The Plight of Tribal Livelihood in the Context of Globalisation

V Srinivasa Rao[1], Boya Sree Manasa[2]

1 *Associate Professor and Head, Centre for Regional Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India*
2 *Ph.D. Research scholars, Centre for the Study of Social Exclusion and Inclusive Policy, School of Social Sciences, University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad, India*

Abstract

Most of the scheduled tribes live in rural areas, and their livelihood mainly depends on agriculture and forest. Forest and forest-based products remain as their primary resource subsistence. Their pattern of shifting cultivation replaced with settle farming. After the introduction of globalisation, the Indian economy opened its exports and imports to the global market. In the process, the intervention of non-tribal community to the tribal regions has become as one of the problematic policy issues to the traditional tribal communities. The traditional livelihood practices of the scheduled tribes in India affected due to extraction of natural resources. The state controls most of the natural resources that existed in the tribal regions without the consent of the local community. In the context of globalisation and its trajectories across the tribal regions, the current paper discusses how globalisation affects the traditional livelihood practices of the scheduled tribes in India.

Keywords: Tribal; Globalization; Forest

Introduction

The geographical locations of the scheduled tribes could be one of the main reasons for their vulnerability. One can read Guha (2016: 126–128) to understand the other reasons why the tribal community in India are more vulnerable than any other social category, including scheduled caste. Despite several initiatives by the government in the field of education, employment and livelihood, their socio-economic conditions remain unchanged. Apart from the social and political reasons that Ramachandra Guha mentioned, there are many other reasons for the vulnerability of tribes. As they exposed to mainstream society or vis-à-vis dur-ing the process of globalisation, their source of livelihood has been affected. Land, forest and forest-based products are the primary sources of their livelihood. During the process of globalisation, the tribes in India have slowly been losing their control on these natural resources. Land alienation, displacement, government control over the forest and forest-based products such as non-timber forest products (NTFP) have come into the picture. These developments during the process of globalisation have side-lined their scope for better livelihood choices. On top of these, interventions of money lenders, lack of production in agriculture, and it has allied sectors, deforestation, dryland cultivation, exploitation of

non-tribes have also been reasons in the rural areas.

Classification of Scheduled Tribes

The tribal population in India are classified into four divisions as: firstly, tribal communities who resides in the forest for their livelihood. Secondly, semi tribal communities those are more or less settled in the rural areas and adopted agriculture and other allied activities as an occupation. The third, tribes those migrated to urban areas engaged in a civilised occupation, and finally, vocational tribes adopted traits and cultures of the rest of the population in the society. The policies should ensure progress and eliminate various forms of exploitation, and they should provide a sustainable path towards equality and social justice. The programmes about modern machinery, transport and communication help the tribal communities for their upliftment.

Moreover, the issue of tribal development in India linked with the backwardness of tribal communities. Factors such as poverty, the issue of integrating with the rest of the population posing great difficulties towards tribal development. After independence government of India initiating various developmental programs (Hooja 2004).

Land as Source of Tribal Sustenance

The land is the primary source for scheduled tribes as living subsistence, but it has only led them into poverty and makes them vulnerable to injustice and exploitation. However, attempts made by the union and state governments to promote and protect their rights to control and use of land. Land reforms are one of the principal instruments for the creation of an egalitarian rural society, which tune with the socialistic spirit. However, land reforms being a state subject, the legislative as well as the administrative responsibility devolve on states, and the union government lays down only the general guidelines. The tribals came under the subservience and dominance of non-tribals in the process of modernisation. Land distribution in India closely follows a social hierarchy. While the large land-owners invariably belong to the upper castes, the cultivators belong to the middle castes, and the agricultural workers mostly belong to the scheduled castes and tribes. Land being the most critical socially valued asset, its unequal distribution helps to maintain the hierarchical structure and strengthen the basis of dominance of privileged groups by perpetuating inequality and deprivation in various socio-economic spheres. The measures relating to allotment of land to scheduled castes and tribes are also inadequate. The availability of ceiling surplus land and its proper distribution is one of the major routes through which scheduled tribes can improve their holding position. There is a strong relationship between social movements, legislative measures and their achievements and the consequent atrocities on the scheduled population

(Mohanty 2001).

Many changes have taken place in tribal communities and tribal regions due to political interference and government developmental programs. In the process, most of the tribal areas connected with the urban industrial area. Their lands are acquired by the new establishments and forcing them to migrate to other areas. This type of exploitation practices and deprivation is continuing on tribal communities despite the several laws enacted to protect their interest, even in some cases measures taken for their welfare. Alienation of tribal land is continuing in many tribal concentrated areas despite strong safeguard measures taken by the constitution of India (Dogra 1990). In particular, the changing in the livelihood patterns of the scheduled tribes are due to various external exploitative factors prevailed in the society.

Since 1990 scheduled tribes in India facing various human rights violation worsening the living conditions of the tribal communities, the sustainable livelihood framework was promoted to eradicate the poverty among the tribes. However, by focusing only on the manifestation of poverty, they are not considered significant factors behind poverty and vulnerability (Tripathy 2018). Even, the significant issues such as health care, education, cultural life, food, shelter and social security are neglected. For example, in united Andhra Pradesh, the tribal lands were illegally occupied by the government and converted their lands as forests, national parks and sanctuaries. Even, the non-tribals occupied their lands by marrying a tribal woman. In the 1930s, Gonds in Adilabad district lost their lands to the Hindu and Muslim settlers from other districts. The panchayat PESA Act of 1996 has introduced for the development of tribal communities. However, the government failed to constitute tribal sub-plan in India. Violation of their language and cultural practices were also increasing (Halavath 2014).

Traditional Livelihood Practices

Tribal agricultural practices are based on their customs and traditions. Slash and burn cultivation practised by tribal people is not ecologically sound but still, it is practised by the hill tribe as shifting agriculture. This practice is not only for the livelihood it is integrally connected with the cultural, social, psychological and rituals of the scheduled tribes. Land grabbing, isolation, and discrimination are the violation of Adivasi rights (Doshi 1972). The traditional livelihood patterns of scheduled tribes differ, and each of the group has their method of cultivation based on the land patterns. South Indian tribes are classified into five categories based on their traditional practices. They are hunting tribes, pastoral tribes, hill cultivation tribes, folk artist and labour. Government employment programs are created only for income generation. Most of the employment schemes do not match with the tribal livelihood (Sasidharan 2017). The problem of indebtedness worsened the tribal

livelihood. Poverty is the leading route cause behind this tribal indebtedness. Even for the cultivation of the small bits of the lands, they are taking loans at a high-interest rate. The system of bonded labour and slavery has still prevailed in some areas. Seasonal farming is the primary source of the tribal livelihood, but most of the tribal lands are dryland not suitable for the farming (Rajamanickam 2007). In many instances, scheduled tribes in India lost their land because of different factors such as forcible eviction, fraudulent transfers, mortgages, leases and encroachments (Jhon 2005). In the process of development, they lost their source of livelihood and employment opportunities. Most of the tribal population depended on the forest land and hill area cultivation with poor marketing and medical facilities. In the rural areas, they are profoundly affected with the contractors, moneylenders and politicians (Das 1998).

Government Interventions

The central and the respective state governments have made efforts to alter the fate of 38.2 million who live in different parts in India. These are much evident when we carefully read the annual government reports since the 1950s. However, the numerically minor tribes have not been able to attract the attention of policymakers and administrative machinery so far owing to their isolation. The problems of these less developed tribal communities of India need attention on urgent and priority basis. The ownership of land among tribals is to become customary rights (Vidyarthi 1972).

The government initiated various tribal developmental schemes through five-year plans. In the first five-year plan, national extension services and community development has been made compulsory in tribal areas. The government executed 40 multi-purpose pilot projects in the backward tribal areas. An amount of forty-seven crores rupees were allotted for the developmental programmes of scheduled tribes in the second five-year plan period as compared to Rs. 25 crores in the first five-year plan. In the third five-year plan, multi-purpose cooperatives were formed for meeting the credit requirements of tribal agriculturists and artisans. During the fourth five-year plan, some crucial schemes like a land allotment, grant of subsidies for the purchase of ploughs, bullocks, seeds for the development of agriculture, animal husbandry, soil conservation, minor irrigation were implemented. In the fifth five-year plan, Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) and Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers (MFAL) projects were affected with operational improvements. Under the initiated programme, each project limited to only one district, and later, it got expanded to launch 160 projects in all. These projects saved the farmers and agricultural labours who did not have more than two hectors of land. The sixth plan strategy for the socio-economic development of scheduled tribes was designed to ensure the highest degree of devolution of funds through unique com-

ponent plans and special central assistance. During the seventh plan, human resource and structural development measures were taken place and assisted 30 lakh tribal families under the preview of tribal sub-plan. The sub-plan policy was instigated by assisting 191 integrated tribal development projects, and by the end of the plan, 268 pockets of tribal concentration (Modified Area Development Approach-MADA) were formed. Also, 74 districts and 74 primitive tribal group projects were taken up within the tribal concentration pockets. Eighth five-year plan exaggerated the efforts to evaluate the gap between the development of STs and the rest of the population so that by the turn of the century they are brought on par with the rest of society. Time-bound programmes to improve the educational status of the socially disadvantaged groups identified as one of the immediate tasks. In the tenth plan, National Scheduled Tribe Finance Development Corporation introduced an exclusive scheme for the economic development of schedule tribe women beneficiaries, entitled Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikarana Yojana (AMSY) for providing concessional financial assistance. The eleventh plan had framed inclusive growth approach, which is identical with social justice, and it primarily discourses the issues of exclusion, exploitation, marginalisation, unrest and governance concerning tribals and tribal areas. In the twelfth plan, the government introduced the entrepreneurship among tribal youngsters through start-up and stand-up programme. The government intends the research, information, mass education and tribal festivals to promote tribal culture, capacity building and awareness generation (Suresh 2014).

Several goals existed in the tribal policy drafts including to improve the quality of tribal lives. It was intended that the scheduled tribes should be developed equally in the area of opportunities and available resources without any sort of hierarchy and discrimination. Whatever, the policy aims, it should be holistic, and it should include all the aspects that belong to the tribal community. It should provide a road map for various development programs. After framing the required policy, it should be translated into action without implementing the policy, but the policy has remained a piece of paper.

Land Grabbing: Role of Government

The tribal people exhibited their plan of actions to protect their rights. They lead many movements for environmental protection, cultural and human rights by showing their agitation on the opposition who want to exploit them in the name of modernisation. This type of dynamic reality about the tribes is missing in this draft. Some of the private companies should take the initiative in the field of tribal infrastructure to help most of them in all-round development (Srivastava 2008). The various tribal groups became most backward fragments of Indian society in so far as their economy, education, health status are concerned.

The large-scale influx of infiltrators from the south and the north-west has compounded fears of insecurity and large-scale land alienation. Infiltration has been a fall out of not merely new government policies, but once formed a part of the colonial government's moves to resettle and develop the region. The plight of the tribal peasantry worsened with a growing number of peasants migrating into Assam from the neighbouring erstwhile East Bengal from the early second decade of 20th century. The large-scale settlement of immigrants resulted in the displacement of the tribal peasantry from their lands. The government acquires tribal lands for the construction of railway and road transport, setting up of industrial and irrigation complexes, construction of dams. Through the studies of Tribal Research Institute (TRI) of Assam, a government agency contends that one of the very significant factors leading to tribal displacement in Assam is the installation of both industrial and irrigational complexes in reserved tribal areas. However, the government did not control the forced tribal migration (Sharma 2001).

Tribal transition is based on their cultural ethnicity and identity through a pattern of life. Forest is their basic need for means of subsistence. The shifting cultivation, which their traditional type of agriculture method slowly changed to settled farming. Along with farming, their other livelihood subsistence is through hunting and gathering various products available in the forest. Report of a committee on forest and tribals states as tribes are not only forest dwellers but also, they evolved to protect the forest against devastation by both man and nature (GoI 1982). The steady increase in demand for natural resources transformed tribes from hunter-gatherer to food producers. Culture commonly state to 'social heritage' which stances for knowledge, philosophies, customs and abilities available to members of society. Cultural changes can arise in a community through internal and external factors, such as within the community or with the intervention of different cultural communities.

Cultural change is a process of response to many changes. These changes include beliefs of their own and to changes beyond their control through physical or biological of nature things. Tribal culture is not only through their form of songs, dance and festivals but is an expression of their livelihood and identity (Bose 1967). Introduction of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation has changed the tribal culture drastically. These policies and initiatives during the globalisation affected the many tribal communities. Tribes show their cultural uniqueness and individuality in many aspects such as their socio-political organisations, language, rituals, festivals, ornaments, art, craft and technology (Sinha 1981).

Impact of Globalisation

After the introduction of globalisation policies, exports and imports started surfing around the country. It also made a non-tribal intervention to tribal areas, and tribes started getting exploited (Murdock 1968). Due to the arrival of non-tribals, changes begun in many aspects. The cultural transition changed among many tribal communities to Hinduism from their own beliefs of God (Srinivas 2004). Globalisation policy helped the country to develop, but tribes remained as the most affected communities mainly in the aspect of socio-economic isolation and exclusion. With the introduction of land reforms, tribes lost their ancestral and cultivating lands as they did not have any knowledge or practice to keep their records. Non-tribes took this an opportunity and grabbed their lands.

Also, in the name of developmental projects, the government itself created displacement among tribal communities. Due to displacement from their lands, forced migration took place (Radhakrishnan 2009). Displacement and migration landed them as labourers in industries, and due to minimal employment opportunities, they remained in below poverty level. Globalisation did not help tribes in any aspects of development as it is a more significant development project; its success or failure depends on how nation draw a map towards its development process (Shivani 2013). Globalisation may be helpful to the Indian economy as becoming open to other countries for imports and exports through liberalisation policies. The development of industries through the entry of privatisation started decreasing forest land, which helped the existence of tribal community livelihood. The forest lands destroyed in the name of development. In Odisha, the forest lands destroyed for laying roads and water pipeline to the co-operate entities by the state government. A number of protests had taken place by the nearby villagers as they depend entirely on the forests itself and the state formed environmental schemes for them like Joint Forest Management (JFM) to use the forest resources. However, due to the company of fossil-fuel-based, climate change was became a significant problem. Villagers with the help of NGOs are developing sustainable livelihood by establishing self-initiated community forest management (CFM) which took the initiatives of factors causing deforestation and other forest degradation policies. The high opposition to corporate companies made the government get involved and took back the subsidies and other facilities provided to the corporate companies for violating environmental laws. However, the government should also take initiatives to provide employment opportunities for tribals other than NREGA and also in aspects of health, education and other amenities. If the government want to initiate any developmental projects, the local gram panchayat members should get the information. After their acceptance, the government should start the rest of the process (Wani and Ashish 2008).

The prevailing condition of agrarian distress is due to changing the patterns of agricultural practices. Agriculture became an unrewarding activity, and lack of unity among the farmers made the sector in high distress. Farmers cannot unite across the nations and to bring pressure on the government to fulfil their requirements in the agricultural sector. Crop failure, changing cropping patterns, the impact of liberalisation policies which lead to a rise in the input cost of production, indebtedness, negligence of the government in public infrastructure and lack of research and extension programs, are the causes behind distress among the rural households. Due to the impact of globalisation and modernisation, family structure in rural villages is declining at a faster rate leading to rising in individualisation. This phenomenon explained in two paradoxical situations. First, farmers' conditions would be better when development takes place in the agricultural sector. For that development, farmers have to fight their entitlements and safeguards by bringing pressure on the government, secondly, by questioning the authorities democratically to resolve the problem. The situation of the agricultural sector after independence defined in three phases. The first phase is when congress party came with pro-peasant policies such as the abolition of intermediaries, reduction of land revenue system, provision of irrigation facilities, and a more significant share in political power for the farming community at the state level. Also, strategies made to make India free from high dependence on foreign countries by producing surplus food grains and enable the agricultural sector to supply raw materials for the industrial sector. The second phase was during the green revolution, which came with new agricultural strategies to increase food grain productivity. However, it did not help the small and marginal farmers as the modern methods of cultivation, and high utilisation of fertilisers and pesticides led to a rise in the cost of inputs, which affected them financially and made them economically weak. In the third phase, the agricultural system in developing countries like India miserably failed and showed a declining trend because of liberalisation policies. Liberalisation policies only benefited the developed countries as they were successfully using their World Trade Organisation (WTO) terms and importing so much of food grains. However, in developing countries, such activities directly affected farmers, which became the main reason for distress among them (Suri 2006).

India gradually deregulated private sector investment after 1975. This phenomenon consolidated in the 1980s. There was substantial domestic opposition to engaging with trade in the 1980s, even though the lessons from the success stories in East Asia were making an impact on policymakers. The substantial economic de-regulation favouring the private sector became possible only after the balance of payments crisis of 1991. During this time, industrial policies were also aggressively started showing their favour towards export promotion. India's economic de-regulation is understood in the context of its evolution as one of the most highly regulated economies in 1975 (Weiner 1986). Adivasis are the most affected communities due to capitalism nature introduced within the globalisation policies. The mode of production through forced labour provided surplus production but also created underdevelopment as within this process, most of the tribal communities disconnected with the outer world and became victims of labour. Capitalism created a dependency for the tribals as they were the backward communities, and their lands were grabbed in the name of modernisation policies. The market development took into consideration, but the lands were taken off from the tribal communities, which made them work as labour in their lands. It was all that happened because of the introduction of capitalistic globalisation development policies (Omvedt 2005).

Tribal Resistance

In Orissa, on 2 January 2006, Kalinga Nagar killings became an eye-opener problem of tribes due to the effect of industrialisation. A massive population gathered in Kalinga Nagar who are protesting against the plants set up by various companies along with Tata steel; in which 12 tribals were killed by the policemen and also one policeman was killed in the clash. Due to the firings that happened in other places; Maikanch, Raigarh and Mandrabaju along with Kalinga Nagar, a total of 28 tribals have been killed. The government gave a displacement amount of Rs. 35,000 per acre to tribals where it sold the same land for ten times more to the industries such as Tata, Jindal. The main problem with government is as it gives amount only for the tribals who have proper land titles. However, for most of the tribals, land titles were not there as they are just cultivating the land for generations along. So, the protest was done as the compensation became useless for them as they were utterly dependent on land. Several movements happened in Orissa; however, the local electronic and print media did not cover the tribal movement. Even, the political allegiance also became a problem, as the opposition party blames the ruling party and would become vice-versa for the same opposition party when it becomes the ruling party within the same district. The political parties never tried to raise the main problem of globalisation as the root cause of such incidents. It is considered that the government resettlement and rehabilitation policy not up to the mark. The industrial profits were also not reaching for tribal development. The government should transfer wealth to a fair price for tribals and should protect their lives for a better quality of life (Mishra 2006).

Summing up

Globalisation policy has helped the country to develop, but tribes remained as the most affected communities mainly in the aspect of socio-economic isolation and exclusion. With

the introduction of land reforms, tribes lost their ancestral and cultivating lands as they did not have any knowledge or practice to keep their records. Non-tribes took this as an opportunity and grabbed their lands. There were various factors behind tribal backwardness such as land alienation, land displacement in the process of development, lack of education and awareness. In order to ensure livelihood to the tribal community, their social and cultural life shall be protected. The socio-cultural life of the majority of the tribes has a relation with their economic conditions. Therefore, ensuring the traditional socio-cultural life of the tribes is ensuring their economic life. It could be possible by protecting the mother earth and its natural resources in the areas where the tribal people are inhabited. It, further, helps the tribal communities to have their livelihood patterns without many interventions even by the government.

References

1) Jhon K, Thomas. Tribal Development in India, Empowerment and Protection of the Rights of Tribals. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2005;33(11):94–111.

2) Suri KC. Political Economy of Agrarian Distress. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2006;41(16):1523–1529.

3) Bose NK. Culture and Society in India. Asia Publishing Company. 1967.

4) Sinha S. Tribes and Indian Civilisation: Transformation process in modern India. *Man in India*. 1981;61(2):105–142.

5) and MGP. The Current Status of World's Hunting and Gathering Peoples. In: Lee RB, Devore I, editors. Man the Hunter. Routledge. 1968;p. 13–22.

6) Suresh D. Tribal Development through Five Year Plans in India- An Overview. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. 2014;3(1):794–816.

7) and SCK. Tribal Land Alienation: Government's Role. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2001;36(52):4791–4795.

8) Guha R. Democrats and Dissenters. Gurgaon: Penguin. 2016.

9) Dogra B. Tribal Discontent: Timely Warning. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 1990;25(14):710–712.

10) Weiner M. The Political Economy of Industrial Growth in India. *World Politics*. 1986;38(4):596–610. Available from: https://dx.doi.org/10.2307/2010168.

11) Hooja M. Policies and Strategies for Tribal Development: Focus on the Central Tribal Belt. Rawat Publications. 2004.

12) and SVK. Concept of 'Tribe' in the Draft National Tribal Policy. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2008;43(50):29–35.

13) Omvedt G. Capitalism and Globalisation, Dalits and Adivasis. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2005;40(47):4881–4885.

14) Radhakrishnan P. 'Globalisation and Exclusion: The Indian Context. *Global Asia*. 2009;4(1):64–73.

15) Doshi SL. Tribals: An Assimilationist Society and National Integration. In: Singh KS, editor. The Tribal Situation in India. Indian Institute of Advanced Study. 1972;p. 438–439.

16) Of IG. Ministry of Home Affairs. 1982.

17) and KH. Human Rights and Realities of Tribals' Lives in India: A Perfect Storm. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*. 2014;19(4):43–46. Available from: https://dx.doi.org/10.9790/0837-19424346.

18) Vidyarthi LP. Problems and Prospects of Tribal Development in India. *Indian Anthropologist*. 1972;2(2):80–93.

19) Shivani N. Globalisation and Socio-Economic Exclusion of Tribals in India. *KCG- Journal of Social Sciences*. 2013;1(6):1–6.

20) Das V. Human Rights, Inhuman Wrongs-Plight of Tribals in Orissa. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 1998;33(11):571–562.

21) Tripathy RR. Livelihood and Anthropology: A Study of Tribal Villages in India. *Anthropology*. 2018;06(04):1–3. Available from: https://dx.doi.org/10.4172/2332-0915.1000207.

22) Mishra B. People's Movement at Kalinga Nagar: An Epitaph or Epitome? *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2006;41(7):551–554.

23) Mohanty BB. Land Distribution among Scheduled Castes and Tribes. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2001;36(40):3857–3868.

24) Srinivas MN. Social Change in Modern India. New Delhi: Orient Longman. 2004.

25) Rajamanickam M. Psychology of Tribal People. Authorspress. 2007.

26) Sasidharan AA. Livelihood Transition: Socio-Cultural and Economic Impact on Tribal Life. *Journal of Social Work Education and Practice*. 2017;2(3):9–17.

27) Wani M, Kothari A. Globalisation vs India's Forests. *Economic and Political Weekly*. 2008;43(37):19–22.