



SCHEDULED TRIBES(ST'S) DEVELOPMENT IN ANDHRA PRADESH

***Dr.Chaganti Rami Reddy**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Sri Krishnadevaraya University, Anantapur-PIN-515 003.E-Mail Id:chagantisku69@gmail.com.

Abstract

In India, seats are reserved for historically disadvantaged groups (Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST)) in federal or state legislative assemblies and for both historically disadvantaged groups at all levels of the Panchayat system, the system of decentralized decision making. The tribal population in the State of Andhra Pradesh, and in the country as a whole, is the most deprived and vulnerable community that faces severe economic exclusion. Although certain constitutional safeguards are provided, no significant economic, social and political mobility has taken place across this community.

Contrary to Scheduled Castes and other Backward Castes who witnessed certain degrees of progress because of protective discrimination policies of the government, the Scheduled Tribes remain abysmally backward and socially excluded, still living in harsh environs. Our paper on "Political Economy of Tribal Development: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh", delineates the situation of the Scheduled Tribes in the background of various policies of the state during the successive plan periods and its impact on their socio-economic mobility. Politically, this community is the most voiceless in the state.

The tribal population in the State of Andhra Pradesh and in the country as a whole is the most deprived and vulnerable community that faces severe economic exclusion. Although certain constitutional safeguards are provided, there has been no economic, social and political mobility across these communities. Contrary to Scheduled Castes and other Backward Castes who witnessed certain degrees of progress because of protective discrimination policies of the government, the Scheduled Tribes remain abysmally backward and socially excluded, still living in harsh environs. The present paper "Political Economy of Tribal Development: A Case

Study of Andhra Pradesh”, delineates the situation of Scheduled Tribes in the background of various policies of the state during the successive plan periods and its impact on their socio-economic mobility.

The hilly areas cutting across the Coastal Andhra and Telangana regions are dominated by tribal communities and can be considered as another region of the state, owing to its unique set of problems and underdevelopment. Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions were part of the Madras Presidency until 1953, when they were formed as a separate state of Andhra. Telangana was part of the erstwhile Hyderabad State ruled by the Nizams, and merged with Andhra state to form the second state along linguistic lines (Orissa was the first) in the country. Physiographically, the state can be divided into three zones, viz., Coastal Plains, Eastern Ghats and Peneplains. The state being a part of peninsular India is seismically highly stable.

Coastal Plains: Towards the eastern side of the state the sea coast extends from Srikakulam in the north to Nellore in the south. The length of the coastline running along the Bay of Bengal is about 980 km. The coastal plains are bordered by the Eastern Ghats towards the landward side. **Peneplains:** The topography of the Peneplain region consists of rounded hills and the Deccan Plateau. The Eastern Ghats slope towards the eastern border of this area. These Peneplains are formed due to intense weathering and denudation over a long period. Soils in this area are generally red sandy loams. Black soil also exists in the central and north-eastern regions. The Peneplains exist in districts of Anantapur, Kurnool and in all the districts of Telangana. The climate is generally hot and humid. The average rainfall in the state is about 925 mm. The Krishna and the Godavari are the major rivers in the state. With a 970 km coastline, AP is the largest maritime state in India. The 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh are further sub-divided into 1,104 revenue mandals for administration, revenue collection and implementation of development programmes. The Mandals in turn, constitute village Panchayats. There are no intermediate administrative divisions between the district and the development block as in most other states. The demographic profile of the state has one of the lowest urbanization rates amongst the southern states (second to Kerala) with urbanisation being more pronounced during the 1971-1991 period. The annual growth rate of the rural population has shown a steady decline and is currently estimated at 1.4 percent.

Andhra Pradesh is home to 35 communities officially designated as Scheduled Tribes (STs). They numbered 50,24,104 in the 2001 Census. Out of the 35 STs, recently two communities, namely, Nakkala/Kurvikaran, Dhulia/Paiko/Putiyā (in the districts of Vishakhapatnam and Vizianagaram) have been notified in the state. Twelve tribes, namely, Bodo Gadaba, Gutob Gadaba, Bondo Poraja, Khond Poraja, Parangiperja, Chenchu, Dongaria Khonds, Kuttia Khonds, Kolam, Kondareddis, Konda Savaras and Thoti have been recognized as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). Except Kondareddis and Thoti, the population statistics of other PTGs are not available separately as these are notified as sub-groups/sections of main communities. The population of Konda Reddis and Thoti is 83,096 and 2,074 respectively, as per the 2001 Census.

Tribal Movements in Andhra Pradesh

Tribal revolts took place in British Andhra against colonialism as well as indigenous privileged sections. Tribal movements happened because of the inherent contradictions between the state and tribes; between tribal people and moneylenders; and tribal people and non-tribal land-owning classes. The British introduced laws in favour of individual rights over land, forest acts, courts of law, revenue, forest and excise machinery from the district level to the smallest village. This process dismantled the collective structures and established individual rights over resources. The Rampa Revolt of 1802-03 was inhumanely suppressed by the British and was projected as anti-social. The tribal movements were not merely against moneylenders or migrants to tribal areas as often portrayed by European Scholars but were against alien rule and were a quest for identity and self-rule. Legal acts came into existence after every show of resistance by the tribals in the country, but were implemented inadequately. The movement led by Komaram Bheem during 1938-41 in the agency area of Hyderabad State was for rights over land and forest. The European anthropologist Heimendorff brought forth the problems faced by the adivasis of this region to the attention of Nizam Government. As a result, in 1946, the Gonds, Kolam, and Pardhanadivasi communities gained legal land rights over their lands. In spite of this, the adivasis could not be at peace because of encroachment on their land by non-tribals from neighbouring districts and states such as Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Progressive legislation like the Land Transfer Regulation Act (LTRA) 1959 could not stop illegal encroachment on tribal land, which continued with the connivance of political parties and forest bureaucracy, taking advantage of the ignorance and illiteracy of the tribals. The late 1960s was a period of agrarian tensions. 1969-72 witnessed the Srikakulam tribal revolt and the Naxalite movement. The tribal land issue came to be focused upon through the Srikakulam Revolt which arose because of the oppressive social order in which social relations were dominated by local and settler landlords, moneylenders, contractors and corrupt bureaucracy. The movement succeeded in social liberation and was also economically effective. Active and politically conscious women participated in small groups. The gains secured by the revolt were four-fold: relief from the power of money lenders; regaining mortgaged lands and wastelands from landlords and government; relief from bonded labour, with a hike in wages; and elimination of restrictions and extractions imposed by the forest officials. As a result of this movement, the government brought an amendment to the LTRA in 1970, which is popularly called the "One of 1970" Act. According to this Act, land in the Scheduled Area belongs to the tribals. The Srikakulam movement contributed significantly to the struggles that took place in the subsequent decade of eighties, in terms of spirit and message.

The Godavari valley tribal struggles like Adilabad-Indervelli Gond revolt in North Telangana and also in the North Coast Agency region took place from 1976 onwards led by the radical left (CPI ML group). The Scheduled Areas of Telangana Region witnessed mobilization of tribes especially in the districts of Adilabad and Khammam. The Gonds of Adilabad were exploited by the landlords and immigrant peasants from the plains. There was militant mobilization of tribals on the issues of land and moneylending by non-tribal trader-

cum-moneylenders. At the same time, the tribals of Kondamodulu fought a heroic battle in the Papi hills against non-tribal landlords who controlled thousands of acres of tribal land. When the *Girijana Sangham* formed by the tribes challenged the power of non-tribal landlords, the state machinery did not come to the rescue of tribals, but took the side of landlords. Ultimately, the *Girijana Sangham* could forcibly take possession of 2000-4000 acres. Land restoration by the state arising out of the 1970 Act was considerable till 1979. However, in East Godavari District, the land which has been conferred on non-tribals was the highest and much more than the land restored to tribals in the other tribal areas of the state. The failure of the state in land restoration motivated tribals to organize themselves under various social movements to get their lands back. By the mid-1970s the, Srikakulam uprising had moved up the Godavari Valley into the plains of Telangana. Peasant struggles were organized under the leadership of radical left and “*Rytu coolie sanghams*” (peasant and agricultural labour organisations), which struggled against social oppression and feudal practices; for a hike in wages and for land. “Social boycott” against the landlords was the popular form of struggle. Land is seen as a livelihood for tribals. The process of transforming land into a commodity and acquiring economic and political power over it has been the single agenda of the ruling class which made possible the entry of non-tribals into tribal areas. Coal mining, paper industries, trade and commerce were the major ventures in the forest areas and organs of the state like the revenue, police, excise, development, and forest departments made inroads into tribal areas. Thus non-tribal encroachment into tribal lands and forest has been the root cause for continuing tribal struggles. The “*Tudum Debba*” movement from the mid-1990s has been agitating for categorization of tribals according to their relative socio-economic status for the purpose of reservation within the Scheduled Tribes. The tribals have been further marginalised by recent policies of Government of India (Guha, 2007). Though legislations empowering the tribals such as the PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) and Land Acts (Recognition of Forest Rights) 2006 have been passed, their rights are not conceded. With economic reforms, commercialization has entered through trade and industrial activity into tribal areas because of their rich mineral resources. This process is making them lose their rights over land and resources. Besides, World Bank projects like the JFM and CFM have not improved access to resources except for wage benefits. Tribal development programmes have also created class differences among them.

Tribal Development Policies and Programmes

The greatest challenge that the Government of India has been facing since independence is the proper provision of social justice to the Scheduled Tribe people, by ameliorating their socio-economic conditions. Scheduled Tribes constitute the weakest section of India’s population, from the ecological, economic and educational angles. They constitute the matrix of India’s poverty. Though the tribals are the sons of the same soil and the citizens of the same country, they are born and grow as the children of the nature. From the historical point of view, they have been subjected to the worst type of social exploitation. They are practically deprived of many civic facilities and are subjected to isolation from modern and civilized way of living since

so many centuries. By British the Scheduled District Act of 1956 had initiated the tribals to keep most of these areas administratively separate; the same situation was allowed to continue under the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935.

However, after independence this policy was abandoned and new policy of tribal development and integration was initiated. The Constitution of India made definite provisions for the welfare and upliftment of the tribal people throughout the country. A review of the tribal situation would indicate that the strategy for development would require an intensive approach to the tribal problems in terms of their geographic and demographic concentration, if faster development of the community is to take place. The community development efforts in the tribal areas were therefore, taken up for supplementation by stating a few special in 1954. A number of commissions and committees were appointed in the recent past to look into the problems of developments in the tribal areas in the country and they have recommended a number of measures to remove the socio-economic imbalances and also to break down their old psychological barrier, which existed in the tribal areas. The special programmes for tribal development have been implemented in our country and state to benefit the tribal population under the backward classes sector from First Five Year Plan. Recognizing the special needs and problems of tribals, a special niche was accorded to tribal development in the country and state development agenda from the very beginning of the Plan Era. Some important landmark achievements in tribal development are as follows: Special programmes for tribal development have been implemented in the country to benefit the tribal population under backward classes sector from First Five Year Plan (1951-56) which did not play any specific and special attention towards the development of tribal areas, because only certain piecemeal attempts such as educational schemes and welfare schemes were introduced. These schemes left concrete impact on tribal development. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) envisaged welfare programmes of STs based on the understanding of their culture and traditions, for their socio- economic upliftment. Forty-three Special Multi-Purpose Tribal Blocks (SMPTBs) were created for about 25,000 people as against 65,000 in a normal block, which is an important landmark during this plan. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) followed the approach of equity of opportunity and to bring about reduction in disparities. The approach of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) was to increase the standard of living of the STs. Special development projects in the agency areas of AP, Bihar, MP and Orissa were set up for targeted development of tribal areas, besides combating political unrest and left wing extremism. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) marked a shift in the approach with the launching of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) for the comprehensive development of the tribals. The TSP stipulated that the funds of the State and Centre should be quantified on the ST population on a proportional basis, with budgetary mechanisms for the welfare and development of the STs. For implementing the TSP strategy, Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) were delineated in the tribal concentrated States. Special Central Assistance (SCA) to TSP and Grant-in-Aid under Article 275(1) of the Constitution were also initiated in this plan to provide additional funds to TSP implementing states for income-generating activities, infrastructure development and administrative reinforcement. During the Sixth

Five Year Plan (1980-85) emphasis was more on family-oriented economic activities rather than infrastructure development schemes.

A “Modified Area Development Approach” (MADA) was adopted for tribal concentrated pockets of 10,000 populations with at least half of them being STs. Primitive Tribal Groups were also given emphasis for their overall development. During the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), there was substantial increase in the flow of funds. Two national-level institutions - Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) as an apex body for State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations, and National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) - were set up to provide remunerative price for the Forest and Agriculture Produce of tribals and credit support for employment generation and skill development. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) emphasized elimination of exploitation, land alienation, non-payment of minimum wages and restrictions on right to collect minor forest produce, etc., besides the socio-economic upliftment of the STs. The approach of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) envisaged advancement of STs through a process of: (i) Social Empowerment; (ii) Economic Empowerment; and (iii) Social Justice for socio-economic development. An exclusive Ministry of Tribal Affairs was set up in 1999 for a focused approach to the development and welfare of the tribals in the country. The Tenth Plan (2002-07) continued the approach of Ninth Plan of Social Empowerment through promotion of new educational development schemes, Economic Empowerment through employment-cum-income generation activities and Social Justice through elimination of all types of discrimination. These strategies have been supported by the ongoing schemes of Central, Centrally Sponsored by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and other Central Ministries and Departments. There was substantial increase in the outlays for the STs’ development for various schemes in this plan period with emphasis on education, minor irrigation and development of forest villages. The planning commission approved an allocation of Rs.1,754 crores for the tenth plan. This allocation does not include grants for Special Central Assistance (SCA) and TSP.

Suggestions

There is a need for periodical status reviews and evaluation of the impact of the schemes and programmes. The ITDP project officers should be assigned a key role in planning, administration and implementation of tribal development programmes and empowered with magisterial powers as recommended. Since the socio-economic profiles of the tribals vary across districts, each district must make an assessment of the deprivation of tribals in all the areas of social concern, and adopt an appropriate principle for allocation of TSP funds across various sectors. In order to improve access to public education and medical facilities, the quality of social infrastructure needs drastic improvement. The schools need quality teachers, teaching materials, and health centres should comprise a number of doctors, para-medical staff and other

facilities. Sufficient TSP funds need to be allocated for this purpose in almost all the ITDAs. Active participation from the tribals is very essential for the implementation of the tribal development programme effectively. The tribal land problem in AP has assumed new dimensions in relation to the traditional rights over “podu” in particular and access to natural resources in general. Before the implementation of any act, policy, programmes, and schemes, more time should be spent on creation of awareness so that they reach very remote areas. It is imperative that dedicated officers who are fully trained should be posted in ITDA areas. Moreover, special incentives need to be given to encourage them for working in these areas.

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