

## CHANGING PATTERN OF INDIGENOUS TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF MALAYALI TRIBES IN VELLORE DISTRICT, TAMIL NADU.INDIA

Dr.P.Maduraiveeran

Professor

Anna Centre for Public Affairs.

University of Madras.Chennai. 600 005

India.

The Constitution of India provides for a comprehensive framework for the socio-economic development of scheduled tribes and for preventing their exploitation by other groups of society. A detailed and comprehensive review of the tribal problem was taken on the eve of the Fifth Five Year Plan and the Tribal Sub-Plan strategy took note of the fact that an integrated approach to the tribal problems was necessary in terms of their geographic and demographic concentration, if a faster development of this community is to take place. Special constitutional arrangements have been made with the set up of special ministry. Special committees were set up to deal with fundamental problems, special training opportunities for officers to deal with the problems of tribes – staffing, training, land agricultural shifting cultivation, forest, tribal culture and research. Steps were taken in the Five Year Plans for their gradual development. Now starting from Panchayat level to District, State and Central level, offices were established to look after tribals.

### **Things have changed for them but not changed enough as:**

1. Policies are not prepared with 100 percent accuracy to solve the tribal problems.
2. Gap between framed policies and their implementations.
3. Officers' in-charge is not so committed to deal tribal problems.
4. Sometimes bureaucrats follow the rules and regulations meant for tribal welfare only in letter not in spirit and essence.

There are 36 tribes and sub tribes in Tamil Nadu. Most of the tribals in Tamil Nadu are cultivators, agriculture labourers or dependent of forest for their livelihood. There are six primitive tribes in Tamil Nadu. The area where the population of Scheduled Tribes exceeds 50 percent of the total population is declared as Integrated Tribal Development Programme area. Tribal setting in Tamil Nadu can be broadly classified into three geographical regions, namely, the Eastern coast line region, the Central plain area and North and West mountains region where the majority of the tribal people are living. The tribal people of the Javadi hills are known as Malayali. These people live on the plateaus and sloppy regions of the Javadi hills. The Malayali population is approximately 40,000. The main occupations of these people are agriculture and collection of forest produces. Most of the households, either the male singly or both husband and wife, migrate to nearby or sometimes distant urban places of generating additional livelihoods means by working as construction labourers and other kinds of work. The implication of such a migration is a significant disruption of normal households. The major problem is to have a secondary source of income or more precisely to generate their minimum needs of food during the crisis period.

The tribal communities all –over the world in general and in the Third World Countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America in particular are the worst sufferers of the basic amenities of life so far health, education, social rehabilitation and socio-economic uplift are concerned. The developmental processes in the Third World Countries have posed serious dilemmas before them. These dilemmas can be perceived in terms of (i) Development for social equity,(ii) Development for cultural diversities and (iii) Development for ecological and environment protection.<sup>1</sup>

Many tribal areas in India are still identified as the areas of illiteracy, ignorance, indebtedness, poverty, landlessness, morbid, health conditions, unemployment and lack of techno-economic skills. Following persistent problems have large remained unattended to:

- Land alienation
- Indebtedness
- Relation with forests, and non-implementation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006

- Ineffective implementation of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 (PESA, 1996) for Schedule V areas.
- Involuntary displacement due to development projects and lack of proper rehabilitation
- Shifting Cultivation
- Poor utilization of government funds, and Poor delivery of government programmes

### **Indigenous knowledge of tribal women**

Forest dwellers are known as 'tribe', scheduled tribe or indigenous people. More than 69% of the tribal people are found either inside the forest or at the vicinity of forest. They have their own traditional practices, customs, norms etc., to manage the forest in sustainable way. Their utilization of forest was not simply the extraction of the forest products rather it kept the ecological balance. The forest is not only the hub of their life but it is the common property.

Their indigenous knowledge is cumulative experience develop in course of their development. The indigenous knowledge system is adapted to local culture and environment and is very much dynamic with changing conditions. The indigenous knowledge is very much significant for the various kinds of information's about the growth of trees and plants, seed preservation, people's belief systems, indigenous technology, farmer's experimentation of introducing new tree species, traditional healing system and local socio-political system and so on. The women are equally experts in these indigenous knowledge.

### **Chaturbhuj Sahu, Indian Tribal Life, Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2001.**

The issue of tribal development could not be pursued outside of the issues of national development. In fact, measures undertaken for bringing about rapid national development were seen as a kind of important mechanism whereby integration of tribal society could be achieved. In fact, the national objective to build up a productive structure for future growth and resource mobilization was far more important than issues concerning the welfare and interest of the tribes. So, tribal interest and welfare were invariably sacrificed in the name of national development.

The conception of tribe for the theoretical purpose of study of social processes and the recognition of 'Scheduled Tribes' for operational purposes of integration, need not be identical and under certain circumstances cannot be identical. For operational purposes many communities who are tribes according to anthropological conception may not be considered as Scheduled Tribes. Other communities who are non tribes according to anthropological view may be considered as 'Scheduled Tribes'.

The main purpose of the recognition of tribal and semi-tribal population under the Constitution is to bring such population at par with other sections of population and integrate them with the mainstream of national life. It, therefore, logically follows that the communities, which are considered to be such as would require special measures for being integrated and for being brought at par with other sections of populations for operational purposes be recognized as "Scheduled Tribes". Accordingly, certain communities are included in the Scheduled of tribes. This administrative action entitles the scheduled tribe to special protection and privileges. Notwithstanding the controversies among the social scientists regarding a universal definition of 'tribe' and mode of their scheduling, the term "scheduled Tribe" as known and described in the constitutional and administrative usages have been followed in the constitution.. These tribes are declared to be such by the President of India, by the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 and by the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes of Union Territories) Order, 1951, as amended from time to time. Moreover, the words like tribes, tribals, tribal communities, STs etc., wherever they occur, are used to mean the "Scheduled Tribes" as notified under these official orders.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, from the experiences of the working of the Panch-Sheel for the tribals, we find that we should not force tribals to adopt changes and we should not impose on them anything from outside. Moreover, the tribal programmes should be very simple and it should not be very complicated in nature and characteristics. One should serve the tribals in a dedicated spirit.<sup>3</sup>

### **Tribal Panchasheel**

The domain of the concept of tribal development has been built up in the line of Nehru's ideas are put in the broader framework of five fundamental principles, called Tribal Panchasheel.

- i. "People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
- ii. Tribal rights in land and forest should be respected.
- iii. We should try to train and built up a team of their own people to do work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing to many outsiders into tribal territory.
- iv. We should not over administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent but the quality of human character that is evolved.<sup>4</sup>

### **Schemes for Tribal Welfare in India**

According to Dr. B.L. Guha, "schemes for tribal welfare must fulfil two essential conditions namely, conformity to the social values and patterns of life of the people for whom they are intended and the psychological receptivity and ability of the tribal population to absorb them. Theoretical perfection of a scheme or its suitability to people in general must not be regarded as the criterion for tribal people. Ignorance of these basic facts and inability to appreciate them are responsible for the failure of many development schemes which by themselves are unexceptionable."

#### **1. Welfare schemes must relate to facts of life**

Isolation and absence of intercourse with other communities are injurious to a people. Contact among groups of different races with varied ways of life is essential for human society to sustain and develop. Granting progress is necessary and unavoidable; schemes for their fulfillment must be geared to the background of the tribal life and take note of their special characteristics and aptitudes. The history of the spread of civilization in backward tracts has shown that in many parts of the world while contact has been beneficial, it has also led to very harmful results when not regulated and canalized in the right direction.

Human society, like the individual organism, possesses great potential powers to absorb from the environment all that is beneficial and through this process ensures its survival. But there are things that have also lethal effects. Neither of the two, however, acts in the same way on every group of people differing in their environmental and socio-political conditions. In other words what is good for the gander may not be good for the goose.

#### **2. Attention to the primitive personality**

A factor which has seldom received due attention is the type of personality of the primitive man. Reared in an atmosphere where the action of natural selection is much harder, he has to have full possession of his physical vigour and mental resilience if he is not to go down in the struggle for existence. In tribal communities therefore there is hardly any asylum for the decrepit; it is only the fit that can exist. The ratio of fitness in tribal society is consequently much greater than in civilized society where humane considerations often place a premium on parasitism and unfitness. Along with a vigorous personality there is an emotional balance in the primitive man; frustration and regressive trends find no place in his ideology. There is ample room for satisfying his physical and emotional needs in a healthy outdoor life and joy and laughter, which is polarized between hard labour on the one hand, and enjoyment and fun on the other.

#### **3. Acceptability and identification**

In devising welfare schemes for the tribal people, the consideration that should guide us must be easy identification and acceptability by the tribal people and not what we conceive to be their good. No strict uniformity can however exist in this or other respects. There are vast differences among the tribes themselves in physical

environment, racial make-up, cultural patterns, the values they cherish as well as the degrees of acculturation to which they have been subjected. Nor have the manner and the extent of our relationships with them been uniform.

It would be instructive to review here the history of our contact with tribal people to provide a clear background against which measures intended for their welfare may be more rationally considered. References about contact with aboriginal tribes occur in many places in early Sanskrit and Tamil literatures, showing that in central and southern India, before the intruding foreign elements the tribes had to obtain shelter in the outlying hills and deep forests, where they lived comparatively undisturbed.

Various measures in indirect rule were tried and personal influence such as that of Augustus Cleveland over the Mai Paharias, was utilized to pacify them until the sixth schedule of the Government of India act of 1935, dividing the tribes into areas of total and partial exclusion, was passed. In the Constitution of independent India this principle has been maintained but modified by the provision of opportunities to mould their own destiny in semi-autonomous tracts. The right to keep the tribal ways of life and language has been guaranteed in our Constitution.

#### **4. Consideration of group characteristics**

Considered broadly, there are three principal groups of primitive tribes in India with wide alignment even if it may mean improvement as this will be contrary to tribal usage. The possibility of improving their environmental hygiene must be restricted to the house itself, within limits, for neither the pile structure form of the house, nor the materials for building need be changed as they are suited to their environment. There is no doubt that plenty of room exists for improvement in these houses as in the dwellings of almost every people in the world. But caution and care are necessary before introducing changes which may not be justified or may not be accepted by the tribes. In the course of visits to one of these tribes it came to my notice that in some areas under the Community Project Development scheme the latrine has been shifted from its old position on the sides of the house to a separate shed connected by a passage at the northern end. In these tribal houses the pigsty is located below the latrine for scavenging purposes.

It may incidentally be mentioned that unlike Indian villages where the excreta is strewn all over the place, endangering cleanliness and health, the arrangement in these tribal villages is far cleaner and more hygienic. The shifting of the latrine to one end, done no doubt with the best of intentions, had actually an opposite effect, as the stink now carried by the gorse wind flowing from the north to the living room, was formerly absent. Real improvement could have been better done if the special shed of the latrine may have been built connecting either the eastern or western wing of the house according to the normal direction of the wind.

Similarly in one-roomed tribal houses, sleeping arrangements were made for the members according to tribal usage and precedence around a central hearth; wooden partitions now introduced to make them into separate cubicles on grounds of privacy have resulted in darkening the corners in the already dark houses, and the blocking of the free flow of air has increased incidence of lung diseases. None of these innovations fulfilled any of the needs felt by the tribe. Their introduction was solely in terms of the notions held by the Indian employees of the community project who came to do welfare work. If thought and understanding had been bestowed before they were introduced a great deal of wastage of labour and expense should have been avoided.

These tribesmen are excellent craftsmen as can be seen from their device of circular wooden rings fixed at the top of poles in a most ingenious manner to prevent rats from entering their granaries. If guided rightly they are responsive to improvement so long as it does not violate their social norms. Instead, therefore, of tinkering with patchy little innovations, which do more harm than good, if attention is directed to more fundamental needs, something really useful can be achieved. For instance, the raising of the house roofs and provision of outlets for smoke will automatically allow more light and air inside the dwelling and would certainly bring down the number of eye and throat complaints. It will also make their living rooms brighter.<sup>5</sup>

The perpetuation of socio-economic backwardness among the Scheduled Tribes, in spite 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 with the following objectives:

- 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 tribal 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 period). For example, engaging a twelfth student from the nearby locality for teaching tribal students in primary classes.
- Sensitizing officials with detailed information for serving in the tribal areas so that they become empathetic to the sensitivities of tribal lives and their traditions.
- Reorganizing 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 edictal – 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 tribal 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 with tribal majority should be left vacant; every post must be filled up and wherever necessary, additional post scheduled tribes 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 of roadways 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.
- Converge MGNREGA with artisanal work to provide livelihood to tribal, many of whom are engaged in artisanal work.
- Land and Tenancy Reform: Deal with outstanding matters of tribal ownership.
- Increase coverage of the most vulnerable within the scheduled tribes in the health sector. Increase cadre of health workers to better serve tribal.
- Plan within a plan of the Twelfth Plan: Suitable programmes for Central Indian Tribal Belt, border and backward areas and those who suffered discrimination like DNTs.

### **Profile of Vellore District**

Vellore district is one of the 32 districts in the Tamil Nadu State of India. Vellore City is the headquarters of this district. After the Independence in 1947, Vellore became a part of the erstwhile Madras state. North Arcot/Ambedkar District was later renamed Vellore District in 1996. Vellore district has an area of 6077 km. Vellore district lies between 12°15' to 13° 15' North latitudes and 78° 20' to 79° 50' East longitudes in Tamil Nadu State. Vellore is divided into 3 revenue divisions, 9 taluks, 20 blocks and 12 corporations and municipalities. This eases the pressure in administration as the classifications are based on the economy, growth index, population and other statistical data. Apart from the above mentioned, villages are internally headed by panchayat systems and Vellore comprises of 16 town panchayats, 843 revenue villages and 743 panchayat villages. The tribes in Vellore are living across the Javadi hills, which covers an area of 50 miles in width and 20 miles in length. More than 230 tribal villages are located in the Vellore and Thiruvannamalai districts of Tamil Nadu, adjoining the Javadi hills.

The district is bound on the northeast by Tiruvallur District, on the southeast by Kanchipuram District, on the south by Tiruvannamalai district, on the southeast by Krishnagiri district, and on the northwest and north by Andhra Pradesh state. Major towns in the district include Ambur, Arakkonam, Arcot, Jolarpet, Gudiyattam, Melvisharam, Ranipet, Sholighur, Tiruppattur, Vaniyambadi, Vellore and Walajapet. Kaveripakkam is a panchayat town in Vellore with the second largest lake in Tamil Nadu. The average maximum temperature experienced in the plains is 39.5 degree Celsius and the average minimum temperature experienced is 15.6 degree Celsius.

According to 2011 census, Vellore district had a population of 3,936,331 with a sex-ratio of 1,007 females for every 1,000 males, much above the national average of 929. A total of 432,550 were under the age of six, constituting 222,460 males and 210,090 females. Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes accounted for 21.85% and 1.85% of the population respectively.<sup>6</sup>

### **Malayali Tribes in Vellore District**

The tribal people of the Javadi hills are known as Malayali. These people live on the plateaus and sloppy regions of the Javadi hills. The Malayali population is approximately 40,000. The main occupations of these people are agriculture and collection of forest produces.

### **The lifestyle of Malayali Tribes**

They do not wear any distinct tribal wear but are clad in regular dhoti and sarees. Malayali construct mud walled thatched houses with an elevation at the top for storing grains. They lead a very simple life with almost everyone dependent on agriculture. They cultivate different kinds of grains, ragi, bhajra, maize and fruit bearing trees. A cattle breeding is also widely popular. All farmers own small pieces of land and most of the agricultural produce are utilized for consumption and a little is taken to the market for trading. Another main occupation of the tribal woman is collecting forest produces and selling them in the market. The government has established a co-education school especially for the tribal children. The initiative aims at improving the standard of living of the tribal people.<sup>7</sup>

Sherring (1909) says, "The Malayali tribe consist of cultivators, woodmen and shepherds, and are not as uncivilized as many other hill tribes." Thus, these legends and comments reveal that they were originally a caste group who became Malaialis (hillmen) after migration from Kanchipuram to the hills of different districts. Malayali speak Tamil among themselves and with other communities. The Malayali are constitutionally a Scheduled Tribe. The Malayali also differentiate among themselves on the basis of social and economic hierarchy and also on territorial level. In North ArcotAmbedkar District, the Malayali of Javadi hills consider themselves superior to those of the Elagiri and Pudurnadu hills. In Salem District, the Malayali of Yercaud consider themselves socially higher than their people in the Koli, Kalvarayan, Pachamalai and Arunoothumalai hills.<sup>8</sup>

### **Problems of Malayali Tribes**

- ✓ The children have to walk for around 5 kms to reach the elementary school. Because of this, school enrollment is not much and the drop out for, the schools are very high. Very few children are going to school beyond 8<sup>th</sup> standard.
  - ✓ Around 80% of the tribal people are living below the poverty line. Agriculture is their major occupation. Rain water cultivation is possible. There are no check dams and so water is a major problem during summer.
  - ✓ More than 80% of the adults are the liquor addicts and exhaust all money on the consumption of liquor. This is one of the attributing factors of tribal poverty.
  - ✓ Adult men and women have venereal diseases.
  - ✓ Suicides rate has been increased drastically for the last one decade is mostly due to poverty induced hunger, unemployment, increased alcoholism, family disorganization and migration.
  - ✓ Thick forest trees were cut down by the politicians with the help of local tribals. People do not have much awareness on tree plantation and cut the trees for firewood purposes. Alternative energy use is not known to them.
- Grave human rights violation exists among the tribal community.<sup>9</sup>

**Christer Norstrom** and **Lawrence Surendra** explained the Malayali is one among the 36 Scheduled Tribes of Tamil Nadu. The Malayali is spread along the contiguous hill ranges of Javadhu, koli, Yercaud, Pachamalai and so on. In fact there are several contiguous habitations in these hill ranges, which are predominantly inhabited by the Malayali. Malayali basically depend for their basic survival on agricultural and forest activities. With the result a completely distressed livelihood strategy is visible and manifest in their day-to-day life.

Most of the households, either the male singly or both husband and wife, migrate to nearby or sometimes distant urban places of generating additional livelihoods means by working as construction labourers and other kinds of work. The implication of such a migration is a significant disruption of normal households. The major problem is to have a secondary source of income or more precisely to generate their minimum needs of food during the crisis period.<sup>10</sup>

**Janaki** has also studied the Malayali tribes. Malayali groups are patrilineal and patrilocal communities. Family is the basic social, economic unit of Malayali social structure. They inhabit the hill ranges of North Arcot, South Arcot, Trichy, Dharmapuri and Salem. The name Malayali means "hill dweller". The economy of Malayali centers around on agriculture. Besides cultivation, sericulture, bee keeping, herding of cattle, goat and sheep, rearing of pig and poultry and collection of honey, minor forest produce are undertaken to supplement their subsistence. In spite of the existence of tribal development blocks, lamp societies, co-operative societies for honey, sericulture etc., primary health centers, agricultural extension agencies, veterinary doctors and schools, Malayali groups are yet to improve their living conditions.<sup>11</sup>

### **Tribal Development Approaches for their All Round Development**

The small, marginal, fragmented, unirrigated and mono crop agriculture holdings and low productive livestock population do not offer adequate opportunities to the tribals. Tribals in remote areas are still devoid of common infrastructure facilities of road and communication, health and education and safe drinking water, which do not allow them to absorb technological and financial facilities provided by government.

In the Tenth Five Year Plan (2002-07) guided by the conclusions that were recorded in the Mid-Term Appraisal of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) stating that 'A small bunch of bureaucratic programmes had done little to avert the precipitous pauperization, exploitation and disintegration of tribal communities and therefore, most of the persistent problems like poverty, indebtedness, land alienation, displacement, deterioration of forest villages and the tribes living therein, shifting cultivation etc., continue to persist even till today as the 'Unresolved Issues of Tribal Development', the Tenth five Year plan lays down its first priority in finding solutions to these very Unresolved Issues. Solutions to this effect can best be found only when the deprivation and exploitation of tribes is eradicated. The Tenth Plan will, therefore, adopt eradication of deprivation/exploitation of tribes as the centre-point in its approach, while pursuing simultaneously the Ninth Plan commitment of empowering the tribes.

The Eleventh Plan has experienced a paradigm shift with respect to the overall empowerment of the tribal people, keeping the issues related to governance at the centre. The operational imperatives of the Fifth Scheduled, Tribal Sub Plan 1976, Panchayat ESA 1996, RFRA 2006; the desirability of a tribal-centric, tribal-participative and tribal-managed development process; and the need for a conscious departure from dependence on a largely under-effective official delivery system will be kept in view during this shift.<sup>12</sup>

## References

1. Chaudhary, S.N. (ed.), **“Human Rights and Poverty in India”**, Theoretical Issues and Empirical Evidences, Volume – IV, New Delhi, Concept publishing company, 2005. 235-236.
2. Shukla, Aradhana. (ed.), Indian Tribes, Psychological and Social Perspectives, New Delhi Kanishka Publishers, Distributors, 2005. 5-6.
3. Tha , Makhan. “An Introduction to Indian Anthropology”, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt, Ltd., 1995. 150-151
4. Nang Helina Mantaw, **“Tribal Development”**, New Delhi, classical Publishing Company, 2003.11.
5. Manav, Anuradha. “Indian Tribes and Culture”, New Delhi, Rishabh Books, 2013, 190-194.
6. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vellore\\_district](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vellore_district).
7. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malayalees>
8. Singh, K.S. **“People of India, Tamil Nadu”**, Volume XL, Madras, Affiliated East-West Press Pvt, Ltd, 2001.pp.906-907.
9. [www.popeindia.org/english/pope/the-tribes/](http://www.popeindia.org/english/pope/the-tribes/)
10. Norstrom, Christer. Lawrence Surendra. **“LivelihoodStruggles of Forest Tribes of SouthIndia”**, Mumbai, Earthworm Books Pvt, Ltd.,
11. Janaki, D. **“Socio-Economic Conditions of Tribal Women in South India”**, Chennai, Dhana Publications, 2000.
12. www. the dawnjournal.com