



# PROMOTING AGRI-ALLIED SECTORS FOR THE FUTURE PROSPECTS OF TRADITIONAL TRIBAL ECONOMY – AN OVERVIEW

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**Abstract:** As per the report of Ministry of Tribal Welfare in India, in the last decade, about 3.5 million tribal people have left agriculture and agriculture-related activities to enter the informal labour market. There is a need to focus more on subsidiary occupations in the tribal economy which is mainly concentrated around the collection and processing of minor forest products and cultivation of food grains largely for the purpose of domestic consumption. The practice of agri-allied activities such as animal husbandry, , poultry farming , horticulture, fisheries , sericulture, bee-keeping etc. along with traditional agriculture will generate additional and substantial incomes to the tribals on one hand and restore the characteristics features of traditional tribal economy on the other. Agri-allied sectors create employment opportunities to the local tribal population and generates income to the tribal society. In this backdrop, the present research article attempts to explore the sectoral transformation of tribal economy in the course of time with a view to identify whether the changes in occupational structure of the tribals affect the origin and traditional agriculture occupation of tribal society which is the backbone to tribal economy with a view to strengthen the traditional tribal economy by encouraging agri-allied sectors along with main occupation.

**Index Terms** – Tribals , Tribal Economy, Agri-allied sector, occupational structure, Sectoral Transformation , Substantial income

## 1. Introduction

Scheduled Tribes are those communities who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. There are over 700 Scheduled Tribes spread over different States and Union Territories of the country. The traditional economy of the tribal people rooted in hunting, food gathering, shifting agriculture, podu cultivation, non-timber forest products collection. Minor forest produce plays an important part in the tribal economy. Its collection and marketing is a major source of livelihood for most tribal families contributing around 70% of their total income. Paddy and a wide variety of traditional millets, cereals and pulses are grown to meet household needs. These are supplemented by vegetables, fruits and roots and tubers some of which are cultivated while others are collected from the forest. The tribal households cultivate food grains for self-consumption and cultivate vegetables for the market and fruit bearing trees Mango, Citrus, Jackfruit, Banana, Papaya, and Cashew are grown inside forests either on common lands or on homestead lands. However, they face problems and challenges in getting a sustainable livelihood and a decent life due to conventional agricultural practices, environmental degradation and the interference of outsiders.

## 1.2. BACKDROP

Tribal population which constitutes about 8.9% of the total population of India spread across the country and reside in the forest and hilly regions of the country. (Census 2011). The tribals live in a hostile environment by a simple substance like gathering food, forest produce, hunting, and fishing and by axe cultivations. The tribes and tribal economies are mostly a remote, paddy producing, and land scarce settlements where the populations use the community land and collective labour in order to practice the shifting cultivation. The means of livelihood to Scheduled Tribes has converged the livelihood system from agricultural to non-agricultural. Whereas the tribal economies lack organized markets as well as financial assistance to promote tribal products. Some of the tribals shift their occupation from traditional cultivation to daily wage work, industrial and construction works and handicrafts, trade and commerce etc. However, agriculture, shifting cultivation continues to be a prominent means of livelihood for most of the tribals.

## 2.1. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In the backdrop of the above concerns, there arise the following research questions.

- i) How to strengthen the convergence of agriculture and non-agricultural sectors in the tribal economy?
- ii) How to restore the traditional tribal economy without diversification of traditional agriculture occupation of the tribals?

## 2.2. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The tribal economy is mainly centered around the collection and processing of Minor Forest Products and cultivation largely for the purpose of domestic consumption. Subsidiary occupation along with traditional agriculture will generate additional and substantial incomes to the tribals on one hand and it restore the features of traditional tribal economy on the other. Agri-allied activities create employment opportunities to the local tribal population and generates incomes to the tribal society. The produce can be shifted to not only to regional markets but also to global markets. For example, the horticulture produce which are importing from other countries such as the rare fruits like dragon fruits, litchi, strawberry etc can be cultivable in local agency areas which yields a good return to the tribals. The processed products of dairy farming and poultry, fisheries have increased demand in consumer markets both in local and international markets.

## 2.3. SCOPE

In recent years, the tribals are shifting from their traditional occupation to other occupation. Sometimes, their principal occupation is also converted to the subsidiary occupations or some new occupations have taken the place of principal occupation. It will move the tribal people away from their tradition. In this context, the present paper emphasizes that every traditional occupation should be continued and restored its characteristic features assuming that they have to follow new cultivation patterns and adopt the modern technology and follow the trends in marketing the products as per the demand at local and global level which protects the identity of the given traditional tribal economy.

## 2.4. AIM

The present research article attempts to explore the sectoral transformation of tribal economy in the course of time with a view to examine whether the changes in occupational structure of the tribals affect the origin and traditional agriculture occupation of tribal society which is the backbone to tribal economy with a view to find out the alternatives to strengthen the traditional tribal economy.

## 2.5. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the present paper is to examine whether the tribals continuing their traditional occupation of agriculture which is the backbone to tribal economy or shifted to non-agricultural sectors for their livelihood.

The objectives in detail are as follows.

- 1) To study the socio-economic conditions of tribals
- 2) To understand the traditional tribal economy
- 3) To review the changes in occupational structure of the tribals

- 4) To analyze the need to promote agri-allied sectors for the future prospects of the tribal economy.

## 2.6. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present work is a review article based on the reviews of earlier research works which dealt with tribal economy and occupational pattern of tribals in different states of India. For the purpose of development of the present article, the secondary data has been collected from the Government reports viz. Population Census 2011, Ministry of Tribal Welfare and international journals through various websites.

## 3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over two-thirds of the tribal population is working in the primary sector as against 43% of the non-tribal population, and is heavily dependent on agriculture either as cultivators or as agricultural labourers. (Census 2011). More than 50% of India's tribal population has moved out of traditional habitats. The tribal people are increasingly moving from being cultivators to agricultural labourers. Every second tribal household now survives on manual labour in an informal economy (Richard Mahapatra, 2018). A comparison between Census 2001 and 2011 shows that the proportion of cultivators reduced by more than 10%, while the proportion of agricultural labourers increased by 9% among the ST population. It is estimated that, in the last decade, about 3.5 million tribal people have left agriculture and agriculture-related activities to enter the informal labour market. This indicates a declining return from direct farming or people simply don't have the resources to do farming. In the absence of no other alternative, they are joining the informal labour force. Displacement and enforced migration has also led to an increasing number of Scheduled Tribes working as contract labourers in the construction industry and domestic workers in major cities. Currently, one of every two tribal households relies on manual labour for survival. (Report of Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2018).

The present work reviewed the occupational changes of tribal population in different states of India with a view to examine the reasons for their shift in occupation. Reimeingam Marchang (2011) in his work on '*Economic, Occupational and livelihood changes of Scheduled Tribes of North East India*' examines the changing livelihood system from agriculture-based towards nonagricultural-based system of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of North Eastern Region. The study found that agricultural households continue to be prominent; however, non-agricultural households are growing in rural areas. In urban areas, non-agricultural households are rapidly growing. However, agriculture, shifting cultivation in particular, continues to be a prominent means of livelihood for some of them. Concerning employment, agriculture employment has declined largely due to the significant decline among cultivators. Employment in non-agriculture sector has improved largely driven by development, particularly education. ST's means of livelihood has converged from subsistence agricultural income towards diversified modern market-oriented employment and economy. The study highlights the convergence of the livelihood system from agriculture to non-agricultural. It is evident from three facts as follows: decline of agricultural households while non-agricultural households increase; decline of agricultural income while non-agricultural income rises; and shift of employment from agricultural to non-agricultural activities. Md. Ayub Mallick (2009) '*Development Programmes involving the Tribes : A Case Study*' explained that Tribal population in Jamalpur block area within the district of Burdwan is mixed in character and settled agriculturists in nature. They maintain their livelihood by undertaking a number of occupations like settled agriculture, industrial and agricultural labour, animal husbandry, fishing, trade and commerce of which handicraft industry is of prime importance. The development programmes involving these tribal peoples were involved with these occupations. But tribal participation and tribal perception are not actually taken into account in the process of tribal development. Development programmes for the tribals are mainly based on wage employment and house building and house repair loan, which take recourse to status quo maintenance giving only side payments to the downtrodden in the game of power politics, power in the forms of wealth and leverage. In fact, the development programmes are intended to mitigate the feelings of relative deprivation and to lessen the risk of violent upsurge. The tribal people lack entrepreneurial initiative. Mere management of development programmes would not make tribal development a sustainable one with fair and equitable distribution of income, power and opportunities. Dr. Santanu Sahu (2019) in his study on '*Demographic Trends and Occupational Structure of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups of Jharkhand*' discussed that Tribal Groups (PVTGs) constitute the most vulnerable tribal entities in Jharkhand and their population has remained low, with low levels of literacy and primitive methods of agriculture and livelihood.. The PVTGs derive their livelihood from forests and land resources. They are primitive and archaic in nature. Their literacy level is very low and they suffer from poor health

conditions. The PVTGs have not become a part of the mainstream economy because their traditions, cultures, beliefs and practices all remain associated with nature and they add no nominal value to Mother Nature from which they derive everything which reflects their strong heritage of respecting the natural world and the environment. The study concluded that they are engaged chiefly as cultivators or agricultural labourers. Although the literacy rate among the PVTGs has improved between 2001 and 2011, it still remains below 50 percent which is far below the national as well the Jharkhand state average. Their economy is still subsistence based with little capacity to save. Although the PVTG population has increased between the 2001 and 2011 census their absolute numbers continue to be very low. This calls for some serious and focused policy action to improve their socio-economic conditions. Thus, a more focused and customized policy prescriptions are required for addressing the specific issues of the PVTGs. Muniraju and K.Sirisha (2022) in their work on *'Local to Global; Promotion of Tribal Products'* explained that the tribal economy is mainly concentrated around the collection and processing of Minor Forest Products and cultivation largely for the purpose of domestic consumption. They usually struggle to meet their economic needs with a bare minimum income (cash). This is due to a substantial number of tribals being cut off from the civilized world, who are unable to adapt to modernization. The tribal economies lack organized markets as well as financial institutions to promote the tribal products. There is a huge demand for tribal artifacts, textiles, ornaments, paintings, potteries, cane and bamboo products and organic and natural food products, but the supply side of this economy is way below the demand side and thus the community fails to profit from its produce. Thus, efficient production and effective promotion become imperative for the economic development of this community. Ansari, Mahmood (2006): *'Tribal Economies in Assam: A Study of Northeastern India'* explained that the tribes and tribal economies have variously been represented in the northeastern region as remote, paddy producing, and land scarce settlements where the populations use the community land and collective labour in order to practice the shifting cultivation. These economies do occasionally utilize the trans-Himalayan trade and commercial network to siphon off and mobilize the agricultural surplus. The study stressed that the reciprocity and redistribution institutions otherwise do function to fulfill the needs of the tribal settlement and population. These tribal economic arrangements are however, recently posited to be transforming into the peasant economies to budding agrarian capitalist frameworks. The emergence of tribal elites, de-peasantized population, sedentary agriculture and wage labor market are identified as indicators of changes and transition. P.Mariyammal (2016); *'The Role of Tribal women, their occupation in rural economy in Kodaikanal'* explained that the tribals live in a hostile environment by a simple substance like gathering food, forest produce, hunting, and fishing and by axe cultivations. The informal tribal economy, on the contrary, is based on the concept of a resource i.e. the livelihood that is to be used according to the needs of the community and preserved the posterity. Studies on the impact of planned development show what has been presented as modernization has forced many of them to change over from an informal to the formal society, without any preparation. These two societies emanate from often contradictory foundations. Balwant Singh Mehta and Bharat Singh (2018) in their article *'Employment and Livelihoods among Tribal in India'* examined whether tribal people are still engaged primarily in agriculture or forestry related activities for their livelihood or they have moved to non-farm and industrial activities over the years and whether the government affirmative action like reservation policy has helped the tribal people in joining more government/public/formal sector jobs. It has been observed that the participation of tribals in public sector or formal sector jobs has increased over the years, which may be due to various affirmative actions by the governments' reservation policy. Anamika Ghosh (2019) in her work on *'Modeling Of Occupational Shift Among The Artisan Tribes: A Study Based On Mahalis And Loharas Of Dakshin Dinajpur, West Bengal'* stated that currently, the tribals are shifting from their traditional occupation to other type of occupation. Sometimes, their principal occupation is also converted to the subsidiary occupation and the subsidiary occupations or some new occupations have taken the place of principal occupation. She referred the statements of Palanithurai and Ramesh (2015) and Tripura and Chand (2015) that the Dalits emerge as the „the neo-landed“ class because the former landed class are shifting to other sector of economy by leasing or selling their land to the Dalits which change their earlier status of labourer to sharecropper or cultivator. Likewise the shifting cultivators of Tripura have shifted from their traditional occupation Jhum to some other forms of occupation. Similar occupational shift is also observed among the artisan tribes who are associated with different type of crafting like spinning, weaving, rope making, basketry, ironworks etc. Anamika Ghosh (2019) describes that the Mahalis and Loharas are the two artisan tribes of West Bengal who are traditionally associated with bamboo craft and black smithy respectively. But, the present

situation forces the artisan tribes to shift from their traditional occupation which brings a sudden threat to such activities as it will bring decadence to such traditional occupation as well as their age-old experiences. Thus, it will move the tribal people away from their tradition. She stated that the study does not emphasize that every traditional occupation should be continued for generation after generation but those activities which demand special skill should not be ended rather encouraged so that people involved with such activities should continue their occupation. Besides, it should be remembered that the occupation of the artisan tribes is intimately related with their identity. Hence, definite initiatives and steps must be taken so that these people can continue their traditional occupation.

To sum up, the means of livelihood to Scheduled Tribes has converged from subsistence agricultural income towards diversified modern market-oriented employment and economy. (Reimeingam Marchang, 2011). Tribal population in Jamalpur block area within the district of Burdwan is mixed in character and settled agriculturists in nature. They maintain their livelihood by undertaking a number of occupations like settled agriculture, industrial and agricultural labour, animal husbandry, fishing, trade and commerce of which handicraft industry is of prime importance.

(Md. Ayub Mallick, 2009). Tribal Groups (PVTGs) constitute the most vulnerable tribal entities in Jharkhand and their population has remained low, with low levels of literacy and primitive methods of agriculture and livelihood. (Dr. Santanu Sahu 2019) The tribal economies lack organized markets as well as financial institutions to promote the tribal products. (Muniraju and K.Sirisha, 2022). The tribes and tribal economies have variously been represented in the northeastern region as remote, paddy producing, and land scarce settlements where the populations use the community land and collective labour in order to practice the shifting cultivation. (Ansari, Mahmood, 2006): the tribals live in a hostile environment by a simple substance like gathering food, forest produce, hunting, and fishing and by axe cultivations. Studies on the impact of planned development show what has been presented as modernization has forced many of them to change over from an informal to the formal society, without any preparation (P.Mariyammal 2016) The participation of tribals in public sector or formal sector jobs has increased over the years, which may be due to various affirmative actions by the governments' reservation policy. (Balwant Singh Mehta and Bharat Singh, 2018). Those activities which demand special skill should not be ended rather encouraged so that people involved with such activities should continue their occupation. Besides, it should be remembered that the occupation of the artisan tribes is intimately related with their identity. Hence, definite initiatives and steps must be taken so that these people can continue their traditional occupation. (Anamika Ghosh, 2019).

Majority of research studies highlights the shift of tribals from traditional agriculture sector to other sectors such as industrial and public sectors. There are only a few studies which support to encourage the traditional agriculture occupation of the tribals. Hence the present paper focuses in this direction to strengthen the traditional tribal economy by promoting agri-allied sectors for the future prospects of tribal economy.

#### 4. AGRI-ALLIED SECTORS FOR FUTURE PROSPECTS OF TRIBAL ECONOMY

As per estimates of Economic Survey (2021-22), the share of agriculture and allied sectors (including agriculture, livestock, forestry and fishery) was 20.2 per cent of the Gross Value Added (GVA) during 2020-21. India's fruit production has grown faster than vegetables, making it the second largest fruit producer in the world. Agricultural export constitutes 10 per cent of the country's exports and is the fourth-largest principal exported commodity. The agro industry in India is divided into several sub segments such as canned, dairy, processed, frozen food to fisheries, meat, poultry, and food grains. The contribution of agri-allied sectors viz., livestock (including dairy, sheep, goat, poultry and piggery), fisheries (marine, inland and aqua farming), horticulture (including fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices, aromatic and medicinal plants) and sericulture sector has been significant and growing over the years. Globally, India accounts for the highest milk production, second highest fish production and second highest production of fruits and vegetables. (Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, 2019).

Agri-allied sectors play a vital role in the Indian economy so as to tribal economy. Divergence in occupation is to be placed by convergence of agriculture and non-agricultural sectors. Supporting agri-allied sectors will provide employment opportunities to the tribals during slack season and creates additional agricultural output thereby generates substantial incomes to the tribals. Increased incomes through the practice of traditional agriculture occupation will attracts the young generation to extend the agri-allied activities globally by creating online marketing for their products with their skills and technical knowledge. They can

strengthen the convergence of agriculture and non-agriculture sectors through trade and commerce. The agri-allied sectors will create employment opportunities to the young generation and generate additional incomes to the tribals thereby the traditional agriculture occupation of the tribals can be restored without diversification in occupation which paves the way for future prospects of traditional agriculture economy. Developing the linkage between agri-allied sectors to non-agricultural sector will strengthen the tribal agriculture economy. The government should take the necessary steps to promote the agriculture and allied sectors by providing financial assistance through tribal development agencies or financial institutions, technological transfer for agricultural operations, by providing storage and delivery mechanism for agri-allied products, providing transport and infrastructural facilities to the farmers, monitoring the system of labeling and packing for branding the products, dissemination of market prices in order to understand the demand for the products at current market prices so that they can get reasonable prices for their products. To conclude, the convergence of agricultural and non-agricultural sectors for the purpose of restoring the traditional tribal economy is one of the best strategies for tribal development which will encourage the agri-allied sectors in tribal areas.

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