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A Study of Factors Contributing to Social Change among Tribals in India

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Abstract:

Social change is an important concept in sociology and in order to understand the nature of any society it is important to study its structure and changes in it. Like nature, human society is also variable and every society strives for stability. But no society in the world is completely stable; changes are constantly taking place in it. All aspects of society such as social institutions, organizations, groups, rules, values, attitudes, beliefs, ideologies, and behaviors are continuously changing. Therefore, while studying a particular society, it is necessary to study the changes that take place in that society and this also applies to the tribal society. Even the tribal communities that remained isolated from the mainstream of society were not immune to the impact of social change. In the pre-independence period, the association of the tribals with the Christian missionaries helped in the social change of the tribals. The process of social change seems to be taking shape among the tribals in India due to the provisions of the Constitution and the various tribal development schemes implemented by the Government of India in the post-independence period.

Keywords: Tribals, Social Change, Article 164, PESA, Christian Missionaries

Introduction:

The pace of social change in Indian society was accelerated by the impact of the processes of industrialization, urbanization, westernization, and modernization during the British rule. Further, after independence, the process of democratization started and drastic changes started taking place in the Indian society. Although this process of social change has not been very dynamic in the tribal society, social change has started to take place among the tribals as well. There is no denying the fact that the entry of Christian missionaries into the tribal areas on the pre-independence period and their close association with the tribal communities has been instrumental in promoting social change among the tribals. In the post-independence period, the various schemes designed by the government for the welfare and development of the tribal society have also promoted the process of social change in the tribal society. In the present research paper, various factors which have contributed to the process of social change among tribals have been discussed and analyzed in detail.

Tribal Social Structure:

Darwin proposed his theory of biological evolution in 1859. Similarly, Herbert Spencer also propounded the developmental theory of social institutions. It is obvious that human institutions, like human beings, must have developed according to some principle.



If human beings are of the same species, why their different cultures an attempt was made to find the answer to this question. Early anthropology thought that the study of tribal institutions would give definite ideas about the development of human institutions, since the tribal society had been living in the mountain valleys far away from modern civilization for centuries. Accordingly, the tribal cultures of America, Africa, Asia, and Australia were studied and based on that, anthropological theories were proposed.¹

Indian society is divided into three different stages of development. The society of the country is divided into a highly advanced society on one side, an extremely backward society on the other and a society in between on the other side. Undeveloped society is called primitive or tribal society. While preserving the traditional and accepting modernity is called rural society and the third is called civil society. Tribal society is a society that lives in the primitive stage of human being and it still lives in the hills and lives by hunting and hunting. This society which wears minimum clothes around the waist to protect the shame is extremely backward. In every corner of the country, the tribal people of different races still preserve the primitive human way of life. Tribals place importance on witchcraft for health cures and trust Bhagat over doctors.²

Explaining the nature of tribal society, Gillin and Gillin say, 'Tribal society is an amalgamation of local groups living in a particular territory, speaking a common dialect, leading a common cultural life, but not having an alphabetic identity.' A group of people is called tribal. Tribal society is very backward compared to advanced society. The economic life of tribals is very simple, easy, and straightforward. The stage of specialization of their social work is elementary. Evos Richards says that 'A society which is homogenous in terms of population area and social relations and has a uniform, simple economy and specialization in social work is in the rudimentary stage as compared to advanced society can be called tribal society.' It is underdeveloped educationally, economically, and socially.³ However, due to the contact with the advanced society and the government's tribal development efforts, the process of social change has started in the tribal society as well. Therefore, the tribals in the primary stage are seen to be transformed by the influence of social change in the present time. But it should be noted that the nature and pace of this process is not the same in all tribal areas.

Factors driving social change among tribals:

The traditional life of tribals is changing rapidly and due to the availability of means of communication, industrialization, and various development schemes, tribals have meet the advanced society and this has affected their social life. As the Mahadev Koli, Konka, Thakar tribes imitate the customs of Hindu social life, the means of preserving their culture is disappearing. It is a matter of concern that traditional songs, stories, folklore, dances, phrases, sayings, folk songs are fast disappearing behind the curtain of time. Today, the folk songs sung by the tribal community to the rhythm of traditional instruments seem modern in tone and content. Also, the feeling of inferiority created among the educated tribals due to the spread of education is unfortunate.⁴

In the process of modern development, some families from the same tribal tribe migrate due to education, job, business; they move away from their usual reality and become a part of modern culture. We forget our dialect, gods and goddesses, myths. Also,



not only dress, food, but marriage also changes. Hence, they have no visible connection with their tribe except through blood connection. Under the development programme, the tribals come into close contact with the outside world and mainstream culture. The more people in the tribal community change their lifestyles and lifestyles, the more successful the development program is. But while this is happening, tribal people are far away from their traditional cultural life. Often, they also lose their connection with their tribe, section, and immediate family. Often their names, surnames are also taken or given from outside culture. E.g., Instead of Mallu (Peacock) the names of 'Manohar' and 'Bajirao' instead of Bija (Seed) are recorded by the school teachers. Therefore, the identity of tribal's gets blurred.⁵ Talcott Parson's words in this regard is very important. He says, culture is a social heritage and through rites, culture is passed on to the next generation and culture survives. Therefore, even if individuals and generations change, the social heritage of culture continues unbroken. For the survival of a society, it is necessary to keep the culture of that society alive. Therefore, while developing the tribal society, care should be taken to ensure that their cultural life does not end.⁶

The traditional life of the tribal community is changing in many ways, but the pace is slow. However, due to the various schemes of the government for tribal development, the tribal society has seen a lot of improvement in educational, social, political, economic and health aspects. Through various schemes of the government, drinking water, roads and communication, irrigation, tribal land rights laws, agricultural development and irrigation, health care facilities, accommodation, education, hostels and ashram schools, irrigation facilities, special powers and funds given to village panchayats in tribal areas, political and job reservation etc. Many other schemes have started to bring changes in many areas of tribal social life. Although the nature of social change among tribals is negative in some respects, the positive effects appear to be more.⁷

British Policy and Christian Missionaries:

As European imperialism expanded, so did the work of Christian missionaries who encouraged the conversion of the colonists. With the spread of imperialism and Christianity, more study of tribal culture began. In fact, their customs were carefully studied to facilitate the propagation of religion among the tribals. Earlier tribal culture was only sparsely known based on the information contained in many travelogues.⁸

The arrival of the British ushered in the modern era in India and the problems of the people of this region were brought to the attention of the British missionaries. But because of the selfish motive behind it, they did not make any special efforts to deliberately integrate the tribals into the mainstream of society. Therefore, tribals remained neglected forever. As the British kept them away from the mainstream of society, moneylenders and landlords exploited the tribals on a large scale. In the name of forest protection and security, the tribals started being expelled from the forests where they cultivated their customs and traditions for years. But as the British did not have any kind of control over these zamindars, the tribal tribes became suspicious of the British. In this way, due to interference in the jurisdiction of tribals, their economic decline. Hence onwards the tribal tribes avoided coming into the mainstream of the society to maintain their own existence.⁹ But the British government and Christian missionaries drew the attention of Indians to the



tribals and their problems: But this must be accepted.

Constitutional Provisions:

The Constitution of Independent India came into force on 26 January 1950. In the constitution, some special provisions have been made for the upliftment of the backward, weak, exploited, deprived and underprivileged sections of the society. As the tribal society is prominent among the neglected and backward elements, some special provisions have been made in the constitution for their development.

In the third part of the constitution, fundamental rights have been conferred for the overall development of the citizens. Accordingly, in Article 15 to Article 17, the constitution has given the right to equality for all citizens and thus the tribals have got constitutional protection to bring them into the mainstream. At the same time, the tribal community has been protected from exploitation due to Article 23 and the right to religious freedom according to Article 25 and educational and cultural rights according to Article 29 have been given to tribals like all citizens.

According to Article 164 of the fourth part of the constitution, there is a provision to appoint an independent minister for the development of tribals in the states of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, which have a large population of tribals. There is also a provision that the central government and the state government should provide special funds for the welfare of tribals.

Article 330 to Article 332 of Part 16 of the Constitution provides for reserved seats in the Lok Sabha and in the State Legislative Assemblies to ensure adequate representation for tribals in proportion to their population. Also, under Article 338, the President can appoint special officers for the protection of Scheduled Castes and Tribes.¹⁰

Along with the above provision, many provisions for tribal upliftment are included in the constitution. Their aim is to bring the tribal society together with the advanced society. This seems to be changing the traditional tribal society.

Pandit Nehru's Panchsheel for Tribal Development:

Many provisions have been included in the constitution for the social and economic development of tribals. But as there is no national policy to implement them, the administration of tribal development is carried out according to the five guiding principles (Panchsheel) elaborated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru in 1952. Nehru's panchasutra of tribal development is as follows.

1. The tribals got the opportunity to develop according to their abilities and talents.
2. Tribal rights over forest and land should be respected.
3. Tribal groups should be trained instead of many non-tribals for administrative and development work.
4. Development works should be done without disturbing the socio-cultural institutions of tribals.
5. The indicator of tribal development should not be the money spent on tribals but the quality of their lives.¹¹

In Panchshila elaborated by Pandit Nehru, the general aspects are given in detail and the exact details are given in brief. Keeping this in mind, the Government of India established the Ministry of Tribal Development in October 1999 to promote tribal

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development and this ministry has drafted the National Policy on Tribals. Accordingly, the ministry is expected to determine the policy based on the suggestions of tribal leaders, state government and other concerned persons, organizations, NGOs etc.

Five Year Plan and Tribal Development Approach:

After the five-year planning process started in post-independence India, discussion and planning started regarding the development of Adivasis society. Prior to that, two views prevailed regarding tribals. First, he believed that there should be no interference in the lives of tribals to preserve their uniqueness. The other view advocated the integration of tribals and their culture into the mainstream by accelerating the process of assimilation among the tribals. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru proposed a golden mean of both the above approaches; It is also referred to as the 'Nehru approach'. Accordingly, while integrating the tribals and their culture into the national mainstream, there was an insistence on preserving the good qualities and virtues of their culture. It was also intended that this inclusion should be done through the voluntary and heartfelt consent of the tribals.

This approach was stated in the following words in the framework of the First Five Year Plan.

1. To provide an opportunity to the tribals to develop the natural resources of their region to create an economic life through which they can enjoy the produce of their labour. Also they will not be exploited by external economic forces.
2. It is proper not to change their religious and social life, it should be done only if they take the initiative and voluntarily bring about change.
3. The good and useful features of tribal life should not only be preserved but also developed.
4. To preserve and appreciate the characteristics of their dialects, their arts, and crafts.

In this way, the First Five Year Plan incorporated the approach of implementing the process of change very gently and with the self-motivation, participation, and consent of the tribals to bring about a developmental transformation in the lives of the tribals. According to this; tribal development plans were planned in the future.

Ministry of Tribal Affairs - Government of India:

Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment was created in 1999 by splitting the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment for the purpose of comprehensive social and economic development of Scheduled Tribes. Earlier, the work of tribal development schemes was carried out through different ministries. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the Central Ministry (Nodal Ministry) which plans all the schemes and coordinates the programs related to tribal development. Accordingly, the programs undertaken by the Department under the provisions of the Government of India (Division of Work) Rules, 1961 and subsequent amendments are applicable to the tribal people and tribal areas of India. This mainly includes the following aspects.

1. Social Security and Social Insurance to Tribals
2. Tribal Welfare: Planning, project formulation, research, evaluation, statistics, and training
3. Development of Scheduled Tribes
4. Scheduled Areas



5. To monitor the Tribal Development Fund based on the framework and mechanism prescribed by NITI Aayog.

6. National Commission for Scheduled Tribes a) to report on the administration of Scheduled Areas and the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and b) to formulate necessary schemes for the welfare of tribals in any State and give directions for their execution

7. Implementation of the Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 except for the administration of criminal justice for offenses relating to Scheduled Tribes.¹³

Thus, it was determined that the Ministry of Tribal Affairs will continue to function as an apex body for the development and welfare of tribals. However, the sectoral programs and plans designed for the development of the tribal community and the responsibility of establishing the necessary coordination for the same was entrusted to the Central Ministries/Departments, Administration of the State Governments/Union Territories, Ministries/Departments.

Direct allocation of funds to Gram Panchayats in Tribal Areas (PESA):

According to the fifth schedule of the constitution, the governors of ten states including Maharashtra which are scheduled areas in the country have been entrusted with some important responsibilities for the purpose of tribal development. Accordingly, the Governor must send a report to the President every year along with his objective observations regarding the administration of the Scheduled Areas in the State. Also, the Governor has the constitutional right to issue notifications for the development of Scheduled Tribes. Using these powers, the Governor of Maharashtra has taken many important decisions through the government system for the development of the tribal people in the scheduled areas of the state. It has helped in raising the standard of living of the tribals.¹⁴

Conclusion:

The nature of social change taking place in tribal society is not the same everywhere. The process of social change and its impact can be seen in the tribal areas where advanced society has grown and where the process of development has reached early. However, it cannot be said that this change in tribals is positive in all respects. It is because: in some cases, its negative effect is also seen in tribals. However, the tribal society should not be isolated from the mainstream and should welcome the social changes among the tribals with the noble vision that the path of progress should be opened for them.

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