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HISTORICAL PERCEPTION AND WELFARE PROGRAMMES FOR TRIBES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

F or ages, tribals were considered a primitive segment of Indian society. They lived in forest and hills without having more than a causal contact with the so called civilized and advanced neighbours. The tribals living in different States belong to various racial groups e.g. (proto-australoid) which include Garoetc, Linguistic groups, (Austric like Santhals, Munda,Bhumij, Dravidian like Oraon, Bhutia etc.), economic (food gathers, cultivators, labourers), social and religious categories. The tribals as a whole are technologically and educationally backward and the main problems of the tribals are poverty, indebtness, illiteracy, bondage, exploitation, diseases and unemployment. After independence, tribals problems and tribals unrest have become politicized and various provisions have been made for their upliftment. In this paper author have tried to trace the history of tribals and also bring out the various welfare programmes which are made for the betterment of tribals in India.

KEYWORDS : Job satisfaction; socio-economic variables; organizational variables; Pharmaceutical Industries.

INTRODUCTION

India is a very vast country with the largest tribal population in the world. These tribes are the indigenous people of India since they have been settled in different parts of the country before the Aryan settlements in India. The tribal people play a vital role in Indian social setup as they belong to a weaker section of our society and have been greatly suffered by poverty. They are the most backward people of our country. These tribal groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the population, the term 'Adivasi' (Adi- original and Vasi-inhabitant) has become fairly popular. The international labour organization has classified them as 'indigenous'

Fundamentally every human from Adam downwards is a tribal with roots somewhere on this wide Earth. If along the arrow-line of history there was something in our society analogous to what is called "Tribe", and if the communities of the people in India recognized it as such, we should have in our Indian language including Sanskrit and Prakrit, a term for it which may be designated as 'Jana'. The terms 'Jana' and 'Jati' are both derived from the root 'Jan' meaning to be born and to give birth to. We know that they are 'Janas' or communities of people like the savaras, the kullutas, the kolas, the billas, the khasas, the kinnars, the

gujjars, the gaddis, the lepchas and the countless number of many others whom today we know as ' Tribes' bearing almost the same recognizable names.

A. Historical Perspective of Tribes

The tribals are not beyond the socio-economic forces of history. They have travelled a long way from ancient India to colonial and feudal period. During this long period, they remained victims of oppression, exploitation and discrimination.

I) Tribals in Ancient India

Going back to the oldest literature of the race, we find from the Vedas that national life and activities in the earliest time on record were expressed through popular assemblies and institutions. In the beginning of the sixth century B.C. India was divided into sixteen Janapadas besides many more of lesser significance. The Vedic literature contains numerous references to Gandharvas and Kinnaras, as performers of specific functions which are explained in detail in the Puranic literature. The Ramayanas mentions the "Dewas, Gandharvas, Caranas, Siddhas, Kinnararas and Apsaras".

The Mahabharata mentions kinners along with Gandharvas, Yakshas, Siddhas and Kimpurushas. In Vishnu Purana, they were associated with Gandharvas, Yaksha, Rakshasa, Daitya and Danavas whereas Shiv Purana mentions them as Yakshas, Rakshasa, Daitya, Gandharvas, Charanas, Siddhas, Danvas, Sesa and other serpants, Garuda and other birds. The tribal India lives in the forest hills and naturally isolated regions known as a rule by different names meaning either the people of forest and hill or the original inhabitants, and so on. In Ramayana and the Mahabharata there are references to tribal communities who are referred to as Jana. When, in his exile, Rama reached the border of the forest of central India, the land was introduced to him as the abode of the tribal people, Jana-sthana. So far as the tribal history is concerned tribals were the inhabitants in the past.

The Vedic hymns are all too indefinite concerning the details of external and social life. We atleast see from them that the Aryan population was divided into a number of tribes or small people (Janas), subdivided into clans united by the ties of kinship (Visas), which in their turn were split up into families. Jana, who assumes a wider significance, recalls the avestic equivalent of the clan, the zantu, and the jati or caste. A series of terms, Vra, Varijana, Vraja, Vrata appears to be synonyms or subdivisions either of the clan or the tribe.

Therefore, Jana, besides meaning 'man' as an individual, with a tendency to collective sense, commonly denotes 'people' or 'tribe' in the RigVeda and later. In the RigVeda the people were divided into cantons (Vis), cantons into faint families or clans, or village communities (Grama, Vrjana) and these again into single families. At the time of Aryan invasion agricultural and urban communities existed in India. The Aryans who entered India were only groups of semi nomadic tribes. They were primarily a pastoral people. The social structure of the RigVedic people was based on kinship. Jana was the highest social unit based on patriarchal kinship. Its chief was known as janapati or janasyagapta or king (raja). Vis was subdivision of the jana or tribe: clan of the tribe, which had its own chief was called vispati or vismpati.

The early Vedic people did not have rigid difference of caste; the only demarcation was between the Aryans, white skinned people, and the non-Aryans or the dasa, slaves or dark skinned people. Gradually, the tribal society was divided into three groups: warriors, Scheduled Tribes and the people. The fourth division called the Shudras appeared towards the end of the RigVeda period. The administrative machinery of the Aryans in the RigVedic period worked with the tribal chief in the centre, called as the Rajan. The king was called the protector of his tribe. Several tribal assemblies, such as sabha, samiti, vidatha, and gana mentioned in the RigVeda exercised deliberative, military and religious functions.

Therefore, the RigVedic Aryans were divided into several tribes. There was frequent internal strife among them. The weaker tribes were absorbed into the stronger ones and thus the kingdoms and larger areas of residence emerged. The Aryans tried to absorb the indigenous local tribes and communities and establish a workable relationship with them, but naturally from a position of strength members of several weak or unfriendly tribals who were unable to withstand the Aryans. Onslaught were enslaved by the Aryans or became a servile class in the Vedic-economic structure, they were called the dasas.

Originally, there were only two Varnas of Aryas and anAryas (non-aryan). In later times, Bhramanas took up this Vedic creation theory and based upon it and upon the existing fourfold division of society the theory of four Varnas: chaturvarnya.

II) Tribes into Castes

In the beginning, the world was a tribal world. All communities were described as tribes. Tribal religion was described as raw material for Hinduism which will be totally absorbed by the Brahmanical system. Hinduism and Brahmanism were treated as coevai. From very early times, there has been a gradual and silent change from tribe to caste. Their change has taken place in the number of ways, and it is believed that most of the lower or exterior caste of today was formerly tribes. The process of incorporation of tribes into caste has, therefore, proceeded ever since the coming of the Aryans people into India. Yet another assumption underlying the ethnographic literature from the latter half of the 19th Century was that tribes and their segments were evolving into caste. Therefore, absorption of tribes and tribal religion into the Hindu system was only a matter of time. The sastric rules prescribed a social stratification based on the doctrine of Varnas.

The invention of this Varnasanskara theory was designed to incorporate numerous detribalized and occupational castes into Shudra category of the fourfold system. In the RigVeda, Atharvaveda, Taithiriya, Vajasaneyi, and kathakasamhitas and also in Brahmana literature we come across occupational groups like those of the barbers (vapta), carpenters (tvasta, taksan), physicians (bhisak), ironsmiths (karmara), leather workers (carmamna), chariot makers (rathakara), potters (kaulala, kulala), arrow makers (isukri), fisherman (kevarta, dhivara), servants (dasa), hunters (punjistha, mrgayu, savanin), etc. That many of such occupational groups were originally tribes which were indicated simply by tribal names of various castes, as we shall presently see, the process of their transformation may be outlined with reference to the Nisadas. Of the eight people forming the Nisadas community as we find in the rudradhyaya of the yajurveda, the vratas, punjisthas were hunters still clinging to food gathering economy, while the taksans, tathakaras, kulalas and karmaras left their tribal fold and settled in the Vedic society as a member of castes belonging to the lower grades of the hierarchy having undertaken the occupations of carpenter, chariot-maker, potter and ironsmith, respectively.

Manu who was eager to incorporate conflicting tribes of various cultural grades within the frame work of the idealized fourfold social order and to rationalize their existence in the prescribed setup with the help of the Varnasanskara theory by which even the foreign tribeswere inducted. Kautilya who was the champion of organized statehood, categorically prescribed that the tribes should be destroyed by any means- war, diplomacy, sabotage, bribery and any suitable corrupt practice and that the tribals should be cut loose from their kinship-bond and engaged in various professions being dissociated from their original environment they would become occupational groups at the first stage and then transformed into castes of various status according to the importance of their respective callings.

Even foreign tribes and those living in the border region such as the kambojas, yavanas, sakas,

parades, pallavas, cinas, kiratas, and waradas have also been inducted by Manu into the category of the Shudras. Manu says that formerly these people were ksatriyas, but in consequence of their omission of sacred rites and of their not consulting of the Brahmanas they gradually sunk into the condition of the Shudras.

Therefore, there were certain non-Aryan tribes which were supposed to be originally kshatriyas but fallen later on. According to the Manu Samhita, the following Kshatriya castes, through the extinction, non-performance, of their proper religious rites and on account of not seeing (i.e. in the absence of their contact with) Brahmanas have been degraded to Shudras caste in this world. They were the Paundrakas, Andras, Dravidas, Kamvojas, Javanas, Sakas, Parandas, Pandavas, Chinas, Keratas, Draradas and Kashas. Kshatriyas of these countries have become Shudras for having renounced the religious rites).

Therefore, during the latter period there certainly were kshatriyas who were tribes rather than castes. But there were tribes such as Shudras also. The caste system worked as a matrix in which the power of a tribe was reflected in its position in the hierarchy of layers in which it had settled. Those occupying the most powerful higher position in the caste hierarchy. At some places it acquired extra ordinary power and climbed to the top of the hierarchy when it was accorded kshatriya or Brahman status. But that would create a breach with their less fortunate tribal brethren, who failed to make the grade.

III) Medieval period

In the medieval period, the process of tribal integration in the wider society began with the induction of the former into the caste society. After the disappearance of the Gupta Empire a large number of independent states raised their heads in different parts of the country. Their narrow sense of loyalty and their tribal rivalries proved disastrous not only for them but for the country also. Thus the social and economic life of people under the Rajput suffered a severe blow. The society was divided into various castes which had a very rigid following. Invasions from outside deteriorated the conditions of the tribals since the foreigners were concerned with fabulous wealth instead of passion for the progress of the people in India. In pre-colonial times the caste system provided not only cheap labour for agriculturethrough its repression of the menial castes, but as IrfanHabib has argued, by making available the hereditary services of village artisans to the peasants and thus reducing the wage- costs generally. Hence rulers, whether tribal, Hindu or Muslim have been supportive of the caste system. Inscriptional evidence shows that in early medieval times the ruler regulated and assigned caste status to groups or even to individuals through the past of dharmadhikari at least in certain areas.

Thus decline of Rajput king deems told upon the healthy growth of the tribals. Moreover, foreign invaders like Hunas, Turks and Arbs plundered them mercilessly leaving them finally in disorganized state. The rays of hope deserted them. There was none in pre British era who could show them a path of civilization. Consequently they developed their isolated culture in deep isolation from the contact of country at large. Their social, economical and political life became miserable in comparison to the other people in India.

Therefore, during the hindu period the tribals enjoyed autonomy, but by the end of 16th century they were harassed by the Mohammedan rules and lost their status. The medieval period is ruled mostly by Muslims who were not interested in the welfare of the tribals. Thus, it is clear that during medieval period the tribal people inhabiting different parts of India were either disturbed by the Mohammedan rulers.

IV) Tribes in British India

Pre-colonial India was a land of many communities organized into categories which were known

by such native terms a Varna, jati, quam, kabila, buradari, and so on. Tribe and caste had not emerged as dichotomous categories. The cognitive perception of communities changed in the colonial period. The colonial system introduced the binary perception. The colonial paradigm neatly divided the world into the world of civilized and the world of the barbarians; it was a world of oppressors and the oppressed, of the rulers and the ruled. The notion of tribe and caste were thus introduced during the colonial period to categorize the communities of India. At first all communities were described as tribes, as mentioned above. Later, the notion of caste emerged sharply particularly after the colonial ethnographic survey was undertaken in 1885. However it was in 1901that the first attempt was made to distinguish tribe from caste.

Also, until the 19th century, the words casta and caste were used to refer to both tribes and castes in India. So casta could also apply to tribe, caste and kin-community. The three social type- the tribe, the caste and the kin-community, can be seen as transformations of a single underlying descent group structure. It is tempting to order these three types chronologically and to say that the tribes existed first. Then, perhaps, the tribe became a caste as hindu village life was established. Lastly, one could hypothesize the development of the kin- community about 1820, when modernization and its concomitants-such as population pressure, land shortages and cash- cropping increasingly under-mined the traditional caste system with the corresponding emergence of new adaptions of the basic structure. The definition of tribe first appeared in Risley and Gait's Census of India, 1901:

A tribe as we find at in India is a collection of families or group of families bearing a common name which as a rule does not denote any specific occupation; generally claiming common descent from a mythical or historical ancestor and occasionally from animal, but in some parts of the country held together rather by obligations of blood feud than by the tradition of kinship; usually speaking the same language and occupying, professing or claiming to occupy a definite tract of country. A tribe is not necessarily endogamous; that is to say, it is not an invariable rule that a man of a particular tribe must marry a woman of that tribe and cannot marry a woman of different tribe.

The Queen's proclamation of 1858 is landmark in the history of India. It held forth many significant assurances. The proclamation declared:
i.all people in India shall alike enjoy the equal and partial protection of the law;
ii.all subjects of whatever caste, tribe, race or creed shall be freely and impartially admitted to offices in British services;
iii.in forming and administrating the law, due regard will be paid to the ancient rights, usages and customs of people belonging to different caste, tribe and race in India; and
iv.The British government will not interfere with the religious beliefs or worship of any of the British subjects.

The 1931 census enumerated all primitive tribes (142).The population of tribe went up sharply to 24.6 million in 1931 in India, including Ceylon and Burma, an increase of nearly 8 million since 1921, out of a population of 352 million, which was 6.9 percent of the total population. Therefore, during the British rule tribe tabulation was a permanent feature of census reports.

A survey of socio-economic and educational conditions of the tribes under British regime clearly reveals that nothing tangible was done for the welfare of the tribes. Yet another defect of the British policy was the assumption that tribals were politically backward. With this idea in mind, the tribals were kept away from the pale of political institutions and were deprived of their participation in the national life of the country. Lastly, the British policy was taking advantage of their vantage position they started acquiring lands and introducing cash-cropping through foul means. Ultimately this land hunger affected not only their agriculture but also their hunting and fishing rights. The British adopted a

forward policy of commercial exploitation of forest resources which led to series of violent upsurges and revolts.

The Britishers evolved the policy of disintegrating the caste, language, region and the like, thus preventing the growth of Indian nationalism and a united nationhood. It appeared that the British Government in India was never serious of ameliorating the conditions of tribal people. Their policy had been of providing protection to the tribals through isolation, which resulted in their exploitation at the hands of the landlords, moneylenders, contractors and also Christian missionaries who were the supporters of the British administration.

v) Tribes in Modern India

With the dawn of Indian independence on 15-08-1947 a new and independent chapter in the life of tribal starts. It is after independence our national leaders became more cautious and eager to help and uplift the tribals.

The country is now passing through the 7th five year plan. Till the end of 4th plan not much importance was given to the development of the tribal communities. But from the fifth plan onwards these communities started receiving special attention both from the central and state governments. However, it was only after the coming into the force of the constitution that real efforts have been made for the welfare of the tribals, and it has been made a responsibility of the state to promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Tribes and to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation as laid down in article 46 of the constitution.

In the constitution of India the tribals were given all special care (Art.46). The isolation policy was rejected outright; and instead a policy of integration of the tribals with rest of the people was adopted. Huge amount was earmarked in different five year plans and yearly plans for the welfare of the tribals. As a result, the tribals are now passing through a phase of development with the rest of the country. The development works and industrialization have helped the tribals to get alternative jobs. They have further created an atmosphere of higher aspirants.

V) Welfare programmes for Scheduled Tribes

A major portion of Indian society consists of the depressed and deprived masses. They have endeavored the wrath and wrongs, physical and mental tortures of the upper ages. But they are backbone of Indian society. India cannot survive and progress without them. Social inequality of the masses was the chief product of our caste ridden society and hierarchical social structure. Social justice was therefore made the signature tune of the Indian National charter. This founding faith has paramount position in our society because the struggle for freedom was not only political but economic and social.In order to realize the concept of social justice and the aforesaid goals, the First Five Year Plan was launched in 1951with the objective of all round balanced development which would ensure a rising national income and steady improvement in the living standards over a period of time. The plan had an outlay of Rs 2,013 crores.The results achieved by this plan were said to be good in parts as Planning Commission drew the conclusion that the overall picture was one of "stability and I steady Progress.

a) Development programmes for Scheduled Tribes

To loosen the grip of the money lenders and the Mahajans on the Tribal, the Government organized large area multi- purpose societies (LAMPS). However, the cooperative societies failed to extend adequate credit for productive purpose to purchase agricultural and minor forest produce from the tribal and fair shops o essential consumer goods. Tribal development has been based on two pronged approach:

a)Promotion of development activities to raise the level of living of the STs, and

b)Protection of their interest through legal and administrative support.

The Tribal sub plans evolved for the tribal development projects during the Fifth Five year plan (1974-1979) and today (in1997) cover 19 states / Union Territories and about 38 million tribals population. The plans are implemented through 184 integrated Tribals Development Projects (ITDPS) covering 75 primitive tribes. The amount allocated for the tribal sub plans has been increasing from the fifth five year plan (1974-1979) onwards by more than five times in the Sixth Plan (1980-1985), 10 times in the Seventh Plan (1985-1990) and fifteen times in Eight Plan (1992- 1997) during the eight plan, the specific objectives set forth under the tribal sub plan strategy were:-

1.Raising production in the field of agriculture, small industries, horticulture and animal husbandry.

2.Elimination of exploitation of tribals in money lending, bondage, use of forests, liquor vending etc.

3.Development of education and training programmes.

4.Development of tribal areas; and

5.Up gradation of environment of tribal areas.

The tribal Research institute (TRIS) also plays a useful role not only in the research and training of the tribals but also in the formulation of tribal sub plans, project reports, and their evaluation. For making the tribal procedure, the Tribal cooperative marketing development federation of India (TRIFED) has been set up. It works for eliminating exploitation of the tribals and for the realization of better prices.

The Ninth Plan (1997-2002) was committed to empower the Socially Disadvantaged Groups as agents of socio-economic change and development through-creating an enabling environment conducive for SCs, OBCs and Minorities to exercise their rights freely, enjoy their privileges and be able to lead a life with confidenceand dignity on par with the rest of the society; ensuring removal of disparities; eliminating exploitation and suppression and providing protection to the disadvantaged groups; ensuring developmental benefits to 'reach the un-reached' through equitable distribution and social justice;ensuring participation of these Groups in the process of planning not merely as beneficiaries but also as participants in planning programmes and their implementation; accelerating the on-going process of improving socio-economic status through the effective implementation of various policies and programmes to bring them on par withthe rest of the society; and ensuring a certain percentage of funds/benefits from all the relevant programmes to flow to women belonging to these groups who are the most affected.

Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-2007) towards the economic upliftment of STs, the Tenth Plan will prioritise the efforts made from the beginning of the planned era (1951) through various developmentalplans, policies, special strategies and programmes, have registered a definite quantifiable improvement in the socio-economic status of the tribals. However, the progress made by them could not bring them anywhere nearer to the mainstream society as the gap in their socio-economic status continued to prevail, not only as a matter of prime concern,

Butalso as a task to accomplish during the Tenth Plan.Achievements and the persisting gaps under the three core sectors of education, health and economic development etc.

Eleventh Five Year Plan

In order to bridge social gaps in secondary education in respect of SCs, STs, minorities, and OBCs, the Eleventh Plan will address specific areas includingup gradation of elementary schools to secondary schools in geographic concentration areas of relevant social groups,(ii) supply of free uniforms, text books,footwear, (iii) supply of bicycle/wheelchairs, (iv) hostels for boys and girls, (v)

stipends to the deserving children, (vi) support to all Madrasas for adoption of general curriculum of States,(vii) pre-matric and post-matric scholarships, (viii) special remedial coaching within/outside school for weaker students, and (ix) an area-intensive approach with community participation .

Twelfth Five Year Plan

The perpetuation of socio-economic backwardness among the STs, inspite of the efforts made so far, presents a formidable challenge demanding effective and result-oriented steps in every developmental sector in the Twelfth Plan. The approach of the Twelfth Five Year Plan must be to achieve overall improvement in the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Tribes. To this end the following must be key elements:

• Relaxing the normative prescriptions about taking up a programme or a scheme in the Tribal majority areas.

• Administrative strengthening of the implementing agency so as to enable taking up implementation of these programmes in the scheduled/tribal areas. This may also require a clear cut personnel policy with regard to posting of officials in those positions, fixity of their tenure and incentivizing these officials for having rendered their services in those areas for a prescribed period.

• Preferring engaging people from the tribal community itself in the areas predominantly inhabited by tribals for government efforts at spreading education, health and extension services, nutrition, public distribution, and so on. If necessary, the basic minimum qualification for such engagements could be relaxed for a specified period (say during the Twelfth Five Year Plan period). For example, engaging a +2 student from the nearby locality for teaching tribal students in primary classes.

• Sensitising officials detailed for serving in the tribal areas so that they become empathetic to the sensitivities of tribal lives and their traditions.

• Reorganising basic services such as nutritional interventions, education, health services, public distribution system, employment generating activities under MGNREGA with posting adequate staff with surety of tenure and assurance of funds to implement these programmes.

• Emphasis on education, health and livelihood support. For education, schools must be opened wherever necessary and for matriculation and above, facilities at designated places should be created. For health, necessary extension work and facilities for preventive medical-care should be ensured. For livelihood support, apart from the land and forest based activities under MGNREGA imparting of skills and creating employment opportunities near their habitations should be encouraged. For this skills relevant to the tribals should be identified on the basis of a socioeconomic survey and then necessary skills training should be provided to them.

• No post in the implementing agencies in scheduled areas/areas with tribal majority should be left vacant; every post must be filled up and wherever necessary, additional posts should be created for effective implementation.

• Implementation of the schemes must be monitored closely at prescribed periodicity. Implementation should not be made to suffer on account of problems associated with transfer of funds.

• Better coverage in roads for tribal areas (population of 500–1,000), with population up to 100 being covered in LWE to be connected.

• Better connectivity through railways in LWE and tribal areas.

• Land acquisition of tribal land to be addressed as required under PESA and displaced tribal population to be resettled and rehabilitated.

• Tribal communities to have full right to minor forest produce .

CONCLUSION

Therefore, it can be concluded that more stress has to be put as the improvement of the socio-economic condition of these depressed classes i.e. scheduled castes and scheduled tribes. Ground work has to be done to ameliorate the grievances of scheduled castes and scheduled that actual beneficiaries should be benefitted and no middleman could resort to any massing of the amounts which is meant to the development of these scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

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- Academic Journal Database
- Contemporary Research Index
- Academic Paper Databse
- Digital Journals Database
- Current Index to Scholarly Journals
- Elite Scientific Journal Archive
- Directory Of Academic Resources
- Scholar Journal Index
- Recent Science Index
- Scientific Resources Database