural reconstruction, but it remained a programme run by the bureaucracy without local level participation. Therefore the programme could not respond to the needs of the people effectively. Finally it was thought that the remedy lay in the decentralization of power, starting from the national state to the village-level. Nearly five years later in 1957, a study team under the Chairmanship of Balwantrai Mehta was appointed by the planning Commission to review the working of the CD programme and also to examine the question of reorganization of district administration to provide for popular participation between the village and state level (Khanna, 1972: 212).

The earlier attempt to make Panchayat Institutions as an effective but it did not succeed due to lack of people's participation and irregularities of election to the Panchayati Raj bodies. In order to revitalize the bodies, the Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992 brought into force by the Government of India on 24th April, 1993 (Mathew, 1996:118). The Act, 1992 came into existence to promote people's participation, to strengthen the democratic process at the grassroots level of the Indian polity. However, in reality tribal areas have been neglected in administrative perspective. Most of the cases, it was found that when the state governments started enacting Panchayat laws, they continued with the past practices of not taking into account the needs and interest of Scheduled Areas. Taking into account the needs and aspiration of the tribal communities, the Government of India was constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Deelip Singh Bhuria in 1994. The committee submitted its reports with the recommendations of village governance, participatory democracy. The committee felt that while shaping the new Panchayati Raj structure in tribal areas, it is desirable to blend the tradition with modern by treating traditional institutions as the foundations on which a modern superstructure should be built (Mukul, 1997:928-929). With the recommendation of the

committee, the Government of India, was brought the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (Bakshi, 2005:186). The Act extended the provisions of Part IX of the Constitution relating to the Panchayats to the Scheduled Areas. It was also made Gram Sabha a nucleus of all activities.

STUDY AREA:

Koraput district of Odisha was selected for the study to analyse impact of rural policies in transforming rural areas and particularly the tribal communities. The undivided Koraput district was declared as a Scheduled Area under the paragraph 6 of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution of India. The district divided into four parts namely Koraput, Malkangiri, Nawarangpur and Rayagada with effect from 2.10.1992 (Mohanti and et al, 2006:15). The geographic area of Koraput district is 8807 sq. kms (District Statistical Handbook, 2001). The present Koraput district is constituted with 14 Blocks and 226 Gram Panchayats (Census 2001, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of Orissa). The population of the Koraput district is 1180637 (Census 2001) in which Scheduled Tribes are constituted 49.62 per cent and the Scheduled Caste are 13.04 per cent. The literacy rate of the district is 35.72 per cent, the percentage in which the literacy rate of tribal population is 18.68 per cent (Census, 2001). Koraput district is one of the most backward districts in the country. Considering the socio-economic indicators, a special programme known as the KBK (Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi) programme was launched for socio-economic development of region. The KBK region had divided into eight districts i.e., Balangir, Kalahandi, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nawarangpur, Nuapada, Rayagada and Sonepur.

IMPACT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON TRIBES

The Government of India was initiated various development programmes throughout country in order to overcome socio-economic backwardness and acute form of mass poverty of its population. Particularly in 1980s the government has put more emphasis on sustainable anti-poverty programmes such as the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM), Development of Women and Children in Rural Area (DWCRA) for the self-employment in rural areas and the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana, Indira Awas Yojana, Employment Assurance Scheme, etc. in the wage employment category. These self-employment and wage employment programmes are being implemented more rigorously and these are broadly renamed as SGSY (Swarnajayanti Gram Swarajgar Yojana) and JGSY (Jawahar Gram Samruddhi Yojana). Apart from this, there are other poverty alleviation schemes such as DPAP (Drought Prone Area Programme), SFPP (Special Food-grain Production Programme) and ASMF (Assistance to Small and Marginal Farmers) confined to the development of certain specific areas which is worst hit by the problem of uncertain agriculture.

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) aims at enhancing the livelihood security of people in rural areas came into effect in 2005. In the Koraput district, large sections of the people registered themselves to get employment under the scheme. However, like other parts of the country, it has been found in the Koraput district that miss management of fund and needy people are not getting employment within the time bound period are major cause of concern of the scheme (<http://www.orissa.gov.in/RD/index.htm>).

Table No.: 1
District-wise Development Indicators in KBK region:

| Sl. No. | Name of District | % of BPL Families* | Human Development Indicator** |
|---------|------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1 | Balangir | 61.06 | 0.546 |
| 2 | Kalahandi | 62.71 | 0.606 |
| 3 | Koraput | 83.83 | 0.431 |
| 4 | Malkangiri | 81.88 | 0.370 |
| 5 | Nawarangpur | 73.66 | 0.436 |
| 6 | Nuapada | 85.70 | 0.581 |
| 7 | Rayagada | 72.03 | 0.443 |
| 8 | Sonepur | 73.02 | 0.566 |
| | KBK Districts | 71.97 | N.A. |
| | Orissa | 66.37 | 0.579 |

Note: * : Percentage of Families Below the Poverty Line as per BPL Census- 2002.

** : Human Development Index published in the Human Development Report of Orissa, 2004.

The above table reveals that the percentage of people below the poverty line in KBK districts is 71.97 per cent against a state average of 66.37 per cent. Except Balangir and Kalahandi, the percentage of families below the poverty line is quite high as compared to the state average in case of all the remaining 6 district of KBK region. In the human development Index, except Kalahandi and Nuapada, the HDI is less than the state average in case of the remaining 6 districts of KBK region. Despite specific initiative of the government, this region is still lagging behind the other districts of the state. (<http://www.merineews.com>).

In the year 1988, a special programme, Area Development Approach for Poverty Termination (ADAPT), was formulated and implemented in 7 blocks in Koraput district. This was undertaken in order to provide employment round the year to the rural poor and to change agricultural strategies. In due course, it was felt that short term strategies were not appropriate to address the multi-faceted backwardness of the region. Therefore, a Long Term Action Plan (LTAP) for the three undivided districts of KBK (Koraput, Bolangir and Kalahandi) was prepared in 1993 in consultation with Government of India. The LTAP was conceptualised for a period of seven years from 1995-96 to 2001-02 with two objectives in view: (a) drought and distress proofing, and (b) poverty alleviation and development saturation. However, LTAP did not take up due to non-availability of sufficient funds. In 1998, a Revised Long Term Action Plan (RLTAP) was submitted to Government of India as per their advice. The revised project was envisaged for a period of nine years from 1998-99 to 2006-07 (<http://kbk.nic.in>). The rural poverty in Odisha is found to be highest in India. In such scenario, it is, further, observed that the unlike the other district, the incidence of rural poverty in the Koraput districts is higher. The BPL Census 1997, Government of Odisha shows that 42.27 per cent tribal families are falling in this category.

Table No.: 2
Below Poverty Line (BPL) Families in Rural Area:

| Total Rural Families | Scheduled Tribe | Scheduled Caste |
|----------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 264707 | 111917 (42.27 %) | 59996 (22.66) |

Source: BPL Survey 1997, Government of Orissa.

The standard of living condition of the Koraput district is much lower than the other districts of Orissa. The Orissa Development Report, 2002 shows that Koraput district has been placed at the 22nd rank in the Pattern and Index of living conditions of the state. In the scenario of health sector, Koraput has been placed at the 18th position. The Orissa Development Report has reported that there is shortage Doctors and non-availability of Public Health Centre in the rural remote area is the primary cause for the poor health status of the district.

Table No.: 3
Pattern and Index of Living Conditions of District:

| Pattern of Living Condition | Index of Living Condition | Rank |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|------|
| 13.3352 | 0.8896 | 22 |

Source: Orissa Development Report, 2002, p. 278.

Table No.: 4
Development Scenario of Health Sector in District, 1999-2000:

| Total No. of Health Centre | Total No. of Doctor | Average coverage per Health Centre | | Rank |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|------|
| | | Population | Sq. Km. Area | |
| 66 | 159 | 17010 | 133.44 | 18 |

Source: Orissa Development Report, 2002, p.294.

TRIBALS' PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

Participation in rural development is vital. The early years of development programme failed to achieve the objectives due to lack of popular participation. The participatory form of rural development is provided larger space to every individual to decide their own destiny without depending upon others. Over the years, Panchayati Raj Institutions have emerged as the powerful institutions in bringing about rapid and sustainable development in rural Odisha.

Odisha Grama Panchayat Act was enacted in the year 1948. Subsequently in the year 1961, three-tier system of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) was introduced in Odisha. The 73rd amendment of the Constitution has conferred constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions. After the enactment of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, the state government amended the Odisha Gram Panchayat Act, 1964, Odisha Panchayat Samiti act 1959 and Odisha Zilla Parishad act of 1991 in December 1997 (Pati, 1998). The PESA Act, 1997, came into force to have village governance with participatory democracy and to make the Gram Sabha a nucleus of all activities. It has an integrated prospective towards improving the quality of lives of rural people and ensuring equity and

effective peoples' participation.

Participation of the tribal communities in PRIs is completely passive. They simply attend the meetings and leave the hall. A glaring example of such dichotomy and disinterestedness is seen in the meetings of 'Palli Sabhas' and 'Gram Sabhas' of the district where paucity of attendance has been observed. Like their counterparts in other communities too take the lead and grab the fruit of development programmes. It is quite unusual to see a tribal lady presiding over the meetings of Palli Sabha or Gram Sabha. Mostly it has been observed in the rural area that there is proxy representation of Tribal women in PRIs in the district.

CONSTRAINTS IN TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT:

There are innumerable constraints responsible for lower pace of tribal development process than desired. Some of the major constraints are:

i). Protection of Tribal Rights & Concessions: The Tribals have been given numerous rights and concessions under various statutes of central as well as state governments but they remain deprived of the benefits arising out of such statutory provisions due to their ignorance and apathy of enforcing agencies.

ii). Lack of awareness: There exists lack of awareness among tribal population about various developmental programmes launched by Government of India and States, resulting in their exploitation.

iii). Destruction of forests: The forests are not only the source of livelihood for tribals but there is an intricate relationship between tribals and forests in the rural areas. The depleting forest resources are threatening imminent food security and socio-cultural life of tribal communities.

CONCLUSION:

The process of development and participation are inherently universal. The local self-government is one of the best platforms, where every citizen in the rural area can represent and participate qualitatively for the growth in socio-economic and political spheres of the communities in general and individual in particular. However, it is unanswerable that why the tribal community of the Koraput district are still underdeveloped and backward. They are still not free from the poverty even after several efforts through anti-poverty plans and programme. The barriers in the participation of the tribal people are voice not heard, dominance of influential persons, lack of awareness, illiteracy, proxy representation, non-coverage of media on tribal issues and the bureaucratic apathy. The success of the policies lies in the public awareness about the policies and their participation, commitment and accountability on part of the government officials and NGOs and civil society are highly required in order to ensure the social justice for the interest of the tribal communities.

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