

Tribal Population and Development Policies in the Himalayan state of Sikkim: A Critical Analysis

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ABSTRACT: *India is home to tribal population of about 85 million, with more than 700 groups each with their distinct cultures, social practices, religions, dialects and occupations and are scattered in all States and Union Territories in India. The Tribes, like the Scheduled Castes, is the most socially, economically and educationally disadvantaged, marginalized and excluded groups in our country. The wide-spread discrimination against scheduled groups has long histories in India. However the status of this community in the state of Sikkim is somewhat different from their counterpart in other part of the country. In Sikkim, the tribal people are very affluent, highly educated and have good number in white-collar jobs. In this context and with this backdrop, this is a modest attempt to study the demographic particulars of tribal and the development policies in India in general and Sikkim in particular.*

Keywords: *Tribes • Tribal Population • Tribal Development • Constitutional Safeguards • Scheduled Tribes • Sikkim*

I. INTRODUCTION

India is a pluralist and multi-cultural country, with rich diversity, reflected in the multitude of culture, religions, languages and racial stocks. The population of the country comprises of different castes, communities, social and ethnic groups. India, a second most populous country in the world, has also the second largest concentration of tribal population, perhaps next only to Africa. The tribal population represents one of the most economically impoverished and marginalized groups in India. The Constitution of India had recognised tribal population as weaker section of society based on their socio-economic backwardness and the age-old social discrimination and physical isolation that they had been subjected to. Although the tribal are a minority and constitute about 8.2 per cent of the total population in India or 85 million people in absolute number but unlike scheduled caste population, the tribes are not discriminated against in the same way by the mainstream Hindu population. There are at present more than 700 tribal groups each with their distinct cultures, social practices, religions, dialects and occupations and are scattered in all States and Union Territories in India except for the states of Haryana, Punjab, Delhi, Chandigarh and Puducherry. The tribes are heavily concentrated in the north-eastern states although they constitute a small percentage of the total tribal population in India.

Tribe Defined

In India the tribes are known to be the autochthonous people of the land. Tribals are often referred to as Adivasi, Vanyajati, Vanvasi, Pahari, Adimjati and Anusuchit Jan Jati, the latter being the constitutional name (Basu 2000^[1]). Tribe as a category, separate from the mainstream caste society, is an invention of the British administrators. According to Singh (1995), “[T]he notion of a tribe was introduced by colonial administrators. It was part of the universal trend to dichotomize the indigenous peoples and colonizers, the savage and the civilized, the tribals and non-tribals ^[2]”. Several anthropologists however hold the view that a tribe is no different from a caste (Ghurye 1943^[3], 1959^[4]; Beteille 1974^[5]; Bailey 1960^[6]).

The term ‘tribe’ has been defined in different ways by different individual scholars and hence there is no universally accepted definition. Though definition of the term “tribe” has long been a subject for discussion among anthropologists, but so far, there is no generally accepted definition (Naik 1968)^[7]. Beteille (1974) concluded that in India, “there really is no satisfactory way of defining a tribal society”^[8]. The Constitution of India though made a several provisions for safeguard to tribal but it is nowhere defined in the Constitution. It only declares that the Scheduled Tribes are “the tribes or the tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities” which the President of the country may specify by public notification (Article 342). Some of the common definitions available in the tribal literatures are as follows.

Oxford Dictionary defines tribe as ‘a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common on sector’. According to Imperial Gazetteer of India, ‘tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a

common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous, though originally it might have been so’.

The dictionary of Anthropology views a tribe as a social group, usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization. The term ‘tribe’ in that sense refers to a type of society and marks a stage of evolution in the human society. As a type of society, the term signifies a set of characteristic features and as a stage of evolution; it connotes a specific mode of social organization.

According to the ILO Convention No. 169, indigenous and tribal peoples are those peoples “whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations”.

The most acceptable definition of tribes in the Indian context is propounded by D.N. Majumdar (1958). According to him, “a tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations”^[9].

Characteristic features of Tribes

The tribes in India have many characteristic features. The original tribes in India have been divided and sub-divided into large number of sub-tribes. They are mutually exclusive, each having the endogenous and exogamous clan with their own named and culture, customs, locational practice and lifestyle. One of their distinguishing features is that the majority of them live in scattered and small habitations located in remote and inaccessible settlements in hilly and forest areas of the country. Originally following characteristics were used for awarding a community the status of a scheduled tribe: (i) the primitive way of living, (ii) habitation in remote and less accessible areas, and (iii) nomadic habits and love for drinks and dance. Vimal Chandra (1964) was of the view that primitiveness and backwardness are the tests applied for specifying a ‘Scheduled Tribe’^[10]. The main characteristics common to all the Scheduled Tribes are; (1) tribal origin (2) primitive way of life, (3) habitat in remote and less accessible areas and (4) general backwardness in all respects. Well-established criterions to be followed for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe are:

- Indications of primitive traits,
- Distinctive culture,
- Geographical isolation,
- Shyness of contact with the community at large, and
- Backwardness.

The Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in its reports (1952) has listed eight features of the tribal groups in India:

- They live always away from the civilized world and are found in the inaccessible parts lying in the forest and hills.
- They generally belong to three stocks such as Negritos, Australoids and Mangoloids.
- They speak the same tribal dialect.
- They prefer primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest produce.
- They are mostly carnivorous.
- They live and prefer to be naked and semi-naked.
- They have nomadic habit and are fond of drinking and dancing.
- They prefer primitive religion known as “Animist” in which they worship ghost and spirits as the most important elements.

According to Ghurye (1963), ‘the common features possessed by all the tribal groups are as follows’^[11]:

- They live away from the civilized world in inaccessible parts in the forests and hills.
- They speak the same tribal dialect.
- They belong to either one of the three stocks – Negritos, Austroloid or Mongoloids.
- They profess primitive religion known as animism in which worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element.
- They follow primitive occupation such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest products.
- They are largely carnivorous.
- They live either naked or semi-naked.
- They have nomadic habits and love for drink and dance.

T.B. Naik (1972) proposed seven criteria by which a ‘tribe’ can be recognized^[12]. They are:

- functional interdependence within the community;
- economic backwardness;
- geographical isolation;

- common dialect;
- politically a unit under a common tribal authority;
- own traditional laws and
- members are averse to change.

A World Bank consultation workshop held in Karnataka in 1998 recommended a list of characteristics that distinguish tribals from others (World Bank 1998) ^[13]:

- Isolation from the urban population
- Tracing of their origin to the oldest sections of the population
- Place of residence confined to scheduled areas
- Separate dialect that does not have a script
- Primitive and animist religious beliefs
- Distinct cultural features
- Particular name for identity
- A simple life
- Few or no links with the market
- A higher status accorded to women
- Production for consumption, not for sale

These criteria are not spelt out in the Constitution but have become well established and accepted. It take into account the definitions in the Census of 1931, the Reports of the First Backward Classes Commission (1955), the Advisory Committee on Revision of SC/ ST lists (Lokur Committee) 1965, the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 and Chanda Committee 1969.

Tribal Population in India

The population of Scheduled Tribes, according to the 2001 Census, in the country is 8.43 crores, which is 8.2 per cent of the total population of the country. The population of Scheduled Tribes has been on the increase since 1961 (Table 1). The decadal population growth between the Census Year 1971 to 1981 in respect of the tribal population has been higher (36.8%) than that of the entire population (24.6%). The decadal population growth between the Census Year 1981 to 1991 in respect of the tribal population has been higher (30.8%) than that of the entire population (23.9%). Similarly during Census year 1991 to 2001 it has been 23.5% against the growth rate of 21.5% for the entire population (Table 2). The sex ratio of ST population was always high compare to the sex ratio of overall population in all Census Years. The sex ratio of ST was in better position at 988 as against the overall sex ratio which was 946 in 1951. In 2001, the sex ratio of ST population was 978, which was higher than the sex ratio of overall population i.e. 933 (Table 2).

Table 1

Distribution of ST Population (1951-2001)			
Year	Scheduled Tribe	General Population	% of ST to Total Population
1951	19.1	361.1	5.29
1961	30.1	439.2	6.85
1971	38.0	548.2	6.93
1981	51.6	685.2	7.53
1991	67.8	846.3	8.10
2001	84.3	1028.61	8.20

Source: Annual Report 2007-08, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India

Table 2

Decadal Growth, Sex Ratio of overall population and STs (1951-2001)				
Year	Decadal Growth		Sex Ratio	
	Overall Population	ST Population	Overall Population	ST Population
1951	-	-	946	988
1961	21.6	52.6	941	987
1971	24.8	31.0	930	985
1981	24.6	36.8	935	983
1991	23.9	30.8	927	972
2001	21.5	23.5	933	978

Source: Census 1951-2001

Except in the State like Haryana, Punjab, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Puducherry, the tribal population in India is unevenly distributed in different States and Union Territories. Table 3 indicates the States/UTs wise distribution of tribal population in India. State wise, Madhya Pradesh accounts for the highest percentage of Scheduled Tribes population to total STs population of the country (14.51%) followed by Maharashtra (10.17%), Orissa (9.66%), Gujarat (8.87%), Rajasthan (8.87%), Jharkhand (8.40%) and Chhattisgarh (7.85%). The proportion of the Scheduled Tribes to the total population of the States/Union Territories is highest in Mizoram (94.5%) and Lakshwadeep (94.5%) followed by Nagaland (89.1%) and Jharkhand (26.3%) (Census 2001)^[14].

Table 3

Distribution of STs Population in different States/UTs of India		
S. No.	States/UTs	% of ST Population in States/UTs to the Total Population of the Country
1.	Madhya Pradesh	14.51
2.	Maharashtra	10.17
3.	Orissa	9.66
4.	Gujarat	8.87
5.	Rajasthan	8.87
6.	Jharkhand	8.40
7.	Chhattisgarh	7.85
8.	Andhra Pradesh	5.96
9.	West Bengal	5.23
10.	Karnataka	4.11
11.	Assam	3.92
12.	Meghalaya	2.36
13.	Nagaland	2.10
14.	Jammu and Kashmir	1.31
15.	Tripura	1.81
16.	Mizoram	1.00
17.	Bihar	0.90
18.	Manipur	0.88
19.	Arunachal Pradesh	0.84
20.	Tamil Nadu	0.77
21.	Kerala	0.43
22.	Uttaranchal	0.30
23.	Himachal Pradesh	0.29
24.	Dadra and Nagar Haveli	0.16
25.	Sikkim	0.13
26.	Uttar Pradesh	0.13

Source: Census 2001

It is obvious from the Table 3 that about 80 percent of tribal populations are to be found along the central belt that covers the states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The rest 20 percent are in the North-Eastern States, Southern States and Island groups. Santhals, Gonds, Bhil, and Oraon are numerically strong Scheduled Tribe groups in India. Smaller tribal groups are to be found in A&N Islands (Andamanese, Onges) and Kerala-Tamil Nadu (Paniyans and Kattunaickens). Some of the major tribes of different States/UTs in India are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
The Major Tribes in India

S.No.	States/UTs	Name of Tribes
1.	Andhra Pradesh	Bhil, Chenchu, Gond, Kondas, Lambadis, Sugalis etc.
2.	Arunachal Pradesh	Dafla, Khampti, Singpho etc.
3.	Assam	Boro, Kachari, Mikir (Karbi), Lalung, Dimasa, Hmar, Hajong etc.
4.	Bihar	Asur, Banjara, Birhor, Korwa, Munda, Oraon, Santhal, etc.
5.	Goa	Dhodi, Mikkada, Varti, etc.
6.	Gujarat	Bhil, Dhodia, Gond, Siddi, Bordia, etc.
7.	Himachal Pradesh	Gaddi, Gujjar, Lahuala, Swangla, etc.
8.	Jammu and Kashmir	Chdddanga, Garra, Gujjar, Gaddi, etc.
9.	Jharkhand	Asur, Banjara, Birhor, Korwa, Munda, Oraon, Santhal, etc.
10.	Karnataka	Bhil, Chenchu, Goud, Kuruba, Kolis, Koya, Mayaka, Toda, etc.
11.	Kerala	Adiyam, Kammrar, Kondkappus, Malais, Munda, Palliyar, etc
12.	Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh	Bhil, Birhor, Damar, Gond, Kharia, Majhi, Munda, Oraon, Parahi, etc.
13.	Maharashtra	Bhil, Bhunjia, Chodhara, Dhodia, Gond, Kharia, Oraon, Pardhi, etc.
14.	Meghalaya	Garo, Khasi, Jayantia, etc.
15.	Mizoram	Lusai, Kuki, Garo, Khasi, Jayantia, Mikir etc.
16.	Nagaland	Naga, Kuki, Mikir, Garo, etc.
17.	Orissa	Birhor, Gond, Juang, Khond, Mundari, Oraon, Santhal, Tharua, etc.
18.	Rajasthan	Bhil, Damor, Garasta, Meena, Salariya, etc.
19.	Sikkim	Bhutia, Lepcha, Limboo, Tamang, Sherpa, etc
20.	Tamil Nadu	Irular, Kammara, Kondakapus, Kota, Mahamalar, Palleyan, Toda etc.
21.	Tripura	Chakma, Garo, Khasi, Kuki, Lusai, Liang, Santhal etc.
22.	Uttaranchal & Uttar Pradesh	Bhoti, Buxa, Jaunsari, Tharu, Raji etc.
23.	West Bengal	Asur, Birhor, Korwa, Lepcha, Munda, Santhal, etc.
24.	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	Jarawa, Nicobarese, Onges, Sentinelese, Shompens, Great Andamanese
25.	Daman and Diu & Dadra and Nagar Haveli	Dhodi, Mikkada, Singpho etc.

Source: Annual Report, 2000-2001, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Govt. of India

Constitutional Safeguards for Scheduled Tribes

The Indian Constitution refers to tribal people as the Scheduled Tribes. The Constitution, adopted and enacted in 1950, is based on the principles of equality and guarantees equality before law and equal protection to all its citizens. It not only guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms, but also prohibits discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex, and place of birth. Recognizing the special needs of various weaker sections including STs, the Constitution also enjoins upon the State to make special provisions of affirmative discrimination for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes. These constitutional provisions have replaced the British policy of isolation and non-interference by a policy of inclusion and integration through development. The Framers of the Constitution of India incorporated several provisions which are meant for the welfare and development of the tribal. Some of the important constitutional provisions for STs are as follows:

Article 15 (4): The State to make special provisions for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 16 (1): Equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

Article 16 (4): The State to make provisions for reservation in appointment, posts in favour of any backward class citizens, which in the opinion of the State is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

Article 16 (4A): The State to make provisions in matters of promotion to any class or classes of posts in the services in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 46: The State, to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and protects them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

Article 164 (1): In the States of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, there shall be a Minister in charge of tribal welfare who may in addition be in charge of the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes or any other work. (Now applicable to Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa).

Article 243 D: Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Panchayat.

Article 243 (T): Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every Municipality.

Article 244 (1): Provisions as to the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in any state other than the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram (Fifth Schedule).

Article 244 (2): Provisions as to the administration of Tribal Areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram (Sixth Schedule).

Article 275 (1): Provision for payment of grants-in-aid to enable the States to meet the cost of such schemes of development as may be undertaken by the States with the approval of the Government of India for the purpose of promoting the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in that State or raising the level of administration of the Scheduled Areas therein to that of the administration of the rest of the areas of that State.

Article 330: Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

Article 332: Reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.

Article 335: The claims of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in the appointments to services and posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State to be taken into consideration consistent with the maintenance of efficiency of administration.

Article 338 A: A National Commission for Scheduled Tribes to investigate, monitor and evaluate all matters relating to the Constitutional safeguards provided for the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 339: Control of the Union over the administration of Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes.

Article 339 (1): Appointment of a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Areas and the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in the States.

Article 340: Appointment of a Commission to investigate the conditions of socially and educationally backward classes and the difficulties under which they labour and to make recommendations to remove such difficulties and to improve their conditions.

Article 342: To specify the tribes or tribal communities to be Scheduled Tribes.

In addition to the above constitutional provisions, there are numbers of laws both Central and State, which provide protection and safeguards for the interest of the Scheduled Tribes. Some of the important Central Acts are as follows:

- Protection of Civil Right Act, 1955
- Forest Conservation Act, 1980
- Bonded Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986
- Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986
- Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989
- The provisions of the PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996
- The Schedule Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of forest Rights) Act, 2006

Tribes and Development in Sikkim

Sikkim is a multi-ethnic state comprising of more than 20 different groups, most predominant being the Nepalese, Lepchas and Bhutias. According to state census of 2006, the Rai community with population of 78,671 is the largest one followed by the Bhutias with 76,070 persons (GoS 2006) ^[15]. The two important communities notified as Scheduled Tribes in Sikkim by the Sikkim Scheduled Tribe Order, 1978 are Lepcha and Bhutia. The Bhutias includes Chumbipa, Dophapa, Dukpa, Kagatey, Sherpa, Tibetan, Tromopa and Yolmo. Recently two major communities viz., Limboo and Tamang were included in the list of scheduled tribes but they are yet to be benefitted from their tribal status and consider as second class STs. Present study therefore covers only two scheduled tribe communities, the Lepchas and Bhutias.

Demographic Particulars

The population of Sikkim in 2001 Census has been 540,851. Of these 111,405 are Scheduled Tribes (STs), which constitute 20.6 per cent of the total state's population (Table 5). The state has registered 22.56 per cent decadal growth of ST population in 1991-2001 (Table 6)). The Bhutia and Lepcha share 63.4 and 36.6 per cent respectively of the total ST population of the state. The highest concentration of Bhutias has been found in East district (48.3%), while the Lepcha are confined in North (33.4%). The Bhutia has 10.9 per cent urban population while Lepcha has only 4.5 per cent. Thus, the tribal population is typically concentrated in the rural areas. In four district of Sikkim, the tribal population is highest in North district (85%) and lowest in South district (37%). The West and East district respectively has 51 and 41 per cent of tribal population (Table 7). Except in North district, where tribals live in compact areas, tribals in other districts are widely dispersed in habitation.

Table 5

Population of STs 2001 Census		
Scheduled Tribes	Total Population	Proportion to total ST Population (%)
All Scheduled Tribes	111,405	100
Lepcha	40,563	36.6
Bhutia	70,308	63.4

Source: Census 2001

Table 6

Decadal Growth Rate					
Total Population		Decadal Growth	ST Population		Decadal Growth
1991	2001	33.06	1991	2001	22.56
406,457	540,851		90,901	111,405	

Source: Census 2001

Table 7

District-wise Tribal Population Distribution				
District	North	East	West	South
Per Cent	85	41	51	37

Source: DESME 2006

Sex Ratio

As per 2001 Census, the sex ratio of the ST population is 957, which is higher than state average (875) but quite low in comparison with the aggregated national average for STs (978). The child sex ratio (0-6 age group) of 964 is also lower than the national average of 973 for all STs. The sex ratio of total population among Bhutia (966) is higher than Lepcha (945). But the child sex ratio among Bhutia is slightly lower (954) than that of Lepcha (979) (Table 8). Overall the sex ratio of ST is higher than general population in Sikkim. It shows no discrimination of sex of birth in the tribes.

Table 8

Sex Ratio (ST Population)		
Category	Age Group	
	0-6	7>
Lepcha	979	945
Bhutia	954	966

Source: DESME 2006

Literacy Status

Literacy and level of education are two basic indicators of the level of development. According to the 2001 Census, 67.1 per cent of the ST population is literate with male literacy rate of 73.8 per cent and female of 60.2 per cent. Tribes wise, Bhutia with 67.9 per cent literacy rate are slightly ahead of Lepcha (65.7%). The difference between the literacy rate of total STs and overall population is only 2.58 per cent. In case of female literacy rate, it was 60.2 per cent among ST females as against 61.46 per cent of overall females and the

difference was 1.36 per cent. The literacy rate of STs and overall population is shown in Table 9. The figures in the Table shows little gap between the literacy rate of STs population and overall population. The literacy of ST population of Sikkim is higher than the national average of 65.38 per cent. Further it is interesting to note that the literacy rate of both male and female of STs population of Sikkim is higher than total ST literacy of India (i.e. male (59.17%) and female 34.76%). This clearly shows that unlike in other parts of India, the tribes are not excluded from availing the formal modern system of education in the state.

Table 9

Literacy among STs (in %)			
Category	Total	Male	Female
General	69.68	76.73	61.46
All Scheduled Tribes	67.1	73.8	60.2
Lepcha	65.7	72.3	58.6
Bhutia	67.9	74.6	61

Source: DESME 2006

Work Participation Rate (WPR)

In 2001 Census, 48.6 per cent of the ST population has been recorded as workers. Of which 77.6 per cent are main workers and 22.4 per cent marginal workers. The female WPR of 42.3 per cent is slightly lower than that of male (54.6%). While 85.2 per cent have been registered as main workers among males, this proportion is 67.5 per cent in case of female main workers (Table 10).

Table 10

Distribution of Total, Main and Marginal Workers among the ST by Sex			
M/F/T	Percentage of Workers		
	Total Workers	Main Workers	Marginal Workers
M	31077 (54.6)	26463 (85.2)	4614 (14.8)
F	23055 (42.3)	15567 (67.5)	7488 (32.5)
T	54132 (48.6)	42030 (77.6)	1210 (22.4)

Source: Census 2001

Tribe wise, Lepcha recorded slightly higher WPR (49.8%) as compare to Bhutia (47.9%). Three fourth of total workers are main workers among both the STs. Of the total ST main workers, 54.2 per cent are cultivators, 3.8 per cent agricultural labourers, and 3.5 per cent are engaged in farming related activities. The Lepcha are predominantly cultivators. Of the total main workers, 69 per cent population among Lepcha is cultivator, against 45.8 per cent among Bhutia.

Tribal Development Policies and Programmes

Sikkim has a large proportion of tribal population (20 per cent). This percentage includes only the two tribal communities i.e., Lepcha and Bhutia. At present state has 89 revenue blocks where STs population are in majority. Both central and state governments have launched several developmental programmes for the welfare and empowerment of the weaker section of society including STs. In Sikkim these comprise schemes for educational development, economic development and social development. The Department of Social Justice, Empowerment and Welfare is a nodal agency which looks after the affairs of tribal in Sikkim. The Department performs following functions:

1. All matters connected with the welfare of STs, economic betterment schemes, educational development schemes, facilities for vocational training and voluntary organisations connected with the welfare of STs.
2. Pre-Matric scholarship scheme for ST/SC/OBC.
3. Post-Matric scholarship scheme for ST/SC.
4. Up-gradation of Merit Scholarship for ST/SC students.
5. Tribal sub-plan for STs.
6. ST, SC and OBC Welfare Boards.
7. Monitoring and evaluation of schemes for STs.
8. Sikkim ST, SC and OBC Development Corporation (SABCCO).
9. Implementation of ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989.

Integrated Tribal Development Area Programme (ITDAP)

This programme is launched by the central government and implemented in all the states where the tribal population exceeds 50 per cent of the local population. In Sikkim, ITDAP is implemented in 77 blocks of three districts and whole North district. More than 55 per cent of the tribal population are residing outside the ITDAP areas. With the view to cover more tribal population, the state government proposed to include another 54 revenue blocks in which the tribals constitute more than 30 per cent of the population. The Welfare Officers of each district act as the drawing and disbursing office for the implementation of the programme.

Land Revenue No.1

The state government has been strictly implementing the Land Revenue Order 1 in Sikkim. According to this Order no Bhutias and Lepchas are allowed to sell, mortgage or sub-let any of their land to any person other than a Bhutia or a Lepcha. This old law in Sikkim therefore restricts alienation of land belonging to Bhutias and Lepchas who are tribals to non-tribals.

Reservation of Seats

The Government of Sikkim has reserved 12 seats out of 32 for tribals in Sikkim Legislative Assembly. The provision of reservation is also extended to public employment. The new reservation policy under Notification No.5/GOS/9/(15)/SWD/WD dated 19.8.2003 reserves 33 per cent of seats for STs in all government jobs and in professional courses. Besides, five years relaxation in age is given to STs candidates. As a result of this policy, the participation of STs in public employment is very high. As against their population percentage of 20.6 per cent, the percentage of STs employees in the state government service as on December 2007 was 33.57 per cent. Even the representation of ST females in the government services is very high (7.20 per cent) which is an encouraging sign of women's participation in the administration of the state.

SABCCO

The Government of Sikkim in 1996 created Sikkim SC, ST and OBC Development Corporation (SABCCO) with an authorised share capital of Rs. 10 crores for providing financial assistance to all the backward section of people. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, Government of India and Government of Sikkim hold 49 per cent and 51 per cent of share capital respectively. The focus of SABCCO is on special development and financial needs (loan) of the ST/SC/OBCs. It provides financial assistance at concessional rates for income generating activities and training in skill development.

The Corporation extends financial assistance to start following activities:

1. Agriculture and allied activities such as purchase of agriculture machinery and implements, goatary, poultry, dairy, piggery, cardamom and ginger cultivation etc.
2. Artisan and traditional occupation such as handicrafts, carpet weaving, tailoring, black smithy, beauty parlour, gold smithy, etc.
3. Technical trade's self-employment such as iron fabrications, Xerox machines, dry cleaning, photo-studio etc.
4. Small business such as general provision store, grocery, manihari shop readymade garments.
5. Transport services such as commander Jeeps, Tata Trucks, Maruti Vans, etc.
6. Conversion of building into Guest-House and restaurants.

Tribal Sub Plan (TSP)

The TSP as a strategy for tribal development was evolved in the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) on the recommendation of an expert committee headed by Prof. S.C. Dube. The committee was constituted by the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare in 1972. The TSP covers all scheduled areas and Teshils/Block, with more than 60 per cent tribal population living. The two main objectives of the TSP are: socio-economic development of STs and protection of tribes against exploitation.

The salient features of TSP are:

1. It falls within the ambit of state plan meant for the welfare and development of tribes. Such a plan is a part of the overall plan of a state and is therefore called sub-plan. The benefits given to the tribes and tribal areas of a state from the TSP are in addition to what percolates from the overall plans of the state.
2. The sub-plan identifies the resources for TSP areas; prepare a broad policy framework for the development; and define a suitable administrative strategy for its implementation.
3. The most significant aspect of this strategy is to ensure flow of funds for TSP areas at least in equal proportion to the ST population of the state.

In Sikkim, TSP has been in operation since 1979-80. The scheme covers all the tribal dominated villages of four districts and adjoining areas where 50 per cent of the population is tribal. The

implementation of all departmental schemes under the state plan is executed through the Project Director and Welfare Officer in the district.

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups [PVTGs] (earlier known as Primitive Tribal Groups [PTGs])

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Commission (1962), popularly known as the Dhebar Commission, classified the STs in India into four different groups: (i) those that are living in the remotest corners and for that reason are almost in a primitive stage; (ii) those in the 'Jhuming' (shifting) cultivation stage; (iii) those who have taken to regular agriculture; and (iv) those who have been already assimilated (Dhebar 1962)^[16]. All these tribal groups are at different stages of economy starting from the stage of food gatherer to settled agriculture. However some of the tribal groups who are at food gathering, hunting and fishing stages are facing multifarious problems in modern times in their own habitats. These tribes are small in groups and some are on the verge of extinction. Some of these small tribal groups in the country have been categorized as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (Earlier known as Primitive Tribal Groups) for special development assistance. The Government of India, based on a four-point criteria viz., (i) smallness in size and diminishing in number; (ii) backwardness and isolation; (iii) pre-agricultural technology; and (iv) very low literacy, has identified 75 tribal communities as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs).

There is a marked difference between the relatively advanced tribal groups and the primitive tribal groups. The latter live in more interior pockets which are generally inaccessible and the declining sources of sustenance have left them more vulnerable to food insecurity, malnutrition and ill-health. The cultural gap between the primitive tribal groups and the nontribal societies is wide. The socio-economic conditions of PTGs are much worse than other tribal groups. Outstanding examples in this context are the bay-Islanders like the Shompens, Jarawas, Sentinelese of A & N Islands. Even some of the mainland groups which can be cited in this context include the Bondos of Orissa, Cholanaickans of Kerala, the Abujhmaris of Chattisgarh, the Birhors of Jharkhand. In Sikkim, the state government has recognised the Lepchas as the primitive tribal group but the Government of India has yet to recognise them as PTG.

II. ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

The Scheduled Tribes (ST), like the Scheduled Castes, is the most socially and educationally disadvantaged and excluded groups in our country. The wide-spread discrimination against scheduled groups has long histories in India. The study however reveals that the status of this community in the state of Sikkim is somewhat different from their counterpart in other part of the country. In Sikkim, the tribal people are very affluent, highly educated and have good number in white-collar jobs. Most of the important posts like Chief Secretary, Secretary, Director, etc. are occupied by tribal people in the state. There is no any sign of poverty, illiteracy and backwardness among the tribal people of state otherwise a main feature of tribal communities in other part of country. Besides, they are not backward but more advanced and developed in comparison to Scheduled Castes of the state. The educational progress of Scheduled Tribe populations is quite remarkable. There is little difference between the literacy rate of general population and tribal population. Many educated tribals play active roles in the new political system. The tribes have been provided a 'space' in the decision-making body like state legislature and local bodies. As against 20 per cent population, 12 seats out of 32 (i.e., 37.5 per cent) are reserved for tribal in Legislative Assembly. Similarly, there is a reservation of seats for tribal in both rural and urban local bodies. As a result, their presence is also good in local governance. Thus, the reservation provision ensured large number of representation of this community both in state administration and local governance. Notwithstanding their high position, the statutory provision of reservation has been equally implemented in the state.

The Scheduled Tribes in other parts of the country are gradually losing access to their traditional lands - a process that is referred to as alienation. The largest form of alienation from traditional land has taken place due to state acquisition of land for development. In Sikkim, old laws like Revenue Order No 1 and state legislation prevent ST land from being alienated. Tribals in the state cannot sell their land to non-tribals even when they want to. The land share of the Lepchas and Bhitias is 20 per cent each and their land revenue contribution is 16 per cent and 19 per cent respectively. Some members of this community still hold more than 100 acres of land. Thus one can concludes from the above mentioned fact the tribes in this Himalayan state enjoy the high social status and in some cases they are more advanced and developed than general population which are in fact unique in whole of the country.

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