

A SUB-PLAN APPROACH TO TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

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An attempt has been made in the present article to critically evaluate the tribal development programmes of the Five Year Plans of the Government of India. It describes briefly the Fifth and Sixth Five Year Plan approach in this context. The major steps in the preparation of the Sub-plan, essential features of the Sub-plan and Integrated Tribal Development Projects are presented. The paper concludes with the suggestion that our programme and approach should stimulate the greater aspirations of the tribal people.

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Introduction

A paradox of the Indian situation is that one small segment of society has leap-frogged into the jet age while the majority is still living in an almost medieval pattern. Indian tribals who form 7 per cent of the country's population have remained almost totally unaffected by time (Sharma, 1977: 2). While they live in beautiful places with an air of tranquillity and culture and an old-world charming tempo of life, their living conditions in terms of present day amenities are primitive. Not only in the matter of physical conditions but also in terms of behaviour and mental make-up the tribal people are still centuries behind their metropolitan counterparts. How to bridge the gap is the big question and the big challenge.

Problems in the interior are elemental. It is not a question of creating a world of television and refrigerators. It is a question of arranging basic needs such as clean drinking water. It is a question of some modicum of hygienic living and health care and a roof over heads which does not blow off with the wind. It is a question of providing two square meals a day. It is a question of covering their half-nakedness.

The path to modernity is long. There is no magic wand which could overnight remove the petrification of centuries and enable the Tribal people to shed their fixation. The previous plan efforts helped

only a small section of the tribals. So a new approach has been evolved to cover the entire tribal population under the development programme and that is the sub-plan approach.

This paper deals with the following aspects namely, Approach during the Five Year Plans, Sub-Plan approach, Sixth Plan approach, criticism and suggestions.

Approach During the Five Year Plans

In pursuance of the provisions of Article 275 of the Constitution, funds have been provided in the Five-Year Plans for Programmes which would raise the level of living of tribals to the level of the rest of the community and improve the administration of Scheduled Areas to the level of the rest of the country. In the First Five Year Plan systematic programmes for the welfare of the tribals were not developed; only Rs. 19.93 crores was spent.

From the Second Plan onwards, the tribal development schemes were taken up under two distinct sectors, namely, the State Plan Schemes and the Centrally sponsored Schemes. The State Plan Schemes were grouped under three broad categories (a) education (b) economic development and (c) health, housing and others. The Centrally sponsored schemes were confined to programmes which commanded high priority or were related to the removal of special disabilities of a nature which required

* The author is grateful to Dr. T. N. Kitchlu for his valuable guidance.

intensive measures over a long period. The classification of various programmes under these two sectors is as follows:

Centrally sponsored schemes: -

- (i) Tribal development blocks
- (ii) Co-operatives including forest co-operatives
- (iii) Girls hostels
- (iv) Post-matric scholarships
- (v) Coaching and pre-examination training
- (vi) Tribal Research and Training.

State Plan Schemes: -

- (i) *education* — Pre-matric scholarship, stipends, boarding grants, hostels, supply of free books, stationary, uniforms, mid-day meals etc.
- (ii) *economic development*: — subsidy for agricultural implements, seeds, fertilizers etc., cottage industries, rehabilitation, communication, animal husbandry, horticulture, pisciculture, co-operatives minor irrigation, soil conservation.
- (iii) *health, housing and others*: housing, drinking water supply, medical and public health, social and cultural activities and aid to voluntary agencies, legal aid and miscellaneous.

After the introduction of community development (CD.) programmes in the country in 1952, it was realised that special development programmes were necessary to improve the economy of the tribals, who are among the weakest sections of the people, socially, educationally and economically. Accordingly, a separate programme known as Special Multipurpose Tribal Development Blocks was taken up during the Second Plan. These were renamed as Tribal Development Blocks during the Third Plan. The experience of the func-

tioning and impact of tribal development blocks underscored the need for intensive development of the tribal areas. Accordingly the special programmes on Tribal Development Agency was started on a Pilot basis during the second half of the Fourth Plan. These projects have been located in (a) Srikakulam District in Andhrapradesh (b) Singhbhum District of Bihar (c) Dantewada and (d) Konta tehsils of Bastar District of Madhya Pradesh, and (e) Ganjam and (f) Koraput Districts of Orissa.

A Critical Review of Past Efforts

Past efforts in the planned economic and social development of the tribal economy were handicapped by inadequate appreciation of the special problems of the tribal areas and lack of provision of investments for the development of the resource potential of the tribal economics. Economic and social development of these areas was also hampered greatly by the lack of social and economic infrastructure.

TABLE 1

PLAN EXPENDITURE ON SCHEDULED TRIBES

Plan Period	Total Plan (Rs. Crores)	Scheduled Tribes (Rs. Crores)	Percentage of plan Outlay
First Plan	1,960	19.93	1.0
Second Plan	4,672	42.92	0.9
Third Plan	8,577	50.53	0.6
Annual Plan (1966-69)	6,756	32.32	0.5
Fourth Plan	15,902	75.00	0.04

Sources: Fifth Five Year Plan, Government of India, Planning Commission, New Delhi

From the First Plan, the expenditure on tribal welfare is identified in terms of outlay incurred on the schemes for the welfare

of Backward classes. Notwithstanding progressive increase in expenditure for the scheduled tribes, the expenditure on tribal development as a percentage of the total plan expenditure has declined from plan to plan.

The outlay on the programmes for scheduled tribes was intended to supplement whatever provision was made for the development of tribal and scheduled areas under general sector programmes of development. In the absence of area-based programmes, such flow of funds from the general sectors to tribal development programmes cannot be specified. It is generally agreed, however, that the flow was not significant. The Study Teams on Tribal Development Programmes (1969) which examined the flow of funds from the general sectors to the tribal areas, has observed that no conscious attempt has been made by the State Governments except Andhra Pradesh, to ensure that the tribals received a reasonable share of the benefits from the general development programmes. "Even in Andhra Pradesh the directive of the State Government that 3 per cent of the total provision of each Development should be earmarked for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes has largely been ignored and broadly speaking the planners in the State have proceeded on the basis that the special provision is the only provision available to finance tribal development programmes" (Government of India, 1969: 120).

The result has been that infrastructure development in tribal areas received inadequate attention. Basic facilities such as roads, culverts, bridges etc., are still very meagre and basic institutions such as servicing organisations, schools, hospitals and even primary health centres conspicuously absent.

The impact of the tribal development programmes undertaken during the First, Second, and Third Plan periods has been

studied by special Committees from time to time. The recent Committee was the Study Team on Tribal Development Programmes (1969) which summed up the progress achieved in regard to tribal welfare and development. The Team categorically stated that although much had been done, it was difficult to precisely assess the socio-economic development of tribals in the absence of surveys done prior to the implementation of the programmes. Further, in the absence of an evaluation machinery, the State had not been able to assess the impact of the development programmes on the welfare of the tribals.

However, on assessment of the programme made by the Study Team on Tribal Development Programmes (1969) indicated that the programme had fallen short of expectations although it succeeded in bringing about a change in the outlook of the tribals, particularly in the fields of education and agriculture. The limitations of the programme lay in its coverage of small area and population which did not permit the execution of schemes like soil conservation, major and medium irrigation, etc., on a viable basis. The tribal development blocks succeeded in making only a limited impact due to certain basic problems such as subsistence level of living, underdeveloped infrastructure and high percentage of illiteracy among the tribal population. It was also observed that the problems of land alienation and shifting cultivation hindered development in these blocks. Among other problems noted were shortage of technical staff and their frequent transfers. Some of the general criticisms of the programmes related to the following:

- (i) Schemes drawn up for more developed regions were applied to the tribal areas without change;
- (ii) Preparatory steps were not taken to settle land disputes;

- (iii) Bulk of the developmental outlay was used up by construction programme;
- (iv) Employment aspect of development was not given due consideration and
- (v) Co-operatives were started without adequate preparation or orientation of the tribals.

Another problem highlighted was that the better-off among the tribals appropriated the bulk of the benefits flowing from the various programmes taken up for implementation. Added to this was the tendency of the block authorities to concentrate schemes in easily accessible areas and the needs of the people inhabiting the more inaccessible and backward areas remained unattended. The concentration of the programmes in a small area and the fragmented approach to development adopted in tribal development blocks did not succeed in extending the full benefits of developmental programmes to the tribal population as a whole.

The working of both the tribal development blocks and the tribal development agencies has shown that the programmes for the welfare and development of the tribal people so far have had a limited coverage. The programmes in the tribal development blocks became too rigid although different field conditions demanded a different approach. Like the tribal development blocks, the operational area of the tribal development agencies proved to be too small a unit for large investment

in infrastructure economic development and social services. While reviving the past efforts, the Working Group on Integration of Sectoral Programmes (1977) reveals that development efforts so far have been generally partial. "Even where broader frame was envisaged it was not clearly articulated. What were supposed to be comprehensive programmes, ultimately become arithmetical totals of sectoral programmes. The special provisions in the constitution in relation to tribal areas with reference to legal flexibility, administrative discretion and certain guarantees to under write necessary costs remain largely inoperative" (Government of India, 1977: 12).

Fifth Plan Approach: An informal Expert Committee on Tribal Development appointed by the Education Minister under the Chairmanship of Dr. S. C. Dube in 1972 went into the entire question of tribal development.¹ The Committee inter alia suggested (a) precise definition of the total developmental effort at the national level; (b) an integrated area plan at an appropriate level comprising all developmental inputs with focus on the problem of tribal communities and (c) a suitable simple administrative and personnel structure within the comprehension of the people. The Planning Commission also appointed a Task Force on Development of Backward Classes which considered the problem in its numerous facets. The Task Force appointed a number of Working Groups,² notably the one on Personnel Policies, The Task Force suggested a three tier developmental structure at micro, meso and macro levels. The

1. Planning Commission set up Task Force on "Development of Tribal Areas". 1972 April, 5.
2. (a) Working Group on Identification of Tribal Development Areas and less Developed Tribal Communities (Chairman Prof. L. P. Vidyarthi).
 - (b) Working Group on Legislative and Administrative Set up (Chairman — Dr. R. K. Roy Burman).
 - (c) Working Group on Tribal Development Programmes based on Forests (Chairman — Shri S. A. Shah).
 - (d) Working Group on General Programmes and area-wise Programmes on Infrastructure and Social Services in Tribal Areas (Chairman — Shri K. V. Natarajan).
 - (e) Personnel Policy in Tribal Areas (Chairman — Shri R. N. Haldipur).

meso unit was suggested to be the main building block of this strategy.

The Central Coordination Committee³ for Welfare of Backward Classes has been set up in the wake of the new strategy for development of tribal areas in the Fifth Plan for ensuring the flow of sectoral funds for tribal development, for watching the progress of schemes in tribal areas and for suggesting measures for effective implementation of the Programmes. This Committee decided to constitute a Working Group under the Chairmanship of Shri B. R. Patel, to work out the details of integration of various sectoral programmes in the tribal development projects.⁴

As a result of these Working Groups and Committees a new strategy has been evolved for Tribal development and that new strategy is called the Sub-Plan approach. The Sub-Plan is not a scheme, it represents a new approach. The strategy clearly spells out the problem of tribal development into two parts — (a) that of areas of having more than 50 percent tribal concentration, and the Scheduled Areas, and (b) that of areas with dispersed tribal population. Besides these two categories, primitive tribal communities at pre-agricultural level of technology were identified as a special group.

The strategy for areas of tribal concentration culminated in the concept of Sub-Plan for these areas. For this purpose the states and Union Territory have been grouped into three categories viz:

- (i) States and Union Territories having more than 50 per cent tribal population — Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, and Nagar Havell, L. M. and A. Island.

- (ii) States and Union Territories having large tribal population — Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan and Tripura.

- (iii) States and Union Territories having scattered tribal population i.e. Kerala, Mysore, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, A and N. Islands, Goa, Daman and Diu.

The State Plans of States/Union Territories in category (i) above are really Tribal Development Plans and therefore, no Sub-Plan has been considered necessarily in their case.

The long term objectives of the Sub-Plan are:-

- (i) to narrow the gap between the levels of development of tribal and other areas; and
- (ii) to improve the quality of the tribal communities' life.

The immediate objectives will be to eliminate exploitation in all forms, speed up the processes for social and economic development and improve the organisational capabilities.

The strategy of Sub-Plan will be as follows:-

Prevention of Exploitation: Integrated credit-cum-marketing services covering marketing of agricultural and minor forest produce, supply of inputs and essential consumer commodities, credit for production purposes as also for consumption and social needs etc., will have to be set up. Redemption of past debts through legislative and executive measures will have to

3. The Central Coordination Committee for the Development of Backward Classes was constituted by the Government of India in April 74.

4. The Working Group on Integration of Sectoral Programmes, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 1977.

be taken up. Programmes for prevention of land alienation, restoration of lands already alienated, termination of practices like bonded labour etc., will need special attention.

Development of Tribal Economy: The development of agriculture will be given the highest priority.

Generation of Employment Opportunities: Opportunities for better utilisation of available manpower should be created through programmes horticulture, animal husbandry, piggery and cottage industries.

Provision of Basic Infra-structure: Growth Centres, communication net work, schools, rural health centres, marketing and credit organisations and rural electrification will have to be planned keeping in view of the local situation.

The Planning Commission has issued guidelines for preparing Sub-Plans. The following are the major steps in the preparation of a Sub-Plan:-

(i) *Identification and Demarcation of Area of Tribal Concentration*

The identification of talukas/tehsils, blocks with 50 per cent of tribal concentration in addition to the Scheduled Areas. From these, suitable planning areas will have to be carried out at macro, meso and micro levels. Micro areas could normally coincide with development blocks. Meso areas could be co-terminus with district/sub division/tehsils. The planning function at macro level will include overall planning and detailed project formulation for rural electrification, major and medium irrigation projects, arterial roads, apex cooperative organisations etc. At the micro level, planning for social services, minimum needs programme, minor irrigation, agricultural extension, and household industries could be undertaken. In the meso level higher education, medium irrigation, training etc., could be included.

(ii) *Identification of Socio-cultural Barriers and Promoters of Change and Development*

For this aspect the following information will be collected for the formulation of a realistic development plan: -

- (a) the Socio-cultural characteristic of the tribal communities.
- (b) nature of physio-geographical conditions.
- (c) level of development of tribal areas in general and of the tribal people in particular.
- (d) the pattern and practice pertaining to various production activities of the tribal and non-tribal people.
- (e) pattern of ownership of means of production; and
- (f) legal framework particularly in respect of land ownership, land tenure and transfer.

(Hi) *Assessment of Potentialities, Special Problems and Felt Needs of the Tribal Area*

In the dynamic relationship between the resource potential, economic activity, socio-economic situation of the tribal community and the institutional frame may be spelled out. The special problems of the tribal areas should be clearly identified particularly those leading to incidence of exploitation in various forms. Identification of the felt needs and aspirations of the tribal should be attempted, .

(iv) *Assessing the Resource Availability for the Sub-Plan*

The resources for the Sub-Plan will comprise: -

- (a) State Plan outlay;
- (b) Sectoral outlays in the central Ministries for Tribal Areas;
- (c) Special central sector allocation for tribal areas, and
- (d) Institutional finance.

The quantum of outlay in the State Plan for these areas should be arrived at keeping in view (a) total population; (b) the geographical areas; (c) the comparative level of development and (d) the state of social services.

fv) *Formulation of Programmes*

The detailed programme will have to be formulated with the project level and the sub-plan will be clearly spelled out in detail give inter-sectoral and intra-sectoral priorities and the phasing of developmental effort.

(vi) *Devising a Suitable Administrative Set-up*

The pattern of administrative organization should achieve functional co-ordination and efficiency. It should have delegation of authority, specifically of responsibility and adequate flexibility so as to enable the implementing authority to effect changes in the on going programmes on the basis of concurrent evaluation. Advisory Committees should include the tribal leaders, representatives of voluntary agencies and people's representatives and other local institutions.

Essential Features of the Sub-Plan

The following are the essential features: -

- (i) Total as against sectoral approach to the problems of the tribal area;
- (ii) Evolving a suitable frame for development of these areas.

- (iii) Accepting the uniqueness of the problem of each viable area and community and formulation of programmes with reference to it.
- (iv) Major thrust of development to be provided by the general sector.
- (v) Substantial supplementation of State's effort by the Union Government.
- (vi) Reconstructing the Administrative and Institutional Frame.

Integrated Tribal Development Projects

The Sub-Plan area in each State is to be divided into various project areas taking into consideration administrative boundaries, topography, level of economic development, ethnic composition, natural resources and potential for development. As the tribal development block was too small a unit for planning and coordination, it was decided to constitute a project comprising a group of development blocks. While the situation varies from one state to another and from one area to another in the same State, the project size was decided keeping in view the specific situation in a particular case. A project has, on an average, about three to four lakh population and about six to seven blocks; 178 integrated tribal development projects have been carved out. Some of the projects are co-terminus with the district in the case of small districts. In most cases, the projects are co-terminus with sub-division/tehsils. There are some projects which are one block units, because there are no adjoining areas of tribal concentration. In some cases, the projects cover an area smaller than a block for the same reason.

The project represents the total developmental effort in that area and has to accept the problem-solving approach, covering a large spectrum from protection to welfare. Under the Sub-Plan approach, it

has been possible to cover about 65 per cent of total tribal population in the Fifth Plan and 155 integrated Tribal Development Projects have been started (Government of India, 1974-79: 275). The States, Central Ministries and financing institutions will be supplemented by a substantial investment of Rs. 190 crores by the Home Ministry. It may be recalled that in the Fourth Plan, Tribal Development blocks allocation was Rs. 32 crores and, it was stepped up in the Fifth Plan about 7 times. The total outlay on the tribal Sub-Plan has been fixed at Rs. 1440 crores.

Approach to Development in The Sixth Plan

The basic objectives of the new task in the Sixth Plan will be as follows (Government of India, 1977: 1):

(i) The entire tribal population will be covered by suitable developmental programme.

(ii) The gulf between the level of development in the tribal areas, and the surrounding areas will be generally bridged by the end of the Sixth Plan and, in the case of more backward areas in the course of another five years, i.e. by the end of the Seventh Plan and

(iii) The tribal communities outside the tribal areas will be helped to attain the general level of development in the area by the end of the Sixth Plan, or latest by the end of the Seventh Plan in the case of more deprived communities.

In this way, the problems of the Tribal communities will be attempted to be solved within a time frame of not more than 12 years from now. i.e. by beginning of the year 1989. In the tribal Sub-Plan areas, a triple strategy of consolidating the gains of protective measures, highest priority to

education and health and working towards a full employment economy by the end of the Sixth Plan.

Criticism and Suggestions

The tribal areas present an extremely complex socio-economic situation. The approach and strategy of tribal development has also undergone considerable change in the last 30 years. The new strategy of the sub-plan will give a boost to tribal development. Under the Sub-Plan approach more than 65 per cent population come under the purview. The sub-plan represents the total development of the area i.e. area development. It is a problem-solving approach, identifying the problems of each area and evolving a total programme for solving the same. The total state effort is gradually being unified under the integrated tribal development projects.

The Sub-Plan and Integrated Tribal Development Projects aim at ameliorating of the living conditions of the people, the approach in fact, is that of area development. The hypothesis perhaps assumes that once the area develops, benefits would accrue to the people. Unfortunately it is not so always and that too in a tribal setting. What with the long history of exploitation and the simplicity of tribals the benefits have usually been usurped by the non-tribals in the area; unless, the schemes are in favour of identified groups of people whom they aim to benefit. Otherwise it will benefit only non-tribals and it will only perpetuate the imbalances and nullifies the objectives. Merely opening up a Health centre, for example, is not enough; what really must be seen is whether its pattern on a given model fits in the extant life pattern of the tribal group whom it wishes to serve and also whether such group will ultimately participate in its benefits.

The traditional tribal institutional structure should be utilised in the service of new change. It will be necessary to understand the nature of the institutional set-up in each area and to examine whether it can be used with advantage in the process of directed change. One example will illustrate the point. Take the case of a tribal market. This institution has a key position in the tribal economy and has certain special features. It is significant to note that the entire economic activity in a well-defined small geographical area, is concentrated within a small period of a few hours in a week at one spot. This situation presents a tremendous policy potential. It is easy to influence here the exchange economy of the entire region because the administration has to oversee it in a few specific points over limited and specified time periods. In an advanced area, on the other hand, economic transactions are spread over numerous points in all the villages, for all the days in a week and all the year round. It will be an impossible administrative task to oversee such an economy except by extremely stringent regulatory measures.

In most of the tribal societies, the traditional panchayats, youth organisations, informal inter-village communication systems, etc., are quite strong. Yet in planning for education, even adult education, these elements are hardly taken note of. Formal institutional framework may be superimposed which may have no contact point with the traditional tribal groups. The two, therefore, work in isolation and without any inter-action, whatsoever.

Even though with all the diversity in their value system, however, there appears to be one characteristic which is strikingly common to almost all the tribal communities, and which again is highly pertinent to planning. It pertains to the tribals attitude to their standard of living and to its

improvement. According to Kusum Nair regarding planning "If democratic planning is to succeed and result in a continuous and self-sustaining process of economic growth, obviously there must be a corresponding and urgent desire in the community as a whole for its fruit in the form of a rising standard of consumption. Planning in India is framed on the assumption — which in view of the extreme poverty of the people would seem logical — that the desire for higher levels of living is inherent — and more or less universal among the masses being planned for" (Nair, 1961: 192). But the great majority of the tribal people have limited and static aspirations. The consequences are many. According to Nair "Unless a man feels the desire to have more material wealth sufficiently to strive for it he cannot be expected to have much interest in new techniques; there will be little attempt on his part to innovate. He may and often does disdain to engage in activities yielding the highest net advantage even within the available opportunities and the restrictions imposed on him by the society to which he belongs" (Nair, 1961: 193). So the aspirations play a vital role. Our programme and approach should stimulate the greater aspirations of the tribal people.

There are three major orientation patterns to a development strategy for any area:

- (1) Region specific;
- (2) Resource specific; and
- (3) People (client) specific.

May be that in a given situation the planner may have to select a combination of the above orientations but in a tribal situation the people (client) specific orientation is a must. The tribals that are recipients of the fruits of the tribal Sub-Plan effort are at various stages of their

growth. The propensity to assimilation in will involve all the tribals in the same de-
 the process of change are also variegated. gree of enthusiasm and participation can
 To assume that a given programme mix at the best be a pipe dream.

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