

Tribal issues, colonial interventions and changes: A critical study

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Abstract: Tribal policies and development are always a challengeable one before the government. The government and the several non- governmental groups has been formulated various programs for all round development of the tribals. But the nature and implementation of the tribal development programs in post – colonial India is a debatable subject. When we go through the tribal issues and policies in postcolonial India, we will get a clear picture that the policymakers did not consult the tribal's when they formulated and implemented the tribal oriented program, failed to understand their real problem accurately. The Post-independent Indian governments are not modifying many of the colonial policies. This led to the continuation of the tribal revolution in the form of the Naxalite movement and Chipko movement. In this regards the colonial discourse continues well in contemporary India. Some of our national leaders thought that some of the policies of the colonial era are inevitable for framing tribal policy, thus those are set in the constitution. So in the aftermath of the post-independence period, we can see huge colonial trends in India. Continuing with colonial discourse led too much of the post-colonial suffering of the country.

Index Terms Tribals, colonial intrusion, land alienation, tribal uprisings, new economic policy

I. INTRODUCTION

Tribes are one of the primarily confined demographic groups of India. Anthropologist defined tribe as a group of people who have a common culture and language living in a perceptible territory. Their socio-economic and cultural life completely diverges from the life of other people. The lifestyles of tribal's are illustrates a researcher into two experiments- whether they are left out of the mainstream or volunteered themselves? Backing this, the Lokur committee, was constituted, reported that the tribal's are geographically socially and economically isolated and backward; hold a variety of cultural identity. The Dictionary of Sociology characterizes tribe as a “social group, usually with a defined area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization.” However, their dissimilar disposition keeps them different, stand out of the way of the material society. Unfortunately, their aloofness keeps them as nothing in the society and they are one of the most unprotected sections of Indian society. The life of these people is so pathetic and deplorable and can't rise up self. However they were the original inhabitants of the soil but for a long time they have been subjected to the severe exploitation by others. These people are usually expelled from the public scenario and are keeping away from modern and urban life. According to the 2011 census, 8.6 percent of the country's population is tribal which is larger than any other country in the world (Ezhilarasu 2014: 176). Tribals are referred in various names such as Adivasis, vanajathi, Kadar etc... They are the ethnic group.

The government has been facing several serious issues regarding tribal development in post –colonial period, the greatest challenges that India has undergone since independence is how to ensure the socio - economic security of the Adivasi section. In addition to that the attitude of the tribal people towards the development is a hindrance for the government. During colonial period, some tribes had an apprehension that after independence they would lose their identity. For instance the Naga community showed their anxiety in 1947 that their culture and tradition would be destroyed by the Hindu rulers of India. Because they expressed that constitution drawn by the people who have no understanding of Naga people therefore, demanded separate independent state outside the Indian Union. In this context the paper focusing on how far the colonial interventions affecting the development policies of tribal communities in post-colonial India with a critical perspective.

Origin of Tribes in India

Anthropologist, historians, and sociologist have been articulated diverse opinion on the ancestry of Indian tribes. Based on the DNA evidence one argument is, Indian tribes are the descendants of the Negrito race who were residing in Andaman Island nearly 7000 years ago. The Bhil tribe is observed by some as "the oldest of the aboriginal tribes be composed of India's early inhabitants" (xaxa1999: 35). They are regarded as the original inhabitants of the forest of central India and were driven into their current homelands by Muslim invaders. Furthermore, facts show that a group of people who were Austro-Asiatic speaking Australoid race colonized Negritos in India, were pushed into the remote. The Oraon Adivasi tribe of eastern India and the Korku tribe of western India are from the direct root of the Australoid origin. Another controversy involving regarding these people is the use of the term Tribe. Was it a native term or an alien? In recent years, scholars have debated upon the legality of the concept of 'tribe' in the Indian context. It has been argued that the tribes are essentially a colonial construct, a part of the "colonial project" (Pathy 1987: 46). Nonexistent in the pre-colonial period, it is argued that this category was created and formalized by the colonial state as part of its legitimizing ideology and operated as a gadget to index conquered populations, formulate imperial policies and to facilitate the incorporation of these populations into the colonial system (Devalle 1992: 50). Nevertheless, after independence, India is continuing the usage of the tribe in order to fulfill the socio-economic interest of the dominating groups. Subsequently, the terms 'indigenous peoples' and 'indigenes' are widely used by anthropologists who desire to evade the cultural credence of the idiom 'tribal'. Terence Ranger and Leroy Vail well-reputed scholars doing their intellectual discourse on tribal communities have been challenged many primeval assumptions of nationalist and ethnic ideologies. Ranger points out that tribe were a western bounded administrative creation to extend colonial interest of the west (Ranger 1983: 234). The usage of the term 'tribe' with its embedded evolutionary and racial substance has come under close analysis in the current global political circumstances down with other aspects of colonial terminology, and tribe may precisely be considered as one of the components through which Europe is seeming part of the Indian social reality. However, the above-mentioned argument is totally redundant by group historians with more accurate substantiation. Damodaran, his "Colonial Constructions of the 'tribe' in India has assured that 'tribes' in India had a long history (Damodaran 2011: 58) and are not counted in the caste hierarchy, pre-existed colonial rule and had a different cluster (Chaudhuri 1993: 68). Notwithstanding faction between different hierarchical social structures, the compassion of difference separated and distanced them from the hegemonic caste society even in pre-colonial times. Thus Damodar and Chaudhuri are strongly stressed that the origin of the tribes to be considered more of a Brahmanical construct than a colonial one (Chaudhuri 1994: 152). Moreover, the colonial discourse on tribe had also been chiefly acquainted with the existing notion among the governing caste groups and the colonial state appropriated such representations as part of their cataloguing. Meantime, since the second half of the nineteenth century, due to the application of the race theory led the British to observe tribal communities as primitive inhabitants who represent an early phase of human development. The fact is that like other Indians, the tribal life was excessively better in the pre-colonial period. However all the evils of the Hindu caste system remain, the Tribal's enjoyed the social and economic freedoms in their own world. Many tribal's had been engaged in jhum or shifting cultivation. Apart from this, these people have been entailing in hunting and food gathering process. As Guha (1983) referred, "The waste and forest lands never paying attention, of former (pre-British) Governments" and were out listed from redistribution of land. (Gupta 2012:274) Many tribal groups were pastoralists who travel with their cattle or sheep according to the climate. They plough up and cultivated land and eventually got the proprietorship over the land. A few people, who acquired power over fellow tribes, became chiefs. Moreover, the political condition of pre-colonial India was more favour to tribes when we compare their life with colonial and even in post-colonial India. Tribes can observe splendid isolation in the pre-colonial period is a highly amazing reality.

Colonial penetration

Colonial rule in India produced several new policies that had brought detrimental blow for the indigenous population of the country. During the colonial period, large-scale restructuring of the Indian society was carried out. They called tribal as scheduled tribes. The earlier privileges of Indian tribes have disappeared during the colonial times. As a result of the industrial revolution, most of the European countries were industrialized, pursued colonialism as the mainstay of their foreign policies. Thus they went every nook and corner of the world in search of raw materials and markets. Meanwhile, they had developed

and used various strategies to gather this. New rules and regulations executed by Britishers transformed the life of tribal people absolutely. For fulfilling the goals Britishers applied a multiplicity of strategies upon these unpolluted communities. They introduced land settlements for making a steady flow of wealth to meet the expenses of the company. Unfortunately, this settlement executed without the consent or the consideration of the people. 1793 Permanent settlement or Zamindari system that bestowed dominance over vast territories, including Adivasi territories, to authorized feudal lords for the purpose of revenue collection by the British. Moreover, the system vehemently commenced the forced restructuring of the relationship of Tribals to their territories as well as the power relationship between them and 'others'. Another major problem faced the tribes' in colonial time was an eviction. Tribes are very much locked to the forests. They depend on the forest for their livelihood and socio-economic life is bound with accessible forest resources. Tribal communities suffered a lot when the British acknowledged forests as state property. Forests were cleaned in order to create a steady flow of wealth, for revenue purposes, agriculture and commercial exploitation. Consequently, British unsystematic exploitation of India's forest resources manifests a new fragment in the use of forest produce in India. Free access to the forests for the tribes has not retained a kind of de-facto ownership of forests and wastelands of the country by the State had begun by this time (Prasad, 2011: 21). The forest regulations initiated by the British was dominant in its character which exercised control on the local forest dweller that depends largely on forest goods, through a characterization of the forest as a national property for the colonial attention (Patnaik, 2007: 11). Commercial interest of the Britisher's also brought turmoil's on the life of these silent communities. By the 19th century, many traders and moneylenders started coming to the forests for purchasing forest produce, offering loans and obtaining cheap labour. The presence of strangers in their jurisdiction made them as fury's group, forced to leave for another. Encroachment of forest land by colonial aegis had mislaid the political privileges of the Indian tribal chiefs. The chiefs exercised economic and political powers earlier, but now had to abide by the rules laid down by the British, pay tributes to the British officers and stop to carry out their customary practices (Prakash Tripathi 2016). Passing of Criminal Tribes Act in 1871 designated tribe's as criminal, was yet another British colonial craving over these people. According to the criminal tribe's act, few tribes like Meenas of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh were treated as criminals from their birth and they do not have the right to move freely. These people had to present daily nearby thanas or chowkies. The colonial intrusion and the triumvirate of trader, moneylender and revenue farmer in sum disrupted the tribal identity to a lesser or greater degree. The colonial administration ended their relative isolation and brought them fully within the ambit of colonialism. It encouraged the influx of Christian missionaries into the tribal areas. The revenue farmers and government agents also intensified and expanded the system of begar —making the tribals perform unpaid labour (Chandra 1989:17). All these atrocities against the tribes led to an unprecedented insurgency from the side of these people. Kurichya Rebellion organized by the tribal people Kurichyas in Kerala against the Wayanad invasion of the British in 1812, the Kol Uprising (1831-32 the Munda Uprising (1899-1900) were major revolts against the British in those times. Moreover, revolts among the indigenous population became a regular episode during colonialism, especially in the nineteenth century. Historians articulated different figure regarding the total number of tribal conflicts in the colonial period in India. K.S Singh classified tribal movements in colonial period into three phases. The first phase between 1795 and 1860, part of the rise and expansion of British Empire. The second phase between 1860 and 1920 due to the intensive phase of colonialism, which resulted the penetration of industrialist into tribal economy. The third phase from 1920 to the independent, tribal movement characterised as separatist movement, but they took part in the nationalist and agrarian movements. (Shah 2006: 97). Whatever the matter is, almost all the tribal agitations in colonial time were callously suppressed by authorities with their colonial force. Although this was the case of the Indian tribal people in the colonial era, they received a different social status in the Princely States. Verrier Elwin an anthropologist was an Englishman who worked among the tribes of India had been pointed out that the rulers of princely states addressed and acknowledged tribes as early inhabitants and claimant of the land. Encroachment on tribal society was unseen in the princely states.

Tribal life in post- colonial period

After independence, the Government has made numerous programs to improve the socio-economic status of the tribal people and keep up constitutional security for them. How to accomplish the vision is a major problem of the government. The central and state governments have joined hands with several agencies to

bring them into the mainstream society. Several differences rose upon implementation of the tribal development programme. The policy of isolation, assimilation, and integration are the core of the tribal development programme. Dr. Verrier Elwin expressed the colonial policy of isolation was replaced by a policy of integration and assimilation (Dilip 2016: 81) It is necessary to bring Adivasis into the national mainstream said by G.S Ghure.

Our first prime minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru gave a serious notion of the problems of tribal development and recommended a liberal approach, which is known as Nehru's Tribal Panchasheel (Dilip: 82). Striking point, but in the Nehru's tribal Panchasheel should protect and encourage tribal arts and culture. Tribal rights in land and forests should be protected, the incursion of outsiders into the tribal area should not be allowed. Although the Government Policy is such, many of the programs implemented by the Post Independent Government are shoddier than the colonial era. 1952 National Forest policy denies all expectations of Adivasis people, control of their rights to forest resources. The path of the colonial policymakers has been followed. The fact is that nothing that protects the rights of Adivasis was included in it. Under the Colonial Forest policy of 1894, a free grazing was approved. (Reddy 1995:5). Obviously many pro-tribal implementations were put forward by the post-independent government. Forest Act 1988 stated, "The primary objective of the Forest policy must be to guarantee environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium which is vital for the sustenance of all life forms, human, animal, and plant. Although this policy has more people-oriented provisions, it still has the concept of exclusive state ownership of forest and mentions industrial needs as national needs. Shifting cultivation was endorsed for a period of three years. Special provisions were made to prevent encroachments on reserve forests with punitive measures. Due to the backwardness of Adivasis, the Indian Constitution made several articles for their interest, development, and welfare. Indian constitution Schedule Fifth and Sixth, Articles 5,16,46,244,275,330,332,334,335,339 and 342 have specific provisions for the improvement of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Article 46 suggests that the special status of the weaker sections of the people, especially the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social discrimination and all kinds of exploitation. Within the first eight-five year's plans, a large amount of funds has been allocated for their development. 43 resourceful tribal blocks were inserted in the second five year. The Third Five Year Plan, more funds were added to the Adivasi Development Block and adopted scientific approaches. In the Fifth Five Year Plan, the idea of sub-plan for Tribal development was highlighted and showed guidelines for finding sufficient funds from the Centre and the States. The sixth, seventh and eighth five-year plans have integrated the sub Plan approach. Several attempts were made to develop the tribal groups.

Post independence, India adopted a policy of coordinating tribals for personal development, such as education, sanitation, health and promotion of women. At the same time, it was not an agenda for integrating them in mainstream or eliminating their own culture. The North East Frontier Agency (NEFA) was formed in this regard (wikipedia.org. 2018). Without recognizing their repulsive colonial origins, arrangements made for the administration of the tribal areas during the British period were by and large continued in the post-independence era. (Verma 1990:103) This is because national development is the central part of the government policies of post-independence India. When the new economic policy is pursued as a part of national development, result of the globalization, they are deliberately deflected from the protective coat of the Constitution. New economic policies create serious consequences for the tribes. Natural resources, livelihoods, elementary education and health, protection from violence, human rights violations, and the right to uphold their traditional and habitual practices are now under threat. Violation of fifth and sixth schedule of the Indian constitution also creates serious ramification on tribal people. The isolation, illiteracy, malnutrition, landlessness, primitive mode of cultivation and medical disadvantages are still continuing in India. Most governments follow the trend that promotes more national and local interests that will have a reflective blow to the interests of Adivasis. One of the major issues that face the tribal's of India is tribal land alienation. There are serious attempts are going on by both central and State Governments to amend the rules prescribed in the fifth schedule to permit private corporate players to take up tribal and forest land. Tribal areas in states like Jharkhand and Orissa have witnessed large-scale industrialization, mineral exploitation, and infrastructure development projects. Bokaro steel plant UCIL mines in Jharkhand, as well as the Hirakund Dam, Rourkela Steel Plant and Mahanadi Coal Fields in Odisha are the examples for it. (Xaxa 2010:62). The PESA also reminds us not only of the remarkable tribal affair but also the strong intervention of the government with the defined direction of the Tribal. (Patnaik,

2007:4). It gives considerable possession over natural resources to the Gram Sabha of a tribal village. But Officials complain that this law cannot be implemented in reality. For example, it is in charge of the Forest Department. There are a lot of complaints about the PESA formulation. The first thing is the government passed without any discussion. Second, the powers are not explicitly defined.

Conclusion

Analyzing tribal issues and policies in postcolonial India, we will get a clear picture that the policymakers did not consult the tribal's when they formulated and implemented the tribal oriented program, failed to understand their real problem accurately. The Post-independent Indian governments are not modifying many of the colonial policies. For instance, they continued to control the forests of the country. This led to the continuation of the tribal revolution in the form of the Naxalite movement and Chipko movement. The tribals of the Chhota Nagpur region launched a movement against the diku, the exploiters who were moneylenders and landlords during the British period. The same issue has continued to be the factor in post – independence political mobilisation (shah 2006-101). The same mode of action, with the majority of Adivasis, still remains strong in the areas of former British rule. In this regards the colonial discourse continues well in contemporary India. Some of our national leaders thought that some of the policies of the colonial era were inevitable for framing tribal policy. , thus those are set in the constitution. So in the aftermath of the post-independence period, we can see huge colonial trends in India. Continuing with colonial discourse led too much of the post-colonial suffering of the country. It is essential to maintain mutual pluralism between the tribal lifestyle and cultural physical progression. Tribal people have a diverse culture. There's no point in trying to make them as inferior to us. In the other, welfare and educational facilities should be developed. So every tribal person may have equal opportunity with other citizens working in the fields, factories and workshops. There is no doubt, about the socio-cultural change among Adivasis to strengthen the Adivasis. However, their cultural identity is in extreme stress. It is not too late to raise them, otherwise the mild approach, maybe even disappear them from the community itself. Still, there is a need to revise the development schemes, flowing of funds from the government to the needful. Moreover, tribal development programmes have no use unless the people are absolutely aware of all these, which are meant for their socioeconomic welfare. Hence this is the need of time to structure the diverse strategy for tribal's and sternly execute the plans for overall development. Obliteration of all the basic issues of tribal's and finds the solutions on it. From all nooks, everyone has to take part in the development strategy of tribal's. As well Government should be solicitous about the development of tribal communities. However, it will only work if the winners support the losers. A tribal policy, rules and regulations for protecting them all are important. However the social future and the development of tribal are possible only these people are accepted by non tribal community in India.

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