

M. Shakeel Ahmad, 2004. Five Decades of Planning and Tribal Development: A Study of Uttaranchal and Jharkhand. Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, Pages; 373, Rupees, 395.

This book is a rich account and analysis of the steps taken towards tribal development from the yesteryears till the present. It is divided into thirteen chapters apart from the introduction. The first chapter deals with a detailed profile of the scheduled tribes and the schemes and programmes for their development. The occupational pattern, education and population growth of the tribes have been discussed in detail. The study brings to light stark reality of the tribal problems which not only persist but continue to multiply despite the introduction of various developmental programmes.

It has been rightly pointed out that after making a critical review of the developmental activities pertaining to the tribes that there is still a very long way to go. Moreover it is important to adhere to the ideology that you cannot develop other people; you can help them develop and take care of themselves as people develop in their own ways.

A vital issue has been focused upon which once again draws attention to the oft forgotten or ignored fact that any developmental plans for the tribals needs to be made against the backdrop of the tribal culture. For example the tribal sub-plan strategy has so far focused on the individuals' elevation above the poverty line; while following the tribal ethos, the emphasis should have been on the elevation of the entire community, focusing on their economy, education, health etc. (p. 38) A comprehensive description of India's tribal policy makes up the second chapter of the book, which deals with tribal policy before and after independence.

Chapter three deals with the major approaches to tribal development. The statement made by Jawaharlal Nehru in his note on 'A Philosophy for NEFA' was made the pedestal upon which the national policy of tribal development rests. He stated, "We cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal area or just not take interest in them. At the same time, we should avoid administering these areas and in particular, sending too many outsiders into tribal territory..... It is between these two extreme positions that we have to function" (p. 69).

The post independence period saw the importance being given to the felt needs of the tribals. Thereafter the five-year plans included specific provisions for tribal development. The Fifth Five-year plan should be regarded as a watershed in the history of tribal development. This period saw the birth of the concept of a sub-plan for the tribal regions. Chapter four is devoted entirely to Tribal Sub-Plan. The need to address vital issues such as planning from below, relationship between the tribal and his environment and optimum utilization of limited resources for tribal development has been brought out in this chapter.

A detailed analysis of the working of ITDPs, SCA to Tribal Sub-Plan and the provision of Grant under Article 275(1) of the Constitution forms the 5th chapter of the book. Chapter six throws fresh light on the symbiotic relationship between the forest and the tribals. A number of valuable suggestions have been given which if taken into consideration can go a long way in benefitting the forests and the tribals both. Author writes, "Agro forestry and social forestry should be promoted for meeting the food, fodder, fuel, wood, timber and bamboo requirements of the people. Commercial forestry should be promoted for economic development of the tribals. Marketing assistance should be made available to them. Cultivation of bamboo and herbs should be encouraged" (p. 158).

The role of Panchayati Raj in the development of the tribals has been dealt with in chapter seven of the book. The fact that the Constitution's 73rd amendment dealing with the Panchayats recognized the need for special provisions for scheduled areas and tribal areas, it has been rightly suggested that the 73rd Amendment Act should be implemented in its true spirit in all the states having Scheduled Areas. Each tribe's culture is unique in its own way and greatly cherished by it. Problems too are tribe specific. The spirit of people's participation, the cornerstone of the Panchayati Raj system, needs to be driven home to the tribals who can work towards self-development.

The role of the traditional panchayats of the tribals vis-i-vis. Panchayati Raj system has also been well analysed in this chapter. The working of the Panchayati Raj in Jharkhand has been explained in the same vein. The author concludes that the traditional panchayats in Jharkhand - *Parha* and *Hatu* do exist and mainly function to preserve the time old tribal customs and manners.

Chapter eight is devoted to the description of Uttaranchal. Well-analysed demographic details of this new state are much needed in order to understand the state and the pace of its development. Chapter nine focuses on the impact of tribal development programmes on the condition of tribals in Uttaranchal. It is disheartening to learn that the provisions on paper find little semblance with their implementation. Lack of awareness on the part of the tribals about development programmes and apathy of government officials towards the tribals cause prove to be the stumbling blocks on the path of tribal development. It has been recommended that developmental programmes should be carried out under the close watch of the tribal welfare department of the State Government in general and the district authority in particular.

Chapter ten and eleven focus upon Jharkhand and the impact of tribal development programmes on the condition of tribals in Jharkhand. It is interesting to know that the role of the NGOs has been far more instrumental in developing the state of the tribals in Jharkhand than the role of the Government. An exhaustive analysis of the working of Panchayati Raj in Jharkhand has been done. Jharkhand

Panchayati Raj Act 2001, which paves the way for tribal self-rule has been dealt with in detail in this chapter.

Chapter twelve makes a comparative study of the position of tribals in Jharkhand and Uttaranchal. The study concludes that in both the states, the Government schemes made for tribal development are not being properly implemented at the grassroots level primarily due to minimal community participation.

In chapter thirteen the author gives several valuable suggestions, which may play an instrumental role in changing the lives of the tribals for the better. For example, it is suggested that there should be a 'comprehensive national policy' for the empowerment of the tribals and a 'National Plan of action' should be formulated for its effective implementation.

The book brings to light the present face of tribal development. Important concerns of the tribals like land alienation and education are dealt with great precision. The issue of tribal development being an ongoing one, the book answers several questions and clears several doubts and simultaneously leaves ample scope for further exploration. Needless to say, it is a thought provoking work and will be useful to social scientists.

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