

Tribal Development Policies after Independence: A Study on Oraon Tribe in Barak Valley Region of Assam

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Abstract

*The Scheduled tribes were socially, economically, educationally depressed classes of Indian population. Majority of the tribes continue to live in a poor economic state, lack of proper health care facilities, have very low literacy rate and are vulnerable to displacement and exploitation. Poverty, poor health, illiteracy and other social problems among the tribals are quite rampant. The tribals have been made a part of the national development process for more than half a century. There are many constitutional provisions and legislative support available for safeguarding the welfare and interests of Scheduled Tribes. In conformity with the directive principles of state policy, social justice has been an avowed goal of development. A variety of programmes have been launched by the government with the objectives of improving the socio-economic condition of the scheduled tribes. A very large number of Scheduled Tribes like Oraon continue to be socially and educationally backward and languishing at the bottom of the social and economic pyramid. **This study discuss how and to what extent government policy both at centre and state help Oraon to bring change in their life in Barak Valley.***

Keywords: Government Policy, Tribe, Tea Tribe, Barak Valley, Oraon.

Introduction

India got independence in 1947. The base of the Indian culture i.e. "Unity and diversity" once again got its due importance. The social reformers, politicians, and the administrators were well known about the vast socio-economic gaps between the tribal groups on the one hand and the rest of the Indian mass on the other. The administrators realized that the solution to the problem of the backward area and people lay in to integration not in isolation. . The socio-economic and cultural life of the tribal groups of India varies from tribe to tribe and region to region. Till today the tribes are more or less trying to retain their separate social identity, customs and regulations. As a whole they can be regarded as comparatively isolated and backward. No doubt the policy and approach toward the tribals after independence was influenced to a great extent. There are various plans & policies provided by the Government for their welfare.

Pandit Nehru strongly believed in the co-existence of numerous diverse cultures and felt that the tribal groups can become a part of integrated India like non-tribal groups, who in spite of maintaining their distinct cultural identities are a integral part of Indian Nation. The approaches

to the tribal problems and development, as conceived by Nehru, are clearly stated in his Forwarded to Elwin's Philosophy of NEFA, which really formed the basis of national policy towards tribal development (1959). He stated five fundamental principles, which are popularly known as "**Panchsheel**". The principles are:

1. People should develop 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.
2. Tribals rights to land and forest should be respected.
3. We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of the administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders in to tribal territory.
4. We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not an rivalry to their own socio-cultural institution.
5. We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent but the quality of human character that evolved.

However, the strong desirousness on the national leaders of India to help and uplift the tribals is reflected in the constitution where tribal were given special care.

Constitution of India and Tribe

The main objective of the Indian constitution regarding the tribal folk is not to disrupt the harmony of tribal life but to work for its advancement, not to impose anything on them but to work for their integration in the national democratic set up. In the new federal structure of Independence India, special place was assigned to the tribal areas. The founding fathers of the nation appreciated their unique Socio-economic situation which was simple and which may require a complete different dispensation during the period of transition.

Tribal development or administration of tribal areas was not formally assigned to the provisions made in the constitution. But these areas brought under fifth and sixth schedules for which special provision were made. The "excluded" areas put under sixth schedule. The "partially excluded" areas and some of the tribal areas in the erstwhile Indian states were included in the Fifth Schedule. The Governor has been given almost unlimited power in the fifth schedule to make Regulations for the schedule areas. This regulation can negate or modify any law passed by Parliament or State Legislature in its application to the entire fifth schedule area or a part thereof. Special regulation can also be made for these areas under the same provision. Under the Fifth Schedule the constitution also provides for the establishment of a tribes advisory council who are consulted by the Governor in relation to his regulation making power. It shall be the tribe advisory council to advice on such matter pertaining to the welfare and advancement of the schedule tribes in the states as may be referred to them by the Governor.

A number of articles of the Indian constitution contain many provisions for the protection and welfare of the tribal population. The provision of the discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth (Article15), equality of opportunity in matters of public employment (Article16), evolution of untouchability (Article17), provision of traffic in human beings and forced labour (Article23), securing a social order for the promotion of welfare of the

people (Article 38) and protection of interest of minorities (Article 29) are of general in nature. There are so many articles in the constitution those are directly related to the tribal safeguards. Article 46 of the constitution enjoined upon the state to promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the tribals to protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Another special provision was offered in article hundred sixty four which makes it obligatory to appoint a minister in charge of tribal welfare in the state of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa. These three states are having the largest number of population in our union followed by Rajasthan and Maharashtra respectably. Article 244 makes applicable the provision of the fifth schedule to the administration and control of the schedule areas and schedule tribes in any state in specified in part-A and part- B of the fifth schedule, other than the state of Assam. It also mentions that the provision of the six schedules shall apply to the administration of the tribal areas in the state of Assam. Article 275(1) ensures grants of financial assistance to states for implication of schemes for promoting the welfare of the schedule tribes or raising the level of administration in the scheduled areas to that of the administration of the rest of the areas in a state. Article 330/331 of the constitution makes special provision for reservation of seats for schedule caste, schedule tribes in the Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies of the state, except the schedule tribes in the tribal areas of Assam and in the autonomous district of Assam. Article 335 seeks reservation of the post in the public services of the union and states for the schedule caste/ scheduled tribes population but this must be consistent with the efficiency of administration. Both articles were unity element for 10 years since the commencement of the constitution but the provision has been amendment after every 10 years extending the period of 10 years.

Article 338 provides special provision for the appointment of the special officer for the schedule caste and schedule tribes with a view an ensuring a supervision and control of the union government. Article also specifies his duties as to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided to them. The President of India appoints this officer, who submits his report before both houses of the parliament. The commission for the schedule caste and schedule tribes has been functioning as per the provision of this article and his scope includes states as well as union territory.

Article 339 outlines the control union over the administration of the schedule areas and welfare of the schedule tribes. Under the provision of this article President may appoint may any time and shall at the expiration of ten years from the commencement of this constitution a commission to report on the administration of the schedule areas and welfare of the schedule tribes. A national commission for schedule caste and schedule tribes has since been appointed. This article also empower the union to give direction of any state in regard to drawing up and execution of schemes specified in the direction and essential of the welfare of the schedule tribes in the states.

Thus, the constitution enjoyed special responsibility on the central government as a whole and state government in particular to make earnest endeavour for the development of the schedule tribes and the areas inhabited by them. To sustain all the constitutional safeguards central government and state government launched various programmes through the department specially setup for the purpose and define ministries and agencies.

Government Policy and Legislative Framework Regarding Ethnic Groups

The Constitution of India provides specific measures for the protection and promotion of the social and economic interests of the Scheduled Tribes (STs). These include: reservation of seats in the legislature, educational institutions, services and posts, a tribal development program and provisions for autonomy.

Reservation in the Legislature: The Constitution of India ensures the political representation of Scheduled Tribes in the Lower House of the Parliament and in the State Legislative Assemblies through reserved seats.

Reservation in Educational Institutions and Services: Article 15(4) of the Indian Constitution provides for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes in educational institutions. In order to improve the social situation of the tribal people, the government has, in addition to quotas in education, also designed a reservation policy for employment in government services. Depending on the respective positions, posts reserved for members of "Scheduled Tribes" are either in proportion to the tribal population of the state in question, or-in most cases-comprises 7.5% of the total number of government jobs.

Constitutional Provisions for Tribal Self Rule: Geographical areas designated as Fifth and Sixth Scheduled areas by independent India are identical to those already delineated by the British as Scheduled Areas. Article 244(i) provides for a Fifth Schedule that can be applied to any state other than those of North-East India. This Schedule has been termed a "Constitution within the Constitution". Under this Schedule, the governors of the states in question have been given extensive powers, and may prevent or amend any law enacted in the parliament or the state assembly that could harm the tribals' interests. The Sixth Schedule is supposed to be informed by the ethos of self-management. The Schedule currently operates in the tribal-dominated areas of North-East India: Karbi Anglong and North Cachar districts in Assam, Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills, districts in Meghalaya, Chakma, Lai and Mara districts in Mizoram and Tripura tribal areas in Tripura state. Each Scheduled Tribe area covered by the Sixth Schedule has an Autonomous District Council with legislative, executive and judicial powers.

Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996: This act is aimed primarily at promoting village-level democracy through the Panchayat Raj institutions. It includes changes aimed at adapting the generally established system for use in the Scheduled Areas, which have a different socio-economic and politico-administrative setting.

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Tribes: Article 338 of the Constitution provides for the appointment of a Special Officer for Scheduled Tribes and Castes by the President, who is commissioned to investigate and report to the President on all matters relating to the constitutional safeguards on Scheduled Tribes and Castes. A National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was subsequently created to take over these responsibilities.

Welfare policies of plain tribes in Assam

The Assam Tribal Development Authority was set up in November 1983, as per provisions of the "Assam Tribal Development Authority Act, 1983". The jurisdiction of the Authority is over the Plains Tribal Areas of the State of Assam excepting the two Hills Districts of the State, North

Cachar Hills and Karbi-Anglong. The main sources of funding the Authority are Special Central Assistance (SCA), Central Sectoral Assistance and State Sector Assistance. The Authority is also authorized as per provision of the Act, to raise loans within the terms and conditions of the standing financial norms and policies of the State Government. Despite fund constrains, the ATDA has been implementing some Welfare Schemes as follows for all round development of the Tribal people.

Family Oriented Income Generating Scheme (FOIGS): This Scheme is being implemented by the Assam Tribal Development Authority as an anti-poverty measure for the upliftment of the Socio-Economic condition of tribal people as well as to generate self-employment opportunities for tribal families, living below poverty line. The scheme implemented under FOIGS includes Auto-Rickshaw, Fishery, Piggery, Poultry, Goatery, Handloom, Sericulture, Weaving etc.

Infrastructure Development Scheme (IDS): Assam Tribal Development Authority (ATDA) has been implementing the Infrastructure Development Scheme from its inception. The Scheme covers renovation and repairing of Educational Institution, construction of Roads, construction of Community Centre etc. The achievements under the scheme are:-

(a) Renovation/ Repairing of Educational Institutions: Under IDS, several educational schools/ Institutions have been provided financial assistance for renovation, repairing etc. Thus rural tribal students have been availing such facilities for improving their educational and extra-curricular activities.

(b) Construction of Roads: The communication system in the rural tribal areas is still far from satisfactory. Therefore, to improve the communication system, Assam Tribal Development Authority has taken up construction works of link-roads, link-bridges, culverts etc. under the scheme.

(c) Construction of Community Centre: With a view to promote Art and Culture among different communities, the Assam Tribal Development Authority has been granting financial assistance for construction of Community Centres in Tribal Areas of various Districts of the State.

(d) Drinking Water Facilities: In most of the rural areas drinking water facilities is not sufficient. Therefore, Assam Tribal Development Authority (ATDA) has been providing financial assistance for installation of ring-wells and tube-wells etc.

(e) Youth Welfare and Cultural Activities: In order to assist the Organisations doing welfare works amongst the tribal people, financial assistance have been given by ATDA for construction of Clubs, houses etc. for enhancing their Socio-Economic and Socio-Cultural activities.

Vocational Training Institute (VTI) Scheme: The Assam Tribal Development Authority (ATDA) has been implementing another Scheme under the Central Sector i.e. the Vocational Training Institute (VTI) Scheme Under the scheme 100 per cent Central Assistance is given to the State for setting up and running Vocational Training Institute within T.S.P. areas.

Oraon and Government policy

Since independence both centre and state government provided various programmes and policies for tribal welfare. But due to migration of tribes from one state to another state put their tribal status in question. Accordingly Oraons do not get scheduled tribe status in Assam. In Assam they are enlisted **Tea Tribe**. Tea tribe are the descendants of tribal people who were brought by the British colonial planters as indentured labourers from the Chhota Nagpur Plateau region into Assam during 1860-90s in multiple phases for the purpose of being employed in the tea gardens as labourers. They mainly found in different tea estates as well as neighbouring villages in Barak Valley of Assam. And all tea tribes in Assam can be categorised in to **Other Backwards Class (OBC)**. Politics made them OBC in this region. In such a situation Oraon do not avail tribal facility provided by governments. Rather government of Assam launched some welfare schemes for wellbeing of tea tribes but such welfare schemes never become functional or operational due to overt and covert factors.

Govt. of Assam created this Directorate in 1983 under the administrative control of WPT & BC Department Nominal fund under plan was provided for this directorate in the budget of WPT & BC till 2004-05. In the year 2005, a Separate department viz, Tea Tribes Welfare Department was created and separate budget provision was also made under Tea Tribes Welfare Deptt. in financial year 2005-06. The main function and responsibility of this Directorate is to socio-economic development of Tea Tribes people by implementing different welfare schemes. Govt. of Assam has recognised the Tea Tribes communities as Other Backward Class (O.B.C.) for the socio-economic development of this community. Govt. has established the Directorate for Welfare of Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes, Assam in the year 1983.

Welfare policies of Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes

The following socio-economic development schemes are implemented through this Directorate, viz,

a) Family Oriented Income Generating Scheme: Under Family oriented Income Generating scheme (FOIGS) the strategy is to provide assistance in the form of subsidy to the poor families belonging to Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes for taking up various income generating schemes. The scheme covers agricultural sector, including Horticulture, Fishery and Veterinary and animal husbandry schemes like rearing of milch cow, poultry, duckery, piggery, goaterly etc. and small enterprises such as Pan shop, grocery shop, Vegetable shop, Vendor, cloth shop, fish trade etc. including tailoring, embroidery, push cart, rickshaw etc. Under this scheme a total of 800 Nos. of Tea Tribes families have been assisted by utilizing an amount of Rs.33.00 lakh during the year 2003-04 and an amount of Rs.70.50 lakh has been sanctioned for the year 2004-05.

b) Pre-Matric Scholarship: The objective of the scheme is to provide economic assistance to the poor tea tribe students pursuing pre-matric course and to encourage them for continuance for education 50% fund is borne by Central Govt. Under Pre-Matric scholarship altogether 7626 Nos. of students were awarded scholarship utilising Rs.25.71 lakh during 2003-04 on the basis 50:50 Central and State share. On the other hand Post-Matric Scholarship is 100 percent

Central share and under this scheme 992 nos. of students were awarded scholarship with an amount of Rs.10.00 lakh during the same period.

c) Grant to Non-Govt. Educational Institutions : The objective of the scheme is to create educational environment among the tea tribes students who are pursuing studies in Non-Govt. educational institutions by providing financial assistance to the Non-Govt. educational institutions for purchasing of teaching instruments, books, furniture and for major repair and extension of school building etc. The grant will be available to the institutions predominantly attended by tea tribes students in the institutions where enrolment of students belonging to Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes is 50% and above. An amount of Rs.4.00 lakh was sanctioned in the year 2003-04 under the scheme.

d) Post Matric Scholarship: The objective of this scheme is to provide financial assistance to the students belonging to Tea & Ex-Tea Garden Tribes to enable them to pursue post matriculation level studies. This is a Central sector scheme.

e) Grant for cultural activities including educational tour: under this scheme financial assistance is provided to the cultural organizations of tea tribes community for development and preservation one of their cultural heritage, which includes purchase of musical instrument, holding of cultural function and exchange of cultural troops. Amounts of Rs.1.00 lakh have been utilized for providing assistance to 20 Organisations in 2003-04.

f) Grant to Non-official Organisations: The objective of the scheme is to assist the non-official organizations such Regd. as mahila samittee, Associations, Club, Libraries of tea tribes community which are rendering voluntary service for all round development of this community, which are rendering services for all round development of the community. An amount of Rs.3.00 lakh was sanctioned in the year 2004-05.

g) Grant to patients suffering from Cancer, T.B. & Other Malignant diseases: Under the Head "Health" economic assistance is provided to the poor tea tribes people suffering from various malignant diseases like tuberculosis, cancer etc. for treatment of their disease within the budget limit. During the year 2003-04 an amount of Rs.0.45 lakh has been spent for providing assistance to 42 patients.

h) Grant for purchase of Uniform: Under this scheme financial assistance is provided to the poor tea tribes students for purchase of Text books and school uniforms. Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to Tea Tribes students for purchase of their School uniform. An amount of Rs.0.68 lakh has been utilized to provide uniform to 450 nos. of students during the year 2003-04.

i) Grants for construction of Hostel for Boys'/Girls': Under the program proposed may be prepared for the construction of hostels for boys' and girls' suitable place where students belonging to Tea Garden Tribes may reside to pursue their studies. 50% is funded by Central Govt.

j) Construction of Rest House-cum-Cultural Centre at Rupnagar, Guwahati: A major project namely construction of Rest House-Cum Cultural centre at Rupnagar, Guwahati has been under progress and 70% work has so far been completed. Total project cost is Rs. 300.68 lakh.

k) Installation of Electrical Meter: Government of Assam introduced a new scheme namely installation of Electrical Meter at the residence of Tea Workers. The community will be benefited by this scheme.

Despite of formulation of plan and policy by state and central governments, Oraon in Barak valley region are deprived of minimum facility. Government made provision for economic and educational improvement of tea tribes of Assam but condition of Oraon is somewhat elusive- neither is it regarded as a tribe nor as a caste in Barak valley of Assam. Oraon are ignorant about facility provided to them by government. Their school going children do not get pre-matric scholarship. School in Oraon inhabited locality lack infrastructural facility and shortage of teacher. Data indicate that majority of Oraon (61.67%) are illiterate while 15.33% of respondents got education high school level and 11% respondents education is up to middle school, 6.67% up to primary I, 3.67% got higher secondary. However, just 0.33% of Oraon is graduate or post graduate or professional. Only a little segment that is 0.67% have technical qualification. Thus, it can say that educational level of the Oraon is not satisfactory. In Barak Valley Oraon community as a whole are deprived of all government amenities. Condition of road, school, house, electricity in Oraon inhabited localities are worse till today. Oraons are working in tea garden since being very long period. Accordingly they are getting land by the tea garden authority. Hence, they are using this land throughout generations. Oraons living in tea gardens do not think about their own land. Among them who are living outside of tea garden posses their own land. Most of the Oraon (65.33%) are landless while only 34.67% possess their land in Barak valley. Health is the most important aspect of life of individual or community. Oraon in Barak Valley suffer from numerous health problems but government hospitals even sub-centers do not attend to health related problems. No facility is available to them to maintain sanitation and hygiene. Oraon children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers suffer from mal-nutrition and deficiency. ASHA, AWC and ANM are there only in official records but practically they do not work in these localities. Health problem is prevailing among Oraons. Most respondents reported health problems. Data show less than one-fifth (19%) suffer from illness and majority of them do not know neither have adequate knowledge about health related schemes or facilities.

Methods of Data collection

The study follows both explorative and descriptive 'Research Design'. The study depends upon ethnographic account. The data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary data collected through participant observation, interview guide and case study method. No structured questionnaire and interview schedule used to primary data collection. The secondary collected from the census and other sources like books, periodicals, journals Magazines, Published and Unpublished research studies conducted by different organizations. . The total sample size was 300. The criteria of sampling 'Random', taking 100 people, fifty males and fifty females, from each district. The 'universe of sample' was the three districts of Barak valley. The Unit of sample was the tea gardens and villages where Oraon live. As Oraon are spread out in entire Barak Valley region of Assam so data was collected from exclusively Oraon inhabited tea gardens/villages of different localities of three districts of Barak Valley.

Conclusion

Thus from the above discussion it can be concluded that, since after the independence the government has provided various plans and objective for the tribal welfare. But due to the migration from the different parts of the states some tribal in India have lost their tribal status. In spite of that they are originally tribe like Oraons are not getting scheduled tribe status in Assam. In Assam they are enlisted by 'Tea Tribes'. In this situation Oraons are not getting all the tribal facilities provided by the Government. Rather than the government of Assam has launched some welfare activities for the wellbeing of the tea tribes. But despite of that these tea tribe welfare policies provided by the Assam government are not being implemented properly. And that is why they are becoming underdeveloped as they were before. Oraon in Barak valley region are deprived of all government aid and facility. Poverty, illiteracy and ignorance are being capitalised by government officials to deprive them.

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