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AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA*

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I

Every one is conscious about the backwardness of various tribes in our country. With the general emphasis on welfare-oriented growth, one cannot possibly ignore the tribal population of the country which amounts to about three crores of people. These tribes are scattered all over the country and are mostly localised in small pockets in various States. The characteristic feature of the tribal areas is that, by and large, these are isolated from the neighbouring areas. Thus, due to lack of communication, there has been almost total absence of any interaction and demonstration effect of the neighbouring areas. Therefore, the tribals have continued to remain conservative and tradition bound. However, with the era of planning, the planned development of these tribals was also thought of. The beginning was made during the First Five-Year Plan. Much larger allocations were made during the Second Five-Year Plan which were further increased during the Third Five-Year Plan. The Fourth Five-Year Plan proposes to nearly double the amount allocated during the Third Five-Year Plan.

Due to personnel and administrative problems, very little use could be made of the allocated funds during the First Five-Year Plan period. Therefore, an effort is made in this paper to examine the Second and Third Five-Year Plan allocations for tribal development for different States and also to examine whether the same have helped towards the agricultural development of the tribal population.

II

It is well accepted that agricultural development cannot take place in a vacuum. Agricultural development is dependent on overall development of communication, education and other necessary infra-structure. Table I shows the population distribution and the allocation of funds (total as well as per capita) for the welfare of tribal people in different States during the Second and Third Five-Year Plan periods. It is interesting to note that the highest per capita expenditure on tribal development during the Second Five-Year Plan was of the magnitude of Rs. 2,686.95 in Punjab. Analysis of the detailed allocations showed that a great deal of expenditure was incurred on communication in Punjab. It is also interesting to note that the tribal population of Punjab increased from 2,661 in 1951 to 14,132 in 1961. Probably the magnitude of per capita expenditure tempted the tribals of the neighbouring areas to migrate to Punjab. During

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TABLE I—STATEWISE DISTRIBUTION OF TRIBAL POPULATION, TOTAL EXPENDITURE AND PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE ON THE WELFARE OF SCHEDULED TRIBES DURING THE SECOND AND THIRD FIVE-YEAR PLAN PERIODS

(*in Rs.*)

State	Second Five-Year Plan*			Third Five-Year Plan**		
	Tribal population†	Total expenditure (lakhs)*	Per capita expenditure	Tribal population	Total expenditure (lakhs)	Per capita expenditure
Andhra Pradesh	11,49,919	307·37	26·72	13,24,368	288·38	21·77
Assam	17,61,434	1,343·41	76·26	20,64,816	1,161·10	56·23
Bihar	38,80,097	383·39	98·80	42,04,784	546·56	13·00
Gujarat	20,64,522	43·93	2·11	27,54,446	431·53	15·67
Kerala	1,34,757	56·43	41·87	2,12,762	39·99	18·80
Madhya Pradesh	48,44,128	486·42	10·00	66,78,410	1,097·21	16·42
Madras	1,36,376	42·47	31·14	2,51,991	58·84	23·35
Maharashtra	15,93,857	81·44	5·11	23,97,159	330·21	13·77
Mysore	80,402	38·87	48·34	1,92,096	49·45	25·74
Punjab‡	2,661	71·50	2,686·95	14,132	13·08	92·55
Orissa	30,09,580	553·82	18·40	42,23,757	587·29	13·90
Rajasthan	17,74,278	187·75	10·58	23,51,470	203·67	8·65
West Bengal	15,66,868	150·07	9·57	20,54,081	220·70	10·75
Himachal Pradesh‡ ..	27,928	34·79	124·57	1,08,194	69·95	64·65
Manipur	1,94,239	129·08	66·45	2,49,049	121·45	48·76
Tripura	1,92,293	107·58	55·94	3,60,070	116·57	32·37
All-India	2,24,39,740	3,883·65	17·30	2,98,79,249	5,340·24	17·87

* Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the Year 1960-61, Part II.

** All-India Report of the Study Team on Tribal Development Programme, Committee of Plan Projects, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1969.

† Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the Year 1962-63, Part II. These are according to the Census of 1951. Therefore, up to the beginning of the Second Five-Year Plan (*i.e.*, 1956) there is some margin of error. The interpolation could not be attempted because the increase in the population between 1951 and 1961 was of the magnitude of 431·08 per cent in Punjab. This could be due to migration and other factors rather than to the natural growth of population. However, the figures pertaining to Gujarat and Maharashtra are from the Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1956-57, Part II.

‡ The figures relate to erstwhile Himachal Pradesh and Punjab before the reorganization of 1966.

the same period, second highest per capita allocation of funds was Rs. 124.57 for Himachal Pradesh, Rs. 98.80 for Bihar, Rs. 76.26 for Assam, Rs. 66.45 for Manipur and Rs. 55.94 for Tripura. However, during the Third Plan period the per capita allocation of funds for Bihar fell from Rs. 98.80 to Rs. 13. The highest per capita allocation of funds was Rs. 92.55 for Punjab followed by Rs. 64.65 for Himachal Pradesh, Rs. 56.23 for Assam, Rs. 48.76 for Manipur and Rs. 32.37 for Tripura. The lowest per capita allocation during the Second Plan was Rs. 2.11 for Gujarat, followed by Rs. 5.11 for Maharashtra, Rs. 9.57 for West Bengal, Rs. 10 for Madhya Pradesh and Rs. 10.58 for Rajasthan. Whereas, during the Third Plan period, the lowest per capita allocation was Rs. 8.67 for Rajasthan, followed by Rs. 10.75 for West Bengal, Rs. 13 for Bihar, Rs. 13.77 for Maharashtra and Rs. 13.90 for Orissa. On per capita basis the difference between the highest allocation and the lowest allocation amounts to approximately Rs. 2,684.84 and Rs. 84 for the Second and Third Plan periods, respectively. Such disparities have been responsible for the uneven development of the tribal areas. The scanty available literature does not throw any light on the reasons for such disparities but it must be emphasized that such disparities should not exist without strong justification. Therefore, this needs to be thoroughly examined and accordingly the necessary adjustment and modifications should be introduced. Any allocations should be decided only after conducting socio-economic surveys in the areas concerned.

Tables II and III give the break-up of the allocations between different heads (*viz.*, education, economic uplift and health, housing and other schemes), for the Second and Third Plans, respectively. For the Second Five-Year Plan, the highest percentage share of education was for Madhya Pradesh followed by Kerala, Gujarat, Madras, West Bengal, Orissa and Maharashtra; whereas the lowest per-

TABLE II—STATEWISE DISTRIBUTION OF PER CAPITA ALLOCATION AMONG DIFFERENT HEADS FOR THE TRIBALS DURING THE SECOND FIVE-YEAR PLAN PERIOD*

(*in Rs.*)

State	Education	Economic uplift	Health, housing and other schemes
Andhra Pradesh	2·10 (7·86)	16·90 (33·22)	7·73 (28·92)
Assam	8·27 (10·85)	33·57 (44·02)	34·42 (45·13)
Bihar	2·00 (20·27)	2·64 (26·71)	5·24 (53·02)
Gujarat	0·59 (27·86)	0·26 (12·41)	1·27 (59·73)
Maharashtra	1·18 (23·08)	1·42 (27·85)	2·51 (49·07)
Kerala	13·03 (31·12)	15·57 (37·18)	13·28 (31·70)
Madhya Pradesh	4·37 (43·55)	2·75 (27·35)	2·92 (29·10)
Madras	8·62 (27·69)	8·77 (28·16)	13·77 (44·15)
Mysore	7·52 (15·56)	16·79 (34·74)	24·03 (49·70)
Orissa	4·59 (24·94)	6·76 (36·73)	7·05 (38·33)
Punjab	285·23 (10·61)	2,061·63 (76·73)	340·10 (12·66)
Rajasthan	1·68 (15·83)	3·87 (36·56)	5·04 (47·61)
West Bengal	2·45 (25·57)	2·91 (30·36)	4·22 (44·07)
Himachal Pradesh	26·64 (21·38)	59·04 (47·40)	38·89 (31·22)
Manipur	4·33 (6·51)	36·05 (54·26)	26·07 (39·23)
Tripura	2·79 (4·98)	43·66 (78·04)	9·50 (16·98)
All-India	3·64 (21·02)	7·56 (43·70)	6·10 (35·28)

N.B. : Figures in brackets indicate percentages of allocation to the total.

* Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the Year 1962-63 Part II.

TABLE III—STATEWISE DISTRIBUTION OF PER CAPITA EXPENDITURE AMONG DIFFERENT HEADS FOR THE TRIBALS DURING THE THIRD FIVE-YEAR PLAN PERIOD*

(*in Rs.*)

States	Education		Economic uplift		Health, housing and other schemes	
Andhra Pradesh	1·46	(6·71)	11·77	(54·06)	8·54	(39·23)
Assam	11·92	(21·20)	15·70	(27·92)	28·61	(50·88)
Bihar	6·32	(48·61)	5·99	(46·08)	0·69	(5·31)
Gujarat	5·63	(35·93)	8·72	(55·65)	1·32	(8·42)
Kerala	8·12	(43·19)	5·94	(31·60)	4·74	(25·21)
Madhya Pradesh	4·51	(27·47)	10·43	(63·52)	1·48	(9·01)
Madras	5·52	(23·64)	10·76	(46·08)	7·07	(30·28)
Maharashtra	2·01	(14·60)	10·37	(75·31)	1·39	(10·09)
Mysore	6·09	(23·66)	12·66	(49·18)	6·99	(23·16)
Orissa	3·98	(28·63)	8·07	(58·06)	1·85	(13·31)
Punjab	12·59	(13·60)	79·96	(86·40)	—	(—)
Rajasthan	2·52	(29·13)	5·68	(65·67)	0·45	(5·20)
West Bengal	4·89	(45·49)	3·25	(30·23)	2·61	(24·28)
Andaman and Nicobar Islands ..	12·04	(39·92)	7·29	(24·17)	10·83	(35·91)
Himachal Pradesh	12·30	(19·03)	36·11	(55·85)	16·24	(25·12)
Manipur	12·20	(25·02)	25·94	(53·20)	10·62	(21·68)
Tirpura	2·54	(7·85)	19·13	(59·10)	10·70	(33·05)
All-India	4·90	(27·42)	9·06	(50·70)	3·91	(21·88)

N.B. : Figures in brackets indicate percentages of expenditure to the total.

* All-India Report of the Study Team on Tribal Development Programme, Committee of Plan Projects, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1969.

centage share of education was that of Punjab followed by Assam, Mysore and Rajasthan. For the Third Five-Year Plan, only 6.7 per cent, 7.9 per cent and 13.6 per cent of the total was allocated for education in Andhra Pradesh, Tripura and Punjab, respectively; on the other hand, the percentage share allocated on education for Bihar, West Bengal and Kerala was 48.6, 45.5 and 43.2, respectively. As regards economic uplift, the highest percentage share of 78.04 was for Tripura, followed by 76.73 for Punjab, 63.22 for Andhra Pradesh and 54.26 for Manipur; whereas the lowest percentage share of 12.41 was for Gujarat, followed by 26.71 for Bihar, 27.35 for Madhya Pradesh and 27.85 for Maharashtra. As regards the Third Plan allocations on economic uplift, Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh had allocated 86.4 per cent, 75.3

per cent, 65.7 per cent and 63.5 per cent of the total, respectively and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Assam, West Bengal and Kerala allocated 24.2 per cent, 27.9 per cent, 30.2 per cent and 31.6 per cent of the total, respectively. As could be seen from Tables II and III, in general, the percentage allocation on health, housing and other schemes was higher during the Second Five-Year Plan than during the Third Plan, the glaring examples are those of Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa. In the absence of any socio-economic surveys, one fails to understand the reasons behind the prevailing differences in allocations of different States. Since, prior to these allocations, no socio-economic surveys were conducted in different States, it is not possible to pin down logical economic arguments for such differences and disparities, therefore, it may be emphasized that this question needs to be examined much more thoroughly.

III

The various reports reveal that some of the major problems of the tribals in most of the States are low and insecure incomes, illiteracy, unemployment, primitive methods of cultivation and inadequate communication system. Since the very beginning of the planning era, attention has been paid to the development and welfare of the tribal population. However, no significant results have been achieved so far. Unfortunately, the available statistics do not throw any light on agricultural production of the tribals. Had this data been available, it would have been very useful to link the per capita expenditure with the level of agricultural development. In the absence of the available statistics, it has not been possible to provide any statistical link up between agricultural development and the allocations on different schemes. However, based on the various reports, some broad observations in this connection could be made.

In certain areas, subsidy covering 75 per cent of the total cost of terracing was offered. The remaining 25 per cent was to be borne by the tribals themselves.[1] In most of the tribal areas, the productivity of land being very low and the quality of land being so poor that even a five-acre holding was considered to be an uneconomic unit. Under such conditions, it is very unrealistic to expect the tribals to meet the 25 per cent of the terracing cost from their own savings. The other possible alternative could be the borrowings for which the tribals had to rely upon the *Mahajans* who charged rates of interest ranging from 50 per cent to 250 per cent.[2] Thus, in the absence of proper institutional credit facilities, the 25 per cent cost would get heavily inflated due to the exploitation of tribals by the *Mahajans*, making it still more difficult for the tribals to think of such an improvement. Therefore, in spite of the generous programme of subsidies, the purpose was not served, and in many cases, it was found difficult to utilize fully the allocated funds.[3]

Similarly, a subsidy of 25 per cent is given for the improvement of private tanks for the development of fisheries, but it was not possible for the tribals to finance the remaining 75 per cent of the cost involved.[4]

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1. Report of the Study Team on Tribal Development Programme, Manipur, Committee of Plan Projects, Planning Commission, New Delhi.
2. Report of the Study Team on Tribal Development Programme, Bihar, Committee of Plan Projects, Planning Commission, New Delhi, 1968.
3. Annual Reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for the Years 1956-57, 1961-62 and 1962-63.
4. Report of the Study Team on Tribal Development Programme, Bihar, *op cit.*

Most of the above-mentioned problems cannot be solved without the initiative and co-operation of the tribal population. To guarantee this, proper environment is to be created. This requires extensive and liberal use of extension services. However, it has been gathered from various reports that the extension staff is not willing to go to the hilly tracts where these tribals reside. Thus, in the absence of the availability of various extension services, it is very difficult to realise the beneficial effects of the allocated funds on agricultural development of the tribal people.

IV

In view of the above discussion, following suggestions may be considered:

1. Special efforts be made to induce qualified people to shoulder the responsibility of educating and helping the tribal people. Also, nobody can dispute the importance of communication in any developing economy. It is surprising to note that except for Punjab, this item had not received the emphasis and attention which it deserved. To think of agricultural development in the absence of proper communication system is almost a mockery. Because this would inhibit the timely disbursement of credit and other agricultural inputs.

2. Credit seems to be the other major problem of the tribals. At present, the tribals hardly avail any institutional credit. As gathered from various reports, they still seem to be totally dependent on the local moneylenders who made every possible effort to exploit them. All-out efforts must be made to free the tribals from the clutches of the moneylenders. Availability of cheap and timely credit would enable the adoption of modern technology and the marketing of surplus agricultural produce, if any. In view of the problems mentioned above, one cannot expect the tribals to be enthusiastic about agricultural developmment in these areas.

3. Shifting cultivation is a common practice with most of the tribals. They clear a particular forest area and indulge into terrace cultivation. This is a very laborious process and reflects on the hardy nature of these tribals. It is important that this hardy and laborious type of labour be utilized more scientifically so as to be the growth promoting factor. For example, the construction of roads in many hilly areas is considered to be very difficult job but with proper wage incentives it may be possible to utilize the tribal labour for this purpose. It is important that for the terrace cultivation tribals be educated to raise more than one crop. Sincere efforts be made to utilize fully the available surface and ground water for irrigational purposes so that it can enable the tribals to raise more than one crop. However, where there is no scope for such irrigational facilities, tribals be educated to raise the second crop of horse gram, and other suitable varieties of pulses. Wherever irrigational facilities exist efforts should be made to educate the tribals to grow a second crop of small millets, potatoes or other seasonal vegetables. In many hill areas chillies could be successfully grown on various terraces. Attention should also be paid to the establishment of small orchards in suitable areas. For example, many hill areas have ideal climate for the cultivation of pistachio nuts, plums, peaches, almonds, and apples. Also, seasonal crops of currents

goose-berrys, and strawberrys could be grown. During the winter, when certain areas get covered with snow, it is possible to use the area for cauliflower cultivation. The heads of the cauliflowers are made in the plains. These are subsequently transplanted in the areas expected to be covered with snow, and these heads are burried with $1\frac{1}{2}''$ thick farmyard manure so that the head does not get affected by the frost. Experiments and experience have shown that good quality and good sized cauliflowers can be grown under this system. It has also been observed that many of the hill areas occupied by the tribals are ideal for the seed cultivation of cabbage, leek, turnip and radish. Himachal Pradesh is specially suited for a commercial crop like saffron. Therefore, special efforts to introduce such measures and agricultural practices must be made in these areas. Just the allocation of funds in the absence of proper planning and scientific recommendations will not solve the problems of the tribal people.

4. Fisheries seem to be another industry which needs to be developed in many tribal areas. Wherever possible, efforts be made to establish reasonable sized reservoirs which could be used for fish breeding. This will not only provide rich food and some extra income to the tribal people but also provide work and recreation. Such opportunities might also prevent them from moving from place to place.

5. Attention should also be paid to the growth of various forest industries, cottage industries as well as animal husbandry so that all these combined create sufficient year round employment and income opportunities for the tribals which could be instrumental in holding them attached to a particular area.

6. However, no planning or recommendation will help, unless proper communication system is provided in various tribal areas. Growth and development presuppose proper infra-structure and communication is the most basic of the same. Hence, the network of communication should receive the top priority in these areas.

DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURE IN TRIBAL AREAS

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INTRODUCTION

The less privileged classes of our society have lately been getting special attention on account of their economic, social and educational problems. With a view to reducing, to the maximum extent, the economic gap between them and the upper strata of the society, urgent need for their uplift has been rightly emphasized. The Fourth Five-Year Plan, putting specific emphasis on the problems