

Education & Human Development status of Adivasis**Amit Singh***PhD Scholar, Center for East Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University,**New Delhi, India***Abstract**

In India, Adivasis are believed to be the “original people” of the land. Tribal groups follow customs and practices that not only are distinct from mainstream Hinduism, but also tend to vary from tribe to tribe. The Adivasis are geographically separated, frequently living in hill communities at a significant distance from Hindu villages, and subsist on forest produce. The geographic separation was sharpened by the creation of scheduled areas for tribal people under the British government. The scheduled tribes are at different stages of social, cultural and economic development in the contemporary India. The cultural pattern varies from tribe to tribe and region to region. The socio-economic life of the tribals is specific in nature. Three dimensions linking caste, tribe, and religion to socioeconomic status in modern India are noteworthy: geography, occupation, and income. First, Adivasis have tended to live in forests and have been concentrated in rural areas. Moreover, Adivasis often live in states that have lower educational attainment, lower health facilities and low human development. The health, nutrition, education and medico-genetic problems of diverse tribal groups have been found to be unique and present a formidable challenge for which appropriate solutions have to be found out by planning and evolving relevant research studies. Tribals in India are most backward community educationally. First generation learners have to face social, psychological and cultural barriers to get education. This has been one of the reasons for poor performance of tribal students in schools. Poor literacy rate since independence has resulted in absence of tribals in academia and higher education. The literacy rate for STs has gone up from 8.5% (male – 13.8%, female – 3.2%) in 1961 to 29.6% (male – 40.6%, female – 18.2%) in 1991 and to 40% (male – 59%, female – 37%) in 1999-2000. Anthropologists and other social scientists, some working within government and many in the academia, generally recognized the dignity of the Adivasis and their customs while engaging in in-depth analysis of the uniqueness of various tribal groups. The State, civil society and academia can find libertine possibilities on the line of human development as prescribed by the United Nations initiatives, if they recognize the full magnitude of the evolving process of Adivasi awakening which is much more than merely a violent challenge to authority. The political upsurge in tribal India in defence of right to land and forest reflects a new awakening which is a positive sign of democratic transformation of modern India.

Introduction:

Adivasi (Hindi: आदिवासी, IPA: [a:ɖi'va:si]) is an umbrella term for a heterogeneous set

of ethnic and tribal groups considered the aboriginal population of South Asia. Adivasi make up 8.6% of India's population or 104

million, according to the 2011 census. They comprise a substantial indigenous minority of the population of India.

Adivasi Societies are prominent in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and many northeastern States and Andaman Nicobar Islands. Many smaller tribal groups are quite sensitive to ecological degradation caused by modernization. Both commercial forestry and intensive agriculture have proved destructive to the forests that had endured hidden agriculture for many centuries. Adivasis in central part of India have been victims of the Salwa Judum campaign by the Government against the Naxalite insurgency.

Adivāsi carries the specific meaning of being the original and autochthonous inhabitants of a given region. It was specifically coined for that purpose in the 1930s. Over time, unlike the terms "aborigines" or "tribes", the word "adivasi" has developed a connotation of past autonomy disrupted during the British Colonial Period in India and not yet having been restored.

In India, opposition to usage of the term is varied. Critics argue that the "original inhabitant" contention is based on the fact that they have no land and are therefore asking for a land reform. The Adivasis argue that they have been oppressed by the "superior group" and that they require and demand a reward, more specifically land reform.

In Northeast India, the term adivāsi applies only to the Tea-tribes imported from Central

India during colonial times. All tribal groups refer collectively to themselves by using the English word "tribes".

The Constitution of India, Article 366 (25) defines Scheduled Tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be the scheduled Tribes (STs) for the purposes of this Constitution. In Article 342, the procedure to be followed for specification of a scheduled tribe is prescribed. However, it does not contain the criterion for the specification of any community as scheduled tribe. An often-used criterion is based on attributes such as:

- Geographical isolation – they live in cloistered, exclusive, remote and inhospitable areas such as hills and forests.
- Backwardness – their livelihood is based on primitive agriculture, a low-value closed economy with a low level of technology that leads to their poverty. They have low levels of literacy and health.
- Distinctive culture, language and religion – communities have developed their own distinctive culture, language and religion.

Shyness of contact – they have a marginal degree of contact with other cultures and people.

The Core Issue: The rising trend of adivasi awakening is a defining characteristic of contemporary India. There is an unprecedented scale of assertion of not only the right to livelihood, but also right to

dignity and the right to selfhood among the Adivasis of India. The political upsurge in tribal India in defence of right to land and forest reflects this new awakening which is a positive sign of democratic transformation of modern India. In this paper we are more concerned about three aspects:

1. The education of the tribal population in India and
2. The human development scenario of the tribal population.

It should be pointed out that the new political condition of adivasi awakening challenges the governance paradigm of the state that seeks to reduce the issue to one of violent challenge to state authority. It also contests the patronising approach of the dominant sections of the civil society advocating empathy and welfare of the tribal people. At the same time, this new trend of tribal consciousness exposes the mobilization perspective of the major political parties who only try to build vote banks in the tribal areas. This awakening also raises new questions about the longstanding anthropological preoccupation of much of the academia with the “uniqueness of the tribes” which forms the basis of many social policies.

The tribal population constitutes a majority in the northeastern states of Mizoram and Lakshadweep (94.4 per cent), Meghalaya (86.1 per cent), and Nagaland (86.5 per cent). The states with no Scheduled tribe groups are Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi and Pondicherry. India has total tribal population of 10.43 crores which is 8.6 per cent of total population of India as per 2011 census. During 2001 and 2011, the decadal change

in the scheduled tribe urban population is 23.7 per cent where as it is 49.7 per cent in urban area and 21.3 per cent in rural area. The urban India has only 2.8 per cent ST population but Rural India has 11.3 per cent ST population as per Census India, 2011.

Literacy is an important indicator of development among tribal groups. The trends of literacy of tribes in India from 1961 to 2011 are described in percentage. The percentage of literacy of tribes was only 8.54 per cent in 1961 which has increased to 63.1 per cent in 2011. But female literacy of tribes is only 54.4 per cent compared to male literacy of 71.7 per cent. During the post-Independence period, the Indian government implemented legislation and allocated funds to facilitate access to enrollment in primary education (grades I-V) in India. As a result, both literacy rates and gross enrollment ratios of boys and girls across the general population have increased substantially during the past 50 years.

The literacy rate among ST boys is 71.7 per cent and among girls is 63.1 per cent. There has been a significant improvement in ST literacy from 1961 (8.54 per cent) to 2011 (63.1 per cent) as per Census India, 2011.

Government Policies and Programmes for Tribal Education Starting from the First Five Year Plan Period (1951-1956): The government is steadily allocating financial resources for the purpose of tribal development. Towards the end of the plan (1954), 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Projects (MTDPs) were created. During the Third Five Year Plan Period (1961-1966), the government of India adopted the strategy of converting areas with

more than 66 per cent tribal concentration into Tribal Development Blocks (TBDs). By the end of Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974), the number of TBDs in the country rose to 504. Additionally, in 1972 the Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy (TSP) was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare. TSP was based on twin objectives of socio-economic development and protection against exploitation. It was generally implemented in the areas where the Scheduled Tribe population was more than 50 per cent of the total population. The PESA (The Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 in fact, has made it mandatory for the States having scheduled areas to make specific provisions for giving wide-ranging powers to the tribes on the matters relating to decision-making and development of their community. A centrally-sponsored government scheme of ashram schools exclusively for ST children from elementary to higher secondary levels was initiated in the 1970s. But the poor quality of education in ashram schools, however, has undermined confidence in education as a vehicle for social mobility. The Janshala Programme is a collaborative effort of the Government of India (GOI) and five UN Agencies – UNDP, UNICEF, UNESCO, ILO and UNFPA – a community based primary education programme, aims to make primary education more accessible and effective, especially for girls and children in deprived communities, marginalised groups, Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribes/minorities, children with specific needs.

Problems of Tribal Education There are many critical issues and problems in the

field of tribal education. They are as follows:

- I. Medium of language – Language is one of the important constraints of tribal children which prevents them access to education.
- II. The Location of the Village - The physical barriers creates a hindrance for the children of a tribal village to attend the school in a neighboring village.
- III. Economic Condition - The economic condition of tribal people is so poor that they do not desire to spare their children or their labour power and allow them to attend schools.
- IV. Attitude of the parents - As education does not yield any immediate economic return, the tribal parents prefer to engage their children in remunerative employment which supplements the family income.
- V. Teacher Related Problems -In the remote tribal areas the teacher absenteeism is a regular phenomenon and this affects largely the quality of education.
- VI. Lack of Proper monitoring- Proper monitoring is hindered by poor coordination between the Tribal Welfare Department and School Education Department.

Suggestions: Some suggestions for improvement of tribal education are as follows-

- a) Literacy campaign - Proper awareness campaign should be organized to create the awareness about the importance of

education. Extensive literacy campaign in the tribal dominated districts may be undertaken on a priority basis to literate the tribal.

b) Attitude of the tribal parents - The attitude of the tribal parents toward education should be improved through proper counseling and guidance.

c) Relevant study materials in local languages - All study materials should be supplied in local languages of tribes.

d) Appointment of Local teachers and female teachers - It is suggested to appoint more tribal teachers and female teachers in the tribal areas. The ecological, cultural, psychological characteristics of tribal children should be considered carefully by the teachers in tribal areas.

e) Stipends and various scholarships - Since higher education among the tribes is less, special ST scholarships should be provided to the tribal students perusing higher education, particularly in medical, engineering, and other vocational streams.

f) Residential schools - More residential schools should be established in each states and districts and extended up to PG level in tribal areas.

g) Social security- Social security of students, especially of adolescent girls is of great concern in residential schools.

h) Proper Monitoring - Higher level officials should check the functioning of schools frequently relating to the teaching methods, working hours, and attendance registers.

Human Development Scenario: Recently, two key milestones have been reached in

India around the protection of Adivasi rights. The first milestone was a ruling by Supreme Court in April which gave Adivasi communities in the Niyamgiri hills of Orissa the final say on plans by a subsidiary of **Vedanta** Resources and the Orissa state mining company to mine for bauxite on their traditional lands. The judgment was a landmark victory in recognizing indigenous people's rights in India.

These set of amendments proposed by the National Advisory Council (NAC) in December last year to the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (known as PESA). The NAC recommended that the free prior and informed consent (FPIC) of affected Adivasi communities be mandatorily obtained before the government acquires any land for development projects, or decides on rehabilitation packages. Not "consultation", or "recommendation", as the PESA currently says, but "prior informed consent".

FPIC is now an internationally accepted standard, which has been affirmed by a number of international human rights treaty bodies, including the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination—all of which India is a party to. It is also recognized as being central to the protection and realization of indigenous people's rights in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People (UNDRIP), 2007, which India has endorsed.

India is also a party to ILO Convention 107 on Indigenous and Tribal Populations, which guarantees Adivasi communities the right to

participate in decision-making on projects affecting their community and traditional lands. (Yet ILO Convention 169, a more progressive instrument which was drafted to replace Convention 107, and widens the protections given to indigenous communities, has not been signed by India).

We can measure Human Development in two perspectives:

1. **Conventional Development:**

Conventional development concept is based on an income perspective. At present the concept of development mainly means the human development. Now the development concept has included the protection of human, ecological and social rights. The multiplication of non-governmental organisations, the contribution of social movements, the revival of the meaning of political representation - all should contribute to society's redefinition of development as a way of truly humanizing growth. Democracy and freedom, a key for a balanced transition from growth to human development, have broadened the demand for equity. The basic needs strategy emphasized ensuring for all people the basic means of well being: food, health and education. Human development went far beyond income and growth to cover the full flourishing of all human capabilities.

The perception of development among the tribals varies from tribal elites to tribal masses. The elites who have cornered larger benefits from Tribal SubPlan area have a different perception of development from the

masses of tribal people who have remained buried in poverty, illiteracy, oppression and discrimination. It would be erroneous to think that the perception and understanding of development is the same for a tribe as a whole. It varies from one stratum to another.

2. **Indices of Human Development:**

The Human Development Report 1990 has defined human development as the process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, other guaranteed human rights and various ingredients of self respect - including what Adam Smith called the ability to mix with others without being "ashamed to appear in public". These are among the essential choices, the absence of which can block many other opportunities. Human Development is thus a process of widening people's choices as well as raising the level of well being achieved. It is measured with different variables:

- a. **Human Development Index:** Human Development Index shows the overall development. Human Development Index measure the average achievement of region in basic human 248 capabilities. The HDI indicates whether people lead a long and healthy life, are educated and knowledgeable and enjoy a decent standard of living. The HDI examines

the average condition of all people in a country.

General formula for the construction of an index is $\frac{\text{Actual value} - \text{Minimum value}}{\text{Maximum value} - \text{Minimum value}}$. It takes account many factors like

1. Life Expectancy
2. Adult Literacy Ratio
3. Gross Enrolment ratio of children at school etc.

b. **Gender-related Development Index:**

The gender - related development index (GDI) measures achievement in the same basic capabilities as the HDI does, but takes note of inequality in achievement between women and men. The methodology used imposes a penalty for inequality, such that the GDI falls when the achievement levels of both women and men in a country go down or when the disparity between their achievements increases. The greater the gender disparity in basic capabilities, the lower a country's GDI compared with its HDI. The GDI is simply the HDI $\frac{\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}{\text{Maximum Value} - \text{Minimum Value}}$.
 Variable Life Expectancy at Birth (Years) Total Male Female Adult Literacy Rate (Percentage) Total Male Female Combined Gross Enrolment Ratio Total Male Female Real GDP per capita income (PPP\$) Minimum Value 85 Years 82.5 87.5 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 100% 40,000
 25 Years 22.5 27.5 0% 0% 0% 0% 0% 0% 100% discounted, or adjusted downwards for gender inequality

c. **Gender Empowerment Index:** GEM measures women's participation in economic political and professional activities. It differs from the GDI, which is concerned primarily with the basic capabilities and living standards. Like the HDI and the GDI, the GEM focuses on a few selected variables, even though participation can take many forms. It concentrates on three broad classes of variable.)

1. For power over economic resources based on earned income, the variable is PCI (Per Capita Income).
2. For access to professional opportunities and participation in economic. Decision making, the variable is the share of jobs classified as professional and technical and administrative and managerial.
3. For access to political opportunities and participation in political decision making, the variable is the share of parliamentary seats.

Scope and the Significance of the study:

The present political awakening of Adivasis reconnects their history with the adivasi revolts against colonial onslaughts in the 19th century when the colonial state sought to penetrate tribal areas in search of timber and minerals and established control over those territories. During the first half of the 20th century numerous uprisings took place against the British as well as feudal autocracies. But after independence and integration of the princely states, while most of the colonial laws continued to operate, the tribal areas were governed under the constitutional framework of cultural protection and economic welfare. It had the

clear objective of slow assimilation of the Adivasis into 'mainstream' society. Nehru's Panshasheel on Adivasis welfare, the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in legislatures and civil service and even the tribal sub-plan providing for special allocation of funds in every department of government were part of this overall strategy.

The vantage point for state policy was thus one of governance and welfare. This policy envisaged administering tribal areas through state apparatus and planned development and promoting welfare activities such as education, health and building of infrastructure for economic development. This flowed from the Constitutional stipulation providing special protection in the Fifth Schedule and other measures. While these welfare measures were being implemented, the exploitation of forest and mining resources by indigenous and foreign capital persisted. As the years went by, the state strategy failed to cope with the aspirations of the tribal people who remained poor and marginalized.

Congress and the other major political parties operate within a framework that combines the state perspective of governance and welfare, and the civil society approach to patronize. The electoral system requires reservation of seats for ST a specified number of constituencies (6.5% reservation in central institutions though the ST population in 2001 census was 8.2%) in Parliament and proportionate number in State legislatures and panchayats according to the ST population in the area. It should be recognized that this process of reservation-based electoral politics has brought up from

the grassroots level upwards two generations of adivasi politicians in India. The reservation for ST in civil services has also produced large number of adivasi officers, though many posts remain unfilled despite the monitoring by the judiciary and the National Commission on Scheduled Tribes. But even after sixty years of electoral politics none of the major political parties has allowed the emergence of a significant tribal political leadership capable of influencing national level policy making. The adivasi leaders remain protégés of upper caste or middle caste leaders in the various States. After the late Jharkhand movement leader Jaipal Singh, there has not been an adivasi leader of national repute. Shibu Soren could have filled that void but for the pressures of coalition politics which severely damaged his reputation. Thus the party system has failed the Adivasis in making their voice critical in national policy-making.

Anthropologists and other social scientists, some working within government and many in the academia, generally recognized the dignity of the Adivasis and their customs while engaging in in-depth analysis of the uniqueness of various tribal groups. While some of the colonial scholars assessed the tribal practices against European civilization norms, a few others discovered the logic and reason behind many tribal practices. In the post-independence period some scholars put forward evidence to appreciate the rational practices of the tribal communities in spheres of economy, politics and culture. Still a minority, they engaged in deeper understanding of the knowledge systems, production practices, political traditions and

environmental philosophy of Adivasis and argued the case for taking them seriously and with respect, as alternative systems in the human civilization. They championed the cause of the Adivasis in public discourse as well as government forums often with great sincerity and determination. However, all their strenuous efforts ended up as inputs into the dominant policy making of the state. Their work, valuable as it certainly was, failed to persuade civil society to re-examine its patronising attitude or the state to go beyond its welfare and assimilation strategy.

Conclusion:

Education is the key to tribal development. Tribal children have very low levels of participation. Though the development of the tribes is taking place in India, but the pace of development has been rather slow. If govt. will not take some drastic steps for the development of tribal education, the status of education among tribes will be a story of distress, despair and death. Hence time has come to think it seriously about tribal education and inclusive growth. So, there is an urgent need for various govt.

interventions, planners and policy makers to address this problem and allocate more funds in the central and state budgets for tribal education. Easy access and more opportunities should be provided to the tribal children in order to bring them to the mainstream of economic development.

The overall development of tribals is far below than the non-tribals. The same is true in the case of various components of HDI also. Gender disparity adjusted development index of tribals is far below than that of the non-tribals. But the gender disparity is comparatively lower among the tribals than among the non-tribals. When we analyze Compare the HDIs and GDIs of tribals and non-tribals, gender disparity in development is high among the nontribals. Disparity is 0.003 for tribals and for non-tribals it is 0.012. As a whole, tribals are less empowered than non-tribals and it is particularly so in the case of gender empowerment. The tribals are heavily deprived of the most basic requirements of life than non-tribals. The rate of deprivation suffered by tribals is more than two fold of non-tribals.

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