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SOCIO-CULTURAL ISSUES OF RURAL AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

India's independence had set in motion development planning and regional development with provision of infrastructure needed for development of areas and communities development takes the overtone of priorities and privileges to segments and areas prone to backwardness Upliftment of marginalized Indian Social Structure is marked by inequalities emerging from caste, religion, gender, region, etc., resulting in socio- economic problems particularly prevailing at grassroots level. These problems posed great challenge to developmental interventions, since there is imbalanced equation between population size and resources to deal with the problem. The CDP, IRDP and various other social welfare programmes, by and large, did not fulfill the needs of all people in India. The regional disparities and population quantity remained as serious threat to the development activities in various sectors. The disparities and inequality prevailed also led to marginalization and exclusion of under privileged sections in rural areas particularly Dalit, women, minorities, transgender, physically challenged and others for their mainstreaming in society. In addition structural and functional inequalities necessitated to undertake social development activities to resolve social problems. Social development in Indian context invariably involved besides government, the other stakeholders to fulfill the development agenda, namely NGOs/CBOs/MFIs and other micro enterprises resulting in IGP through capacity building and skill development in these forums. This can be done through development partnership with Government Organizations (GOs,) Nongovernment Organizations

(NGOs,) Community Based Organizations (CBOs,) Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs,) Banks through appropriate coordination by higher education institutions to deliver its responsibility coupled with accountability to the community. By framing a common development agenda with the afforested stakeholders we could effectively link higher education institutions to deliver development to society.

KEYWORDS: *India, independence, development, regional, population, government, Organizations, society, Socio-Cultural, Rural, Tribal Communities.*

INTRODUCTION: The word “tribe” is generally used for a socially cohesive unit, associated with a territory, the members of which regard them as politically autonomous. Different tribes have their own cultures-dialects, life styles, social structures, rituals, values, etc. The forest occupies a central position in tribal culture and economy. The tribal way of life is very much dictated by the forest right from birth to death. It is ironical that the poorest people of India are living in the areas of richest natural resources. Historically, tribes have been pushed to corners owing to economic interests of various dominant groups. The tribes are a part of the Indian society and general problems of consciously changing or modernizing Indian society are applicable to them. Before independence, tribes enjoyed an almost untrammled control over forestland and its produce for their survival. Forest offered fodder for their cattle,

firewood to warm their hearths, and above all a vital source of day-to-day sustenance. The wonderful equation between man and nature demolished after independence with the encroachment of rapacious contractors on tribal land and the indiscriminate destruction of forest in the name of development.

A tribe is an Indian group which possesses certain qualities and characteristics that make it a unique cultural, social, and political entity. The nature of what constitutes an Indian tribe and the very nature of tribes have changed considerably over the course of centuries, but certain characteristics have remained. A tribe is viewed, historically or developmentally, as a social group existing before the development of, or outside of, states. Total population of Scheduled Tribes is 84,326,240 as per the Census 2001 which

accounts for 8.2% of the total population of country. Majority of the Scheduled tribe population live in rural areas and their population is 10.4 % of the total rural population of the country. There are as many as 573 tribes and sub tribes in India. They have been broadly classified into different classes, groups depending upon their present state of development and factors namely, mode of living in forest, shifting villages, forest villages, community villages and revenue villages. They have got a heterogeneous cultural pattern with variegated economic condition and activities largely based on ecological settings and ethnic Environment. The basic economic activities of the tribes may be classified under the following heads.

- (1) Food gathering,
- (2) Pastoral,
- (3) Shifting hill cultivation,
- (4) Handicrafts,
- (5) Cultivation,
- (6) Trade and Commerce,
- (7) Labour.



REVIEW OF LITERATURE:The need for tribal development in India hardly needs any justification. Their primitive way of life, economic and social backwardness, low level of literacy, hackneyed system of production, absence of value system, sparse physical infrastructure in backward tribal areas and demographic quality of tribal areas coupled together make it imperative for a systematic process of development of tribes and tribal areas. The Indian tribal society is a unique society with diversity of nature and people. In our country, known for the extreme poverty of the masses, the tribes constitute the core of the poor. Poverty, poor health and sanitation, illiteracy and other social problems among the tribes are exerting a dragging effect on the Indian economy. The Five Year Plans formulated the implementation of a series of investment-backed schemes and projects for the betterment of the conditions of the tribes living in the rural and urban areas. Many of the tribes with their forest-dwelling culture do not have the motivation or the skill of settled cultivation. As a result, their land has been alienated to their better endowed tribal neighbours or non-tribals. There have been many tribal studies in India based on tribal economy, land alienation, socio-economic

development, tribal culture etc. It is highly imperative to have a look at these tribal studies by various Anthropologists, Research scholars, etc. A new trend in ethno methodology which came during the British period was a theory propounded by Verrier Elwin (1943)⁴ who suggested that tribes should be kept isolated in their hills and forests. Elwin's theory is known in social anthropology as 'public park theory'. He suggested that ordinarily the non-tribal people should not be allowed to enter into tribal pockets without permission of the state government. This system would guarantee the isolation of the tribes. G.S. Ghurye (1943)⁵ protested the theory of public park. He argued that the tribals were nothing more than backward caste Hindus. They should be treated at par with the Hindus. Following Guryev's argument, D.N. Majumdar (1944)⁶ took a slightly different position. His suggestion was that the cultural identity of the tribes as far as possible should be retained. He feared that if the isolation was broken the tribes would lose their ethnic identity. To maintain it, he hypothesized that there should be 'selected integration' of the tribes. While spelling out, he argued that not all the elements of civilization should be allowed to enter the tribal area. Only those



which have relevance with tribal life should be permitted into such area. Such a policy would keep the tribes away from ordinary crowd. These all studies focus on the major issue of tribal problems and if we want to develop nation we should firstly solve the problems of the tribal peoples and make them a part of our society.

TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: Politics has been the focal issue of the development discourse since its origin. The State has power to determine the policies and programs for the development of the country. In developing countries political regimes directly affect development policy in favour of their interest. In the case of India, where politics is fraught with many problems, for instance, regionalism, communalism, corruption etc, the situation seems to be grim. It has adversely affected the people belong to the lower strata of society and exclude them from full participation in society. Tribes have been the most excluded of the excluded. After integration with larger Indian society and modern economy their plight has increased, instead of decreasing. On the one hand, they have lost not only autonomy of governance, but control over land, forest and other

resources. On the other hand, they have not been properly included in the mainstream of society, and they have surfaced as the sufferers of development.

CONCEPTUALIZING TRIBALS: Social formation of India has mainly three components - tribal settlements, villages and towns. It is difficult to draw sharp distinction amongst them because they share some common characteristics. But one thing appears to be true that the tribes have been exploited economically and socially by the non-tribals living in tribal area. Article 46 of India's constitution says: "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Schedule Castes and the Schedule Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." But there are tribes who have remained outside the schedule list of constitution and form weaker sections of India's population. The tribes are backward particularly in the fields of education and economy and have been exploited by the dominant sections of Indian society such as landlords, money-lenders and industrialists who have grabbed their lands by various means.



Tribes have generally been defined in India in terms of what they are not. They did not practice a religion with a written text, did not have clear class divisions, did not have a state or political form of the normal kind and most importantly they did not have caste. The term was introduced in the British period more for the purpose of administrative convenience. A large number of tribes have been converted to different religions - leaving their tribal identity just to get redemption from exploitation and to elevate their status and honour. Sometimes it becomes very difficult to differentiate between a tribal and a caste group. Tribals have a strong sense of their distinctiveness and separate themselves from non-tribals. A large number of tribals in India even today live in hilly and forested areas where population is sparse and without proper communication facilities.

SOCIAL CHANGE:
CONCEPTUALIZING CHANGE AS A PROCESS: "Change is the law of nature. In life, every particle and substance, be it electron-small or mountain -big, is continuously changing. Every change leaves life to it and every decay gives it a new birth. Society is no exception. The changes we

witness today are bound to give way to some new changes hidden in the womb of time". Thus the change is the only unchanging aspect of society and constant change is among the most permanent features of our society. Social change is such a general term that it has been used to refer to almost any kind of change not qualified by some other term. Sociologists and anthropologists have to do a lot of brainstorming to limit the broad and general meaning of social change. It has become necessary to make the term more specific and useful for social theory. Social change refers to changes that are significant - that is, changes which alter the 'underlying structure of an object or situation over a period of time'. Thus social change does not refer to any and all changes but only such changes which transform things fundamentally. Changes have to be both intensive and extensive - have a large and big impact over a large section of society in order to qualify as social change.

The term 'change' is considered neutral. This means that the object to which it is applied becomes different with time. Hence in this sense social change suggests no law, no theory, no direction, and no continuity.



The idea of continuity is introduced when we refer to social change as a process. A process means a continuous change taking place in a definite manner through operation of forces present from the very beginning within the situation. Examples of processes are - communication, socialization, accommodation, integration, disintegration, competition and conflict. Social change as a process acquires against the background of continuity or lack of change. Change makes sense as a concept only if there are also some things that are not changing. This is because they offer the possibility of comparison or contrast. Thus social change has to be understood together with social order. Social order is the tendency within established social systems that resists and regulates change.

Since tradition and modernity coexist, continuity and change are empirical or observed facts of social life. Tradition and continuity coexist because all societies need a certain amount of stability and social checks. Modernity and change are required to achieve new levels of knowledge and technical know-how to meet changing demands and challenges. Social tensions and conflicts are also sources of social change.

SOCIO-LEGAL ANALYSIS OF

IMPACT OF RURAL AREA: Democratic decentralization can help mobilize what some theorists call social capital: interpersonal relations and community networks. These networks can significantly reduce the transaction costs of collective action and economic exchange and, when appropriately linked to state interventions, can generate significant synergies. Constitution 73rd Amendment Act asserts the mode of democratic decentralization with representation to the marginalized section of the society. A legal impact study represents an attempt to ascertain how a particular law affects the conduct and attitudes of those individuals, groups or other relevant units located in jurisdictions where that law is in force. The present study is an attempt to understand the legal impact assessment of law with reference to gender, caste and class in the rural areas in India.

APPROACHES TO THE TRIBALS: ISOLATION, ASSIMILATION,

INTEGRATION AND OTHERS: Tribals in India have always been the source of study for Sociologists and Anthropologists both Indian and foreign. They have been treated differently by different scholars

depending upon their individual background, experience and interest. There has always been difference of opinion regarding suitable model for the integration of the tribals to the mainstream of Indian life. To start with, the officers of the census of India, till the year 1931, forcefully stick to the point that the tribals were distinct from non-tribals as far as religion is concerned. They made the point clear that the tribals were animist and the non-tribals were not. G.S. Ghurye(1959) contested this by remarking that the tribals have never been markedly different from the neighboring non-tribes. Ghurye theory states that the so called 'aborigines' in India share the culture and language of the non-aboriginal Hindu communities of the respective region they live in.

The British government, however, described the tribals as a distinct group, isolated people. It would not be surprising to note that the British government considered the tribals not only an autonomous political unit but also culturally an autonomous entity. During the British period the tribals were brought nearer and closer to the non-tribal society because of the expansion of transport and communication. This led to creating of

many administrative problems for the British regime. With regard to problems such as mode of cultivation, transfer of lands, rights to forest exploitation, and preservation of tribal solidarity the Britishers were constrained to frame some laws. The colonial rule, in fact, was forced to come out with a policy resulting from the consequences of the tribal interaction with the non-tribals.

Arrival of Independence signaled the departure of the British rule and hence the post-independence period looked at the tribal problem from an altogether a different perspective. Now the tribals are equal partners in the process of nation-building. If the country as whole has to develop, the tribals cannot be left to their age-old agony and torture. They cannot remain as museum species as there cannot be two futures for the citizens of the same country. The past experiences of the policies of isolation and assimilation and their results forced the thinkers and social reformers to opt for middle path which might be more fruitful. The base of Indian culture i.e. 'Unity in diversity' once again got its due importance. Most of the experts on tribal ways of life



and administration combined their skills and adopted an integral approach towards tribals.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE INITIATIVES IN TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA:

Public-private partnership initiatives taken by the State for the tribal development in India. In the classical sense, the tribal development philosophy the post-independent India had three pillars espousing the assimilation, integration and 'isolation' perspectives. In the neo-liberal India the ever shrinking welfare State has effectively utilized the private sector partners to supplement into its developmental activities primarily for providing educational facilities. At the national level, we find that the socio economic development or livelihood generation of tribal communities is through Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). For instance the Model School scheme aims to establish 2,500 schools under Public-Private Partnership (PPP) some of the area may have tribal presence. Furthermore, one of such many initiatives of PPP model at the regional level is by Gujarat which runs Vocational Training Centers (VTC) so as to impart training to the tribal communities so as to enable and empower them. It also has

an additional component of the presence of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), within the State tribal development policy. The present paper is an attempt to address such and related issues and deliberates on the changing discourse of tribal development in neo-liberal India.

ROLE OF ICT IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT:

In the present century, the advancements in ICTs are changing the various components of human life. The changes in the ICTs have brought a positive impact in the socio-economic structure of communities. ICT play a key role in development of rural India. Political, cultural, socio-economic developmental and behavioral decisions today rests on the ability to access, gather, analyze and utilize information and knowledge. ICT is the conduits that transmit information and knowledge to individual to widen their choices for social and economic empowerment. ICT helps and improving living standards in rural areas by providing important social, educational, economic and health benefits. In a developing nation like India, the role of ICT in overall development becomes more important. It can contribute in almost every area such as human rights



protection, health, education and agriculture etc. Especially in rural context, it acts as an intermediary between the government and the people.

IMPLEMENTATION OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA:

The Rural development generally refers to the process of improving the quality of life and economic welfare of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. As per census 2011, about 70 per cent of the India's population lives in rural areas and the dependent on agriculture as the primary source of occupation. These rural populations can be characterized by mass poverty, low levels of literacy and income, high level of unemployment, and poor nutrition and health status. The rural developmental programmes intend to reduce the poverty and unemployment, to improve the health and educational status and to fulfill the basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing of the rural population. To improve the conditions of rural people, Central and State Governments introduced from time to time a number of programmes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA),

Indira Awas Yojana (IAY), Sampoorna Grameen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY), Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) etc, to meet various need of the people. In this context, the paper aim to evaluate the various rural development programmes and schemes to explore the reality to development through these programme and schemes.

CONCLUSION: The solutions to the tribal problems mentioned above, have their own merits and demerits. The modern culture must not be imposed on them. Only those elements of new culture which may vitalize them for material advancement must be infused in them. Tribal problems are simple but very delicate to handle. No solution can be experimented with before winning the confidence of the tribals. It is essential to establish a harmonious compatibility between the tribal mode of living and the material advancement of culture. The integration of the tribal society into the Indian society takes time, and it has to be promoted while retaining the good points of the tribal culture. Tribal people possess a variety of culture and they are in many ways certainly not backward. There is no point in



trying to make them a second rate copy of ourselves. We should unite and integrate the tribes in a true heart unity with India as a whole so that they may play a full part in their life. And the last is to develop welfare and educational facilities so that every tribesman may have an equal opportunity with the rest of the fellow citizens who work in the fields, factories, and workshops in the open country and the plains. The socio-cultural change among the tribal communities has no doubt empowered the tribals; however, their cultural identity is under severe stress. However, it is not too late to rise above the politics of exclusion and marginalization, to unearth and mainstream fast vanishing tribal traditions, in India. Perhaps its time to amplify long marginalized voices and awaken contemporary nation States to the realization that only through the establishment of such democratic, reconciliatory, gender friendly grass root tribal traditions could one create a more equitable, more just society and world order. The reality remaining that without rapid action, these native communities may be wiped out, taking with them vast indigenous knowledge, rich culture and traditions, and any hope of preserving the natural world, and a simpler, more holistic

way of life for future generations. However, it will only work if the winners support with the losers.

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