

Missed Opportunities In The Hills

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ABSTRACT

India's economy is ranked the sixth in nominal terms and third on ppp basis (after US and China) in the world according to projections by IMF outlook 2018. India is also the fastest growing economy in the world. The bright macroeconomic scenario however cannot compensate for the dark realities existing at the micro level. The gross inequality existing among the population region wise or community wise is one such dark spot among many. The living condition of the tribal population of the country in general is abysmally low and comparable with that of Sub Saharan Africa the poorest region of the world. When some sections of people are deprived of a basic minimum level of living and opportunities of improving it, the very objective of development is defeated. It further sets in motion a vicious circle because the underdevelopment of tribal people impedes development further by missing on human capital formation. Tribal youths who could reinforce the human capital pool so greatly, remain forgotten and unutilised. Hence concerted and sincere efforts are needed to include the tribals in the development process. That is the only right way for a country to march forward.

KEY WORDS: ST population, Deprivation, Human Development, Human Capital formation, Development process

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian Economy has crossed many mile stones in the last seventy years of its journey. Projections by International Monetary Fund outlook 2018, India becomes the sixth largest economy on nominal basis and third largest on ppp basis. The real national income has exhibited a rise of more than eighteen fold and real per capita income a rise of more than fivefold between 1950-51 and 2011-12. The macroeconomic indicators like GDP, per capita income, growth rate of the economy all reiterate the success story of the Indian economy. However the emphasis here is on growth. If one desires to ascertain whether there has been development in the real sense of the term, one has to look beyond simple growth indicators. Development entails much more than simple growth achievements.

Growth is only a means and what matters most, ultimately is to what extent the people of the country have benefited from it, and whether all of them have or not. If a section of the population or more so when a vast majority are left out when it comes to the distribution of this growth fruit, it would be rather awkward to call it development. A third of world's hungry live in India, and this is in spite of phenomenal rise in food grains production in the post Green Revolution era. Hence obviously more production does not automatically lead to more availability for people in general. The trickledown effect has somehow not materialised in India. In spite of spectacular double digit growth of the economy in the last two decades a large section of the population remains marginalised. The societal reach of economic progress in India has been remarkably limited (Sen Amartya, 2013). Certain communities in India have historically remained marginalised.

One way to classify the Indian society is, as scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and general. The SCs and STs are the people who are socially and economically marginalised. When the growth achievements are segregated and observed separately for each of these groups then what one would feel is sheer disappointment. One would be appalled at the level of living of the SCs and STs as compared to the general category population that too after about sixty five years of planned development, the extent of horizontal inequality is very sharp in India. The present study addresses the issue of this horizontal inequality by focusing on the tribal population of India.

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

1. *To analyse the present socio economic condition of tribal population of India in general.*
 2. *To highlight the extent of deprivation of these people in terms of basic amenities of life.*
 3. *To make an assessment of the impact of this deprivation on the life of these people.*
 4. *To analyse implication of the deprivation of the tribals for the economy in turn in terms of loss relating to human capital formation.*
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5. To suggest some measures to ameliorate the situation.

The sources of data are secondary such as, the published data of the Planning Commission, NSSO, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, National Family Health Survey, All India Survey of Higher Education, Ministry of Tribal Affairs Statistical division, Census 2011 Govt of India etc. The method used is descriptive statistics. Various inferences have been drawn on the basis of analysis of these data.

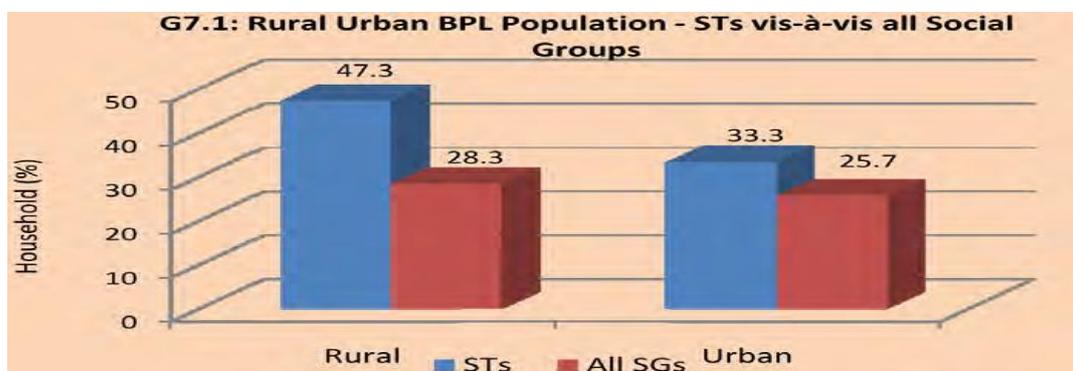
III. SOCIO ECONOMIC CONDITION OF TRIBALS OF INDIA

Scheduled tribe population comprise about 8.6 percent of total population of the country as per census 2011. Only ten states namely, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and Karnataka account for 83.2 percent of the total tribal population of the country. Historically they have been living in remote inaccessible regions of the country. As would be expected they were not touched or negligibly touched by the development efforts. The remoteness and inaccessibility of the tribal inhabited regions stand on the way of basic amenities reaching these places. But coincidentally their habitats are rich in mineral resources. The stakeholders of development have successfully exploited these resources making a positive difference to the growth of the economy. But exploitation of these minerals has caused widespread destruction of forests; degradation of land, contamination of water resources and in turn has brought immense misery in their life. In addition to these their shrinking habitat and vanishing sources of livelihood has exacerbated their woes. They are displaced from their habitats, and the compensation for the displaced is far from satisfactory. They are either pushed to further remote and inaccessible regions or to other regions where the livelihood prospects are too uncertain. There is a slow growth in urban tribal population but without proper education and skill mostly they earn meagre income and live a subhuman life.

Several special measures have been introduced as part of the planned efforts from time to time. However there have been glitches which have come in the way of the accomplishment of these programmes. The level of living is gauged from amenities such as housing facility, sanitation, drinking water etc. From the data of Ministry of Tribal Affairs we get a fair idea about the gap in living condition of the tribals compared to the national average for all classes. When for all classes 53.1 percent households at all India level have good houses, the same is 40.6 percent for Tribal households. Similarly percentage of households having latrines inside premises is 46.9percent for all classes and only 22.6 percent for tribals. The facility of cooking with non smoke emanating fuel such as LPG, kerosene, electric stoves etc. is available to 35.58 percent of total households of India, but to only 12 percent of the tribal population. Where 65.46 percent of households have access to treated drinking water supply, only 53.82 percent of the tribal households have such access. When the literacy rate for total population is 72.8 percent the same for STs is 63.1 percent. Another important aspect where STs lag behind is availing banking services, which is 58.7 percent for all households and 44.98 percent for STs. There is a wide gap between the living condition of general caste people and the STs.

In a World Bank paper Das Maitreyi Bordia et al find that between 1983 to 2004-05 the pace of poverty reduction has been considerably slower for the Scheduled Tribes than it has been for other social categories, the Scheduled Castes included. They also find that while the Scheduled Tribes saw significant gains in indicators of health, some of which improved at rates faster than the population average, such gains were not sufficient to bridge the gap between the STs and the rest. Regarding education their study finds that despite improvement in educational attainment, literacy levels among STs remained abysmally low (47 percent of ST population compared to 67 percent for others) – an indication of the former’s considerably lower -starting point.

As per Planning Commission estimate(2004-05), both in rural and urban areas, the percentage of BPL population among STs is much higher than that for all social groups(pl see figure below.).



Source: Planning Commission (2004-05)

Sarkar Sandeep et al (2006) in their study of development level of tribals of India compute Human Development index and human Poverty Index of this section of population and arrive at a conclusion that these indices are about thirty percent lower than the corresponding indices for India as a whole. They further examine these indices in comparison to international indices and state that “They would firmly be in the low-human development category, which includes sub-Saharan Africa, as against the middle-human development status of all-India. Further, the STs of Orissa, already a state with low human development in India, would fall to the bottom of the list of HDIs of sub-Saharan African countries.” Their finding is that within Odisha, the districts with the lowest HDI values (as calculated in the Orissa Human Development Report, 2004) fall in one contiguous belt in the south and south-west region of the state and they are all ST dominated districts.

The result of the above mentioned deprivations are even more deprivation and tightening of the noose of poverty snare. Due to poverty they fail to better their health and education, leading to lower skill, lower job opportunities and finally lower earning capacity, which in turn means even worse poverty. Perpetuation of poverty can be explained better if it is considered from the perspective of human capital formation, which signifies grooming of children and youth to become skilled productive agents.

IV. HEALTH, EDUCATION, HUMAN CAPITAL FORMATION AND THE TRIBAL YOUTH

Capital such as machineries, tools, equipments, infrastructure like roads, railways and power etc. are vital for growth since they greatly enhance productivity in the economy. Likewise educated and skilled population through their participation in the production process enhance productivity in the system and hence are termed as human capital. To convert the population into capital there is the need of ensuring good health and imparting education and training to them. This has twin benefits- first it enhances the earning capacity of such people who have acquired more education and skill and lifts up their standard of living, which in course of time frees them from the poverty trap. Second, it enhances the productivity of the entire system and enhances the growth rate, raises national income and uplifts the entire economic system of the nation. Here economist Julian Simon’s view merits mention- “the ultimate resource is people- skilled, spirited and hopeful people- who will exert their will and imagination for their own benefits, and so inevitably, for the benefit of us all”. The two most important ingredients of human capital formation are Health and Education. People become productive agents in the age span 15 to 64 of their life. The youth of a nation thus are the vital agents of development. But their accomplishment hinges entirely upon the level of health and education they receive in their life, especially in their childhood. According to UN General Assembly statement on child poverty in January 2007 “Children living in poverty are deprived of nutrition, water and sanitation facilities, access to basic healthcare services, shelter, education, participation and protection, and that while a severe lack of goods and services hurts every human being, it is most threatening and harmful to children, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, to reach their full potential and to participate as full members of the society.” Moreover to quote Amartya Sen “ The problem of chronic under nutrition is closely related not only to deficiency of food intake, but also to deprivation of other kinds, particularly those of education, health care, basic facilities, and social environment(including water supply, sanitary facilities etc.).“ But as we analyse below the available statistical information, it becomes apparent that the health and educational status of tribal children is much below standard.

As per National Family Health Survey-3(2004-05), under five child mortality is the highest among STs in India as compared to any other class, the figures being 95.7 for STs, 88.1 for SCs, and 74.3 for all groups together. The immunisation records too depict the same picture. 31.3 percent of ST children are found to be fully vaccinated against 53.8 percent of others (other than SC, ST, and OBC), and 11.5 percent of the ST children received no vaccination at all.

With such low immunisation rate tribal children get afflicted by various diseases which results in their poor health and stunted growth. As per a UNICEF study(Rustagi Preet et.al,2011), the ST children have 1.5 times more chances of being deprived, at least on account of one of the three standard nutritional indicators(stunting, wasting, underweight), as compared to the non-ST children. Various micro level studies including several medical research

TABLE-1: KEY HEALTH INDICATORS

	SC	ST	TOTAL
Infant Mortality	66.4	62.1	57.0
Neo-natal Mortality	46.3	39.9	39.0
Pre-natal Mortality	55.0	40.6	48.5
Child Mortality	23.2	35.8	18.4
Under five Mortality	88.1	95.7	74.3
Childhood vaccination(full immunisation)	39.7	31.3	43.5

Source: National Family Health Survey(NFSH) 2005-06

studies find that the incidence of deficiency driven diseases such as iodine deficiency, vitamin A deficiency, anaemia, and also many water borne diseases such as diarrhoea, respiratory tract infections etc is very high among the tribal children. The initial three years are extremely important for the development of potential of a human being. Poverty and hunger negatively affect their development. Insufficient food and medical care hampers the development of cognitive ability and even the emotional aspects of the kids. Hence learning capability is reduced and finally they fair poorly in education. Quite naturally they grow up to be youth with poor health and low physical capability. These deprivations form a section of the whole story of multiple deprivations. The UNICEF study by Rustagi Preet et.al(2011), on the basis of computation from the NFSH-3 data reveals that household deprivation in terms of sanitation, shelter, and water is alarmingly high for tribal children in India(though the total scenario is not very encouraging either). For sanitation deprivation is 85 percent for ST children against 63 percent for total, for shelter it is 54 percent and 49 percent, and for water it is 30 percent and 14 percent respectively. With this background the scenario involving health (as presented above and) and that involving education discussed below come as no surprise.

The less it is said about the state of education of the tribals, the better. We may start with literacy rate. As per Census 2011, when the literacy rate for total population is 72.99 percent, for Tribal population it is 58.96, and there is a gap of 14.03 percent.

Even at primary level number of schools is far short of required. Problem starts with the remoteness of the areas they live. Even if schools are there, infrastructure, availability of teachers (both quality and quantity wise) etc are abysmally low. Hence human capital formation among tribals begins with a weak foundation. Most of the tribes are located in interior and remote areas where teachers would not like to go from outside and local teachers are rarely available. The abysmal state of education among tribals can be gauged from the table-2 below.

When the Gross enrolment ratio of STs compares favourably with that of the country as a whole up to class 9, it reverses and goes on worsening thereafter, implying that fewer and fewer the tribal adolescents receive post school education. The scenario involving dropout rates is even more depressing, which has an ascending order with respect to education levels. For boys the dropout rate up to class is 28.7 which rises to 50.4 when considered for the whole school period i.e class I to X. For girls the figures are 25.1 and 47.9. Even the education they receive up to class 9 too is doubtful. The state of primary education in the remote tribal regions is dismal. Even more disturbing are the suffering school children go through in some naxlite infested tribal regions. Primary schools turn into battle grounds between maoists and security forces and in many such villages the school buildings are brought down by

TABLE-2: ENROLMENT RATIO

GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) - Boys			GROSS ENROLMENT RATIO (GER) – Girls		
Classes	ST	All Categories	Classes	ST	All Categories
Classes I - V (6 - 10 Years)	137.2	115.40	Classes I - V (6 - 10 Years)	136.7	116.7
Classes VI - VIII (11 - 13 Years)	90.7	87.70	Classes VI - VIII (11 - 13 Years)	87	83.1
Classes I - VIII (6 - 13 Years)	120.5	104.90	Classes I - VIII (6 - 13 Years)	118.7	103.7
Classes IX - X (14 - 15 Years)	57.1	69.00	Classes IX - X (14 - 15 Years)	49.1	60.8
Classes I - X (6 - 15 Years)	108.2	97.60	Classes I - X (6 - 15 Years)	105.3	94.8
Classes XI - XII (16 - 17 Years)	32.7	42.20	Classes XI - XII (16 - 17 Years)	24.8	36.1
Classes IX - XII (14 - 17 Years)	45.4	55.50	Classes IX - XII (14 - 17 Years)	37.3	48.4
Classes I - XII (6 - 17 Years)	96.8	88.00	Classes I - XII (6 - 17 Years)	92.8	84.8

Source: Statistics of School Education 2010-2011

the naxlites. Sharma Supriya(2011) from her study of Dantewada region of Chhatisgarh finds that the worst sufferers of such violence were the school going children. Some face several hardships due to dislocation (when they are moved to Ashram schools several kilometres away), and some are forced to give up school altogether. There are other intricate issues too. Whatever number of schools and teachers are available, they are hardly suitable as a means to build human capital. The language they have to start with in schools is completely alien and this reduces their interest and performance even more. With such state of affairs, it would be too naive to expect to find many tribal youth in higher and technical education.

As per AISHE(All India Survey of Higher education),2012-13 of GOI, Ministry of Higher Education, the Gross Enrolment Ratio in Higher Education (18 to 23 age group), is 21.1 percent for all categories of people, whereas for the ST population it is 11.0 percent only. Scheduled Tribe students constitute only 4 percent of total enrolment in higher education. A more detailed information is available from AISHE 2009. When the enrolment at Under Graduate level for all categories together is 138,728,700, the same is 65,267,7 for STs; it's a mere 0.47 percent of the total. For courses in post school Diploma enrolment is 1,407,406 for all categories, and 74,302 for STs; which comes to 5.28 percent of the total. One thing is clear from here, post school, more of the tribal youths get absorbed in low skill jobs with diploma qualification, instead of honing their skill further or

going for graduation, post graduation with the prospect of high skill remunerative jobs. The reasons may be partly financial. But partly it may be due to ignorance or even worse- lack of ambition. Lack of ambition is a fall out of the low living conditions.

V. THE PERILOUS OUTCOMES

These tribal youth with little or no education and skill are unlikely to fit into a fast growing, globalised economy like India. Certain perilous outcomes emanate from the situation. They get drawn to maoist outfits and take to violence, which is a total wastage of human capital. Many of these youth who remain in their homeland, in sub human condition without any hope of a better future turn to alcoholism, ruining the remaining potential and wasting human capital altogether. Incidence of alcoholism is very high among tribals according to official statistics, about 50 percent of tribal men in the age group 15 to 59 drink. Micro level case studies on displaced tribals working in mining regions reveal that the children of such families are malnourished deprived of education and also they are very vulnerable for other forms of exploitation and abuses, including getting involved in illegal activities by the mafia and trafficking. Thus conditions are generated for perpetuation of their deprivations.

This in turn means gross under utilisation of the most precious resource of the nation. According to Common Wealth Youth Programme, 2013 India's Youth Development Index is 0.58 and rank is 78 out of 170. If we make a rough calculation, then youth population is 22.3 percent among tribals and it comes to 19.9 million. When majority of such a large size of youth population stay idle indulging in alcoholism, get involved in violence or take up low paying unskilled job, the loss for the Indian economy, in terms of loss of output would be colossal.

VI. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In spite of innumerable programs launched at various stages for the tribal population in the country, the ST population has not caught up with the other sections of population. They live a life of misery, and the country loses huge amount of human capital. The most important way to resolve this issue is by addressing two crucial aspects- health and education. Planned efforts undertaken through the department of Health and Family Welfare, department of School Education, Department of Higher Education, and the Department of Tribal Welfare have not delivered as expected.

Mostly it is observed that implementation is shoddy. Moreover, it is increasingly being felt that while formulating the programme the issue is being addressed entirely from supply side, to the complete neglect of the demand side. The programmes are formulated at centre or state level on "one size fits all" basis. The STs in India do not form a cohesive group. Their needs vary in the minutes and that calls for formulation of differentiated programmes for different regions and different groups. Language is a great barrier at the primary level of education in the tribal pockets. Introduction of their mother tongue at the primary level would bridge the gap and make learning a smooth process for the tribal kids. The steps taken by government of Odisha in this direction merits mention. The government of Odisha launched Mother tongue based Multi lingual Education programme (MLE) in 2009 in 19 tribal languages. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) in its Programme Evaluation Report on Multilingual Education in Odisha mentions some encouraging findings. It observed significantly higher achievement scores for children of MLE schools than that of non MLE ones. Further it observed increased self respect and self confidence among children, increased interest in schools, increase in enrolment, better retention rates and lower dropout rates. However some problems encountered at implementation level and hence limiting or negating the positive impacts need to be tackled first. With further refinement s MLE can address the issues related to education of the tribals.

Coming to health, it is important to note that, sufficient paramedical workers are not there to serve the remote tribal areas. Secondly, these workers being generally from other social classes, the tribals don't feel comfortable with them or even view them suspiciously. Hence in the first stage special care has to be taken so that more and more numbers of health workers come from their community. Their abysmal living condition further makes them so indifferent that they do not come forward to avail the opportunities. Hence special efforts are needed to spread awareness among them. In case of education, the programmes designed at state level are uniform for all section. But at primary level, the issue of language difference must be addressed. The curriculum must include some of their cultural aspects to make it more acceptable to them. The Govt of India has provision of reservation of seats for STs in all institutions of higher education, including the IITs and IIMs. But no talent from the hilly, remote regions make it to these institutions as their foundation at primary level is never laid. Hence it is imperative to design primary education specifically for tribals. Their assimilation into the system has to be transitional, not through superimposition. Another issue that needs to be addressed is the seasonal migration of these people resulting in disruption of children's immunisation and education. Properly planned livelihood avenues in the lean season would help a lot. As there are serious lacunae at implementation level, a process of proper social audits must be initiated. In the absence of proper manpower to carry on the

programmes, involving NGOs with good repute would yield good results. With individual effort certain NGOs have made good impact on health and education of the tribals in various parts of the country. The tribals have some inherent genetic advantage especially in athletics. That must be tapped as a resource. So far the noble intentions have not been translated hundred percent into proper action. The indigenous knowledge of the tribals which can be of great help in environmental preservation is yet to be utilised. If utilised, it would go a long way in achieving the twin objectives of human capital utilisation and sustainable development.

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