Tribal Development Scenario in West Bengal
A Study of Jamalpur Block of Burdwan District

MOHAMMED AYUB MALLICK

Tribal development in West Bengal is directed towards ensuring an immediate boost to agricultural production in tribal areas, improve economic conditions of the landless among the tribals, recognise the co-operative and marketing structures, and to provide employment and increased income to the tribals. Family-based economic programmes include land reclamation, land development, supply of agricultural inputs and the like. The area-based economic programmes include construction of roads, execution of minor irrigation and lift irrigation schemes and so on. Although, the tribals are in the process of transition from a traditional society to a modern society, they are going through the process of institutionalised exploitation and socio-political marginalisation. They are not health conscious and yet practice traditional methods of medicine.

Mohammed Ayub Mallick is Faculty Member with the Department of Political Science, University of Kalyani, Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal.

INTRODUCTION

Tribe is a socially cohesive unit. An ideal type of tribe can be characterised as socially homogenous, having its own socio-political characteristics and dialectics. It is an isolated, autonomous and a self-contained social unit. The components of development planning include objectives, goals and targets, resources, selection of means to mobilise resources, formulation of specific programmes and provision for its implementation. The economic programmes of the tribal development agencies are directed towards
ensuring an immediate boost to agricultural production in tribal areas, to improve the economic conditions of the landless among the tribals by providing them with land and land inputs, to reorganise the co-operative and marketing structure, to provide employment and increased income to the tribals through animal keeping, agro-based cottage industries and the like. The family-based economic programmes include land reclamation, land development, supply of agricultural inputs and the like. The area-based economic programmes include construction of roads, execution of minor irrigation and lift irrigation schemes and so on.

Post-independence, the state recognised the special problems of the weaker sections of society and offered special programmes to improve their quality of life and for the alleviation of poverty. The Community Development Programmes were initiated to bring about awareness among the rural masses. Several land reform measures have been introduced to redistribute land to the tillers. In order to help solve local problems, decentralisation of state powers was undertaken, and Panchayati Raj introduced. Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Tribal Sub-plan (TSP), Jawar Rojgar Yojana (JRY), National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS), Indira Abas Yojana (IAY), National Maternity Benefit Scheme (NMBS) among others, have been introduced for social mobility of individual tribals. These state-sponsored programmes had limited success, because only a small fraction of tribes reached the target level. The well-placed tribals have created a new process of social differentiation. The tribal social identity is moving towards tribal class mobility. Tribals are now found in almost every stratum of our society, from administrators to agricultural labourers. There is also evidence of successful caste mobility through Sanskritisation. The tribals now imitate the non-tribal habits. However, they are not equal to the non-tribals. The tribal problem in India is characterised by the process of institutionalised exploitation and socio-political marginalisation, produced by the twin historical process of unequal incorporation and exclusion.

METHODOLOGY

This study is mainly based on qualitative analysis of data gathered from the field. Given the qualitative nature of study, pure quantitative techniques have been avoided to the extent possible. Secondary data has been collected from books, journals and periodicals. An attempt has been made to elicit information through Galtung’s dialogical Participatory Rural/Relaxed Appraisal (PRA) method.
GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

Jamalpur block is one of the underdeveloped blocks in the district of Burdwan. The district of Burdwan, is situated between 22° 56’ and 23° 53’ north latitude and between 86° 48’ and 88° 25’ east longitude. Burdwan, the principal town and administrative headquarter, is situated on the north bank of Banka, some 2 miles from Damodar river, at 23° 14’ north latitude and at 87° 51’ east latitude. The district lies mainly between the Ajay, the Bhagirathi or Hooghly and the Damodar rivers. It is bounded on the north by Santal Parganas, Birbhum and Murshidabad; on the east by Nadia; on the south by Hooghly, Midnapore and Bankura; and on the west by Manbhum. The Damodar, the sacred river of the Santals, rises in the Chota Nagpur water-shed. The principal places on its banks are Kasba, Gohagram, Gopalpur, Jamalpur and Selimabad.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Tribal people in the study area earn their livelihood by undertaking a number of occupations like settled agriculture, industrial and agricultural labour, animal husbandry, fishing, trade and commerce of which household industry including handicrafts is of prime importance. They have entered into monetised economy to compete with the present-day marketing system. However, their economy is still based on raw material production and increasingly dependent on the urban economy for subsistence (Basu, 1982). With centralised planning administered by economists and bureaucrats, people’s participation is not envisaged as an integral part of development. Numerical smallness, low level of literacy, simple technology and primitive agricultural pursuits has resulted in further marginalisation and alienation of the tribals. The present tribal development approach lays emphasis on development of agriculture, land reclamation and land development, group demonstration and input assistance. Development projects like digging of wells, promotion of lift irrigation, animal husbandry, and poultry farming are important in the Tribal Sub-Plan.

Conservationists adhere to traditionalism and resist change. Technological and economic development in tribal society without necessary changes in the value-attitude system is a fundamental obstacle to the economic development of the society. Industrialisation has uprooted the tribals from their traditional occupations, decreased the hold of the tribals on local natural resources, resulting in the deterioration of quality of life and quality of
tribal employment. Tribals need to be empowered and encouraged to participate in the development process.

Development must go hand in hand with (1) provision of basic necessities like health, nutrition, education and employment; and (2) development of traditional occupation and not sudden structural changes in their economic base disposal. The developmental programmes of tribals in West Bengal are examples of ‘directed change’ (Danda, 1988a,b) initiated through community development and Panchayati Raj. Implementation of community development programmes brought about certain social, economic, political and cultural changes. Although, there are positive changes in the rules of commensality, untouchability, caste order and social distance, there appears to be dismemberment of the traditional authority structure and value system. In spite of economic disparities and exploitation of one class by another, people were psychologically united in ceremonial ties before the onset of fast moving changes since the sixties. With improved communication facilities, media exposure, growth of literacy and changing political scenes, the traditional power structure has ceased to function (Bhowmick, 1988). However, the community which has emerged from pre-agricultural technology and now settled in agricultural practices, is not totally divorced from tradition.

The development objectives, goals and strategies or programmatic goals should be formulated with the following in mind:

**Objective:** Development in relation with the mainstream society — investment and adoption of technology in production, development of human resources, institutional arrangement and infrastructural development, education, awareness through communication, modifications in values and norms, socio-economic relations, and opportunities and services.

**Prime goal:** Development of the individual and the community, particularly the ‘down-trodden’.

**Programmatic goals and activities:** Improvement of income and income generating assets — improvement of land base, application of improved technology in agriculture, development of subsidiary occupation and creation of additional employment opportunities.

Protection from exploitation — institutionalisation of credit and marketing facilities, restriction against land alienation and fair wages for labour.
Improvement in interaction with other groups and administration — identification of tribal leaders and educating and socialising them for better interaction, representation in social, economic and political institutions.

There is a need for a comprehensive tribal development model. Responsive leadership accompanied with the development process would make the development real. Employing workers with a background in anthropology would be an advantage. The tribesmen are suspicious of the government and their agents as they have no faith in any government welfare measures. They generally wish to be left alone. In this welter of suspicion, mistrust and frustration, the tribesmen badly need the services of men who would restore their faith, interpret to them the policies of the governments and also act as a two-way channel of communication between the tribesmen and the local government (Aiyappan, 1988). This calls for the development of leadership within the leadership community. Panchayati Raj Institutions have paved the way for the creation of social and administrative infrastructure, tribal participation in economic schemes, community activities and panchayat elections.

‘Development plans for the tribals should have a wide range of variability and should be formulated accordingly. There is differential development among the tribals themselves and consequently of their needs. Plans must be in conformity with classificatory tribal communities’ (Narayan, 1988: 139).

The plans are, however, uniformly formulated and tribal interests and problems are not taken into account. Development implies integration of social and economic development, and includes mainly the development of man power, employment opportunities, increase in the level of real income and wages, constructive use of leisure time, development of agriculture, industry, mining, power, transport and communication facilities, water resources and so on (Qureshi, 1971: 12).

The comprehensive tribal development model includes three models of social policy: i) The Residual Welfare Model — the individual is the unit and instrument of his own welfare. Under this model the individual is provided with temporary help to become self-reliant and confident. ii) The Achievement Performance Model — social needs of the individuals should be provided on the basis of merit, achieved status differentials, work performance and productivity. iii) Institutional Redistribution Model — the individuals are provided with basic welfare services irrespective of income, education, caste and so on. This model is based on the principle of social justice.
Tribal development also implies the integration of tribal people with the general Indian population. ‘It implies policy of “Social Symbiosis” or “Social Commensalism” whereby there might be a sort of “cultural federation” in which people of different cultures and shades of opinion and values may live together “without fusion, having symbiotic or commensal relationship with one another” and without the “necessity of ironing out cultural differences”, thus providing a “modus vivendi for cultural miscegenation”.’ (Majumdar, 1947: 147). In this process of development, different sections of the rural populace have been affected differently. The development programmes have benefited the upper middle, middle and richer sections much more than the lower middle and poorer sections. There is ‘growth of inequality’ (Dandekar and Rath, 1971: 28) in this process. ‘Consequently, the extent of participation in the development process and share in the development gains become a direct function of one’s pre-determined resources position. The small and marginal farmers, owing to low and deficient farm level infrastructures, obviously had limited capacity to benefit from the development strategy with its bias for the land factor’ (Jodha: 634).

The Constitution of India lays emphasis on agriculture as the key sector for tribal development. ‘Agricultural production is a cooperative enterprise of the central and state governments on one hand and cultivators on the other. The Constitution of India has visualised promotion of agricultural production as a basic responsibility of the state governments. It has also placed a number of responsibilities on the centre with direct or indirect basing on agriculture.’ (Muttalib, 1973: 69). Agricultural operations in tribal areas are largely dependent on rains and the vagaries of nature. Lack of knowledge of soil and water conservation measures, limited knowledge and exposure to improved agricultural techniques, low investments and crippling indebtedness have left tribal agriculture remain precariously at subsistence levels. The economic programmes of the tribal development agencies are generally directed towards ensuring an immediate boost to agricultural and horticultural production, improve the economic conditions of the landless among the tribals by providing them with land and non-land inputs, reorganise the cooperative and marketing structure, and provide employment and increased income to the tribals.

Two types of development programmes have been initiated in tribal development areas — family and area-based programmes. The former
includes land redistribution, land reclamation, land development and soil conservation measures, supply of agricultural inputs, promotion of village and cottage industries, animal husbandry, business and so on. The area-based programmes emphasise construction of roads, tubewells, sanitation, minor irrigation and lift irrigation schemes, construction of shishu shikha kendras, free primary schools and anganwadi centres and other community development programmes.

Tribal development programmes may serve the dual purpose of restoring confidence among the tribals and bringing them in closer contact with the outside world. The community development programmes provide the tribals labour-based employment or wage employment. One of the most important programmes for tribal development would be to secure rights on land which they may be cultivating as leaseholders or otherwise. Efficient utilisation of natural and human resources is a key function of economic development. Therefore, education should be the main thrust of tribal development. Providing better social services can effectively increase the human resource potential. Economic programmes have to be highly subsidised as the resource-base for tribals is very limited.

As per government norms, each block is accepted as a unit of planning for rural development. The available programmes, particularly the Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) and the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) are limited to economic development only. So far, non-tribals have been the only beneficiaries of these programmes. These programmes can be strengthened with the implementation of suitable social development schemes. The data from the field survey has indicated the need to achieve a better balance between the two. ‘The overall effects of the TSP have, therefore, been to offload sums of money in tribal areas…. On the face of it, it appears that improvement in infrastructure has occurred…. major beneficiaries have been non-tribals, more used to its availment, rather than tribals…. Unless the development process possesses a keen perception of socio-economic nuances, steering through them to reach out to target groups, it becomes counter-productive, as some examples of tribal areas show.’ (Singh, 1990: 101).

Change rather than continuity should figure prominently in development schemes. The main thrust of the constitutional provision for the scheduled tribes is to protect and promote tribal interests through legal and administrative support and to raise the economic condition and thereby upgrade their quality of life. Promotion of economic interests of the tribals
Mohammed Ayub Mallick has been one of the planks of planned development. One of the consequences of the current pattern of development is differential growth among the scheduled tribes. The inequity of growth, however, can largely be attributed to the general process of growth itself. With the process of modernisation the inequalities of the scheduled tribes have increased. ‘It is generally true that the Scheduled Tribes are much more backward than the Scheduled Castes in the variables of modernisation. While it is true that the Scheduled Tribes are under-represented and the Scheduled Castes are over-represented, the former may have an edge over the latter, the advantage in their case may be smaller than in the case of Scheduled Castes in a similar context…. We may, therefore, formulate the structural hypotheses about the mobility opportunities of the Scheduled Tribes as follows: First, the larger the percentage of the Scheduled Tribes in a state, the lower are their chances of upward mobility and, second, the higher the percentage of Scheduled Castes in a state the better are the chances of mobility of the Scheduled Tribes.’ (D’Souza, 1990: 170).

As per the data gathered from the field survey, the second hypothesis does not hold much water, as Scheduled Tribes are generally more backward than the Scheduled Castes. Moreover, this hypothesis is also not applicable in the study area. A majority of the tribals receive no benefits and continue to live in poverty and ignorance. The existing policies and schemes of the government have succeeded in perpetuating the inequality syndrome. So far, the development schemes have only benefited the elite. They have taken maximum advantage of protective safeguards. The elites and the bureaucrats control the power structure and exploit the tribals. The tribal elites instead of ‘becoming agents of change, … have grabbed the major portion of the cake and contributed to the deplorable condition of their people…. Continuity is there, because earlier too, most elites did control the resources…. A society of equals would not have responded unequally to the exogenous forces of change and development; nor would it have solidified the process of elite formation. The old elites have come to assume new positions, may be with some entry-points for others but no exits. The result is undesirable trend to accentuation of inequalities’ (Gupta, 1993: 501).

The rural areas in West Bengal are plagued with problems of inequality, poverty, lack of productivity and basic minimum services. In a bid to alleviate these problems the government has instituted various development policies and programmes. The present system of distribution of land and other assets is skewed, and is characterised by large-scale employment on
the one hand and low productivity on the other. The developmental programmes should be implemented through institutions like the panchayats. The development programmes aimed at upliftment of the rural mass based on economic criteria and social welfare measures are based on various approaches: Community Approach, Area Development Approach, Target Group Approach, Employment Generation Approach, Poverty Alleviation Approach and the Social Welfare Approach.

The programmes for tribals emphasise improvement of quality of life, elimination of all forms of exploitation, speeding up the process of socio-economic development and building up of confidence among them. Side by side, employment generation schemes like Crash Scheme for Rural Employment, Social Forestry, Indira Abas Yojana and Million Wells Scheme are important. Taking family as the unit of planning and employment generation, the IRDP is aimed at removing poverty and unemployment. The supporting component of IRDP is Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment aiming at providing technical skills for rural youth living in poverty. With a view to motivate women to take up income generating activities to supplement their family income, the Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) groups have been formed. Further, to enhance quality production and increase income with the use of modern tools, the Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA) programme has been launched. Previously launched programmes like National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP) have been merged into the Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) for improvement of rural infrastructure, creation of social assets, sustained employment and increase in wage levels. Apart from JRY, the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) is likely to provide assured gainful employment to the rural poor.

The Minimum Needs Programme was initiated to establish a network of basic services, including access to elementary and adult education, health services, water supply, electrification and so on. The Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) was instituted to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age group of 0-6 years, including the psycho-physical and social development of children, reduction in infant mortality and reduction of school dropouts. The centre has provided funds from the Central Rural Sanitation Programme for the building of toilets for SCs and STs. Apart from this, three schemes have been formulated under the National Social Assistance Programme—National
Old Age Pension Scheme: benefits provided to aged and destitute persons receiving Rs. 75 to 100 per month; National Family Benefit Scheme: benefits provided to persons in the age group of 18-64 years receiving Rs. 500 in case of death due to natural causes and Rs. 10,000 in case of accidental death; National Maternity Benefit Scheme: benefits provided to pregnant mothers receiving Rs. 300-500 for pre-natal maternity care for the first two live births.

It is in this context that self-employment programmes assume great significance. With the multiplicity of programmes, each programme was viewed in its individual capacity and there was no attempt to link the programmes. The programmes were aimed at achieving individual programme targets rather than substantive income generation. To make the development programmes free of defects the Government has decided to restructure the self-employment programme. In 1999, a new self-employment programme known as the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) was launched. The programme provides for both credit facilities and subsidies, besides laying emphasis on training courses.

The extent of empowerment of the tribals can be understood by looking at two aspects — tribal representation in Panchayati Raj institutions and actual participation of the tribal people in elections and party politics. Statutory provisions for reservation of seats for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have provided opportunities for holding positions of leadership in villages. Urbanisation, industrialisation and the agencies of political socialisation, such as political parties, have aroused class-consciousness among the backward classes. A new type of social conflict between the have and have-nots, the forward and backward classes is found in village politics. The suppressed castes or classes have started voicing their protests against the traditionally dominant castes or classes through the system of Panchayats. In an attempt to protect further loss to personal property and prestige, the traditional influential leaders of the village are establishing covert contact with local level party leaders and other influential people. Therefore, decision-making at the village level still remains inherently with influential members of the village. According to the data gathered from the Field Survey, even though the procedure of decision-making at the Panchayat level is democratic, the degree of participation is very poor.

Thus, even concepts of “anti-capitalism”, “Panchayati Raj”, “protection of petty commodity production” can serve as the political basis for the expansion of legitimate bases of the capitalist state. Particularly, the
Panchayat system in West Bengal creates tension between the two domains of capitalist and pre-capitalist forces in an essentially capitalist formation.’ (Halder, 1988: 208).

Empowerment means endowing those who are powerless or having no power with a share of it. It is both process and product. In so far as tribes control and enjoy some power, the measures so taken may be conceived as products. They may be seen also as processes in that they constitute stages to or strategies for the greater empowerment of the tribes. The process of disempowerment of the tribes began with the incorporation of the tribes into the larger social structure. The whole thrust of development after independence was to integrate the tribes into the mainstream as to their geographical isolation, low level of development and social backwardness (Ray, 1972). The issues of tribal development could not be pursued outside of national development. The agenda of national development was not in consonance with the interest and welfare of the tribes. The tribals find themselves increasingly subjected to impoverishment, exploitation and oppression. Empowerment to the tribal people means power to control their own resources. As per the Scheduled Areas Act, 1996, Gram Sabha is the prime unit of participation. Every village must have a Gram Sabha consisting of persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the panchayats at the village level. The Gram Sabha is vested with power to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, and community resources. It is also vested with the power to approve plans, programmes and projects for socio-economic development.

The Panchayat system in West Bengal has given rise to a new privileged class in the rural areas. The Panchayats have failed to build any infrastructure (Biswas, 1989). Local power is concentrated in the hands of the well-to-do. Panchayats have become the institutional arrangement for defusing tensions in agrarian relations. The Panchayati Raj system seeks to create institutions based on mass support through the management of various development programmes. Bureaucratic procedures and mad craze for power have made the people separate from these institutions of popular participation. ‘Emphasis is more on representation and enlightened leadership than on participation….’ (Tornquist, 1991: 68). The Panchayati Raj institutions have to work towards consolidation and redistribution of assets and benefits for the poor and providing means of livelihood. It is important to set up different types of small-scale industries. This would provide them
with an alternative source of income. Women’s participation in village activities has to be encouraged. ‘The girls’ education in tribal areas is another major empowerment need. The reasons for tribal girls’ non-enrolment and/or dropout from the school are many: her preoccupation in economic pursuits, whether visible or non-visible, non-relevance of the learning experiences in the present day school to the needs of the tribal girls, modern education acting as disculturing agent or alienating force in tribal societies etc.’ (Ambasht, 2001: 121–22).

However, with modernisation villagers have started demanding the institution of statutory Panchayats. Statutory Panchayats function parallelly with traditional village organisations. Though the statutory Panchayats have reduced the status and authority of the tribal panchayats, tribal organisations still wield considerable authority and do not compromise on certain traditional values and beliefs. Simultaneously, tribal panchayats have also taken certain measures to meet the challenges of modernisation.

The role of the traditional panchayat is on the decline. ‘The tribal councils which used to be all powerful in directing the behaviour of its members are now soon weakening, for the administration has abrogated the right of the tribal council to sit in judgement on criminal cases. The ‘nyaya’ panchayats have taken over the judgement of the ordinary civil cases in its hands. This has reduced the dominance of tribal or clan councils.’ (Doshi, 1972: 469). Communal ownership of land has given way to individual ownership. Colonial rule destroyed the indigenous economic activities and social structure of the tribal community. Traditionally, the village headman, also responsible for the collection of rents, would allot a single plot of land to each inhabitant (Chatterjee).

‘A Santal’s land not only provides economic security, but is a powerful link with his ancestors; and this applies to newly entered areas no less than the old, for he will not take possession till the spirits approve. The land is part of his spiritual as well as economic heritage….’ (Alpin, 1981). The collection of revenue, policy of isolation or ‘leave them alone’, the establishment of central police and judicial systems have contributed to the decline of the organisational structure of the tribes and the emergence of a contemporary tribal political life. The panchayats are under the immediate supervision of the Sub-divisional administration (Inamdar, 1970). ‘There appears to be unanimity of opinion that these village Panchayats should be, not merely the administrative unit, but also the medium for development activities. This is in accordance with Article
40 of the Constitution which says that: “The State shall take steps to organise village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government” (Elwin, 1963: 129).

A few educated individuals, who were economically well-off and owned land, were unsuccessful in their attempts at attaining leadership positions in the village. Panchayats have now assumed judicial and legal rights to exercise control over the village’s social and economic matters. The majority representation principle, periodic election, uninhibited political competition and coalition formation are against Santal traditions. Introduction of election based on adult franchise has led to the growth of factions and parties in the villages (Sachchidananda, 1968) and open competition has replaced the spirit of consensus (Danda, 1971). Traditionally, the headman acquired his ascribed role by inheritance governed by patrilineal primogeniture principle and consensual principle as opposed to the achieved status and coercion. ‘Ascribed statuses are those which are assigned to the individuals without reference to their innate differences or abilities. They can be predicted and trained for from the moment of birth’ (Linton, 1936: 115).

‘When the performance of a role is supported by legitimacy the ability of the actor in the role to enforce binding decisions on those supporting him is called ‘consensual power’, as opposed to ‘power’ as an unqualified term applying to the same ability but based on coercion.’ (Swartz, 1968: 31). Political participation fulfils four functions, that is, pursuing economic needs, satisfying needs for social adjustment, meeting psychological needs and pursuing particular values. The socio-economic and psychological needs of the individuals and their attitude towards particular values of democracy determine the level of political participation and individual’s political orientation.

Further, there are various levels of participation — from taking part in political discussions to taking part in decision making. Economic backwardness, lack of education and socio-economic inequality have limited the participation of the tribals in the decision making process. As per data gathered from the field, the participation of tribals in political activities are restricted to casting votes, attending meetings, participating in political discussions, election campaigning, canvassing for candidates and in some cases contributing to the election funds. For effective and fruitful participation of tribals the government will have to improve the existing tribal welfare measures and legislations.
Development, in essence, signifies that all tribal people must be provided with the means to sustain life. They should be free from servitude and develop self-esteem (Todaro, 1985).

Therefore, Tribal development = Economic growth + Social development

The tribal people still live in poverty and morbidity. They stand in urgent need of positive intervention…., a large number of tribal communities have been living in close regional proximity to non-tribal people imbibing alien culture and life style. From the perspective of the entire scenario, the approach to technology adoption should be guided by the situational parameters of different groups, as one of the important determining factors. If technology for raising productivity has to be called in, it should be compatible with the pre-existing techno-systems. The other factors of importance are assimilative capacity and ecologic assonance. Intensive search has to be launched for locating relevant technologies for ensuring the basic necessities of adequate food, drinking water, health, shelter etc., which do not cause damage to the underlying philosophy of the tribal milieu. Judicious injections of technology are essential, lending the concepts of “appropriate technology” and “upgrade technology” considerable significance.’ (Singh, 1990: 102).

Quality of life is dependent on the availability and access to basic necessities, such as food, drinking water, clothing, housing and health services. Attributes and per capita quantity of these necessities depend on command over resources, development of human resources, level of technological know-how and level of education. The small and marginal farmers with uneconomic holdings consume whatever they produce. Whatever aid is received by them gets diverted to consumption expenditure. As a result, the propensity to consume increases, while the propensity to save declines. The interest free consumption loans are advanced to tribal farmers in the TSP area, which is in addition to capital subsidy advanced by the government. Thus, in tribal economy we find —

\[ C = Y + S + I \]
\[ I = S + S1 \]
\[ S = I - C \]
\[ Y = I + C \]

C is equal to consumption, I is equal to investment, Y is equal to income, S is equal to savings and S1 is equal to subsidy.

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Data gathered from the field reveals that the relevance of the secondary and tertiary sectors to the tribal economy is negligible. Agricultural economy is plagued with various problems — (i) economic turn-out from agriculture is low, (ii) most of the owner cultivators own less than three acres of land, (iii) most of them are agricultural labourers, (iv) lands are fragmented, and (v) remunerative prices for the agricultural goods seldom exceed the costs. With diversification of occupations and introduction of cash economy, tribal settlements are now dispersed. The possible causes for the dispersal of settlements are:

**Push Factor:** Land alienation and insufficient lands for cultivation, seasonal unemployment, maintenance and upkeep of family needs and limited scope for progress and prosperity; and

**Pull Factor:** Preference for permanent service or occupations other than agriculture, search for security and economic prosperity, temptations of a new and modern life and money-economy.

The following characteristics of tribes in the study area have been identified: (1) most of the beneficiaries are poor and ignorant; (2) few people who are educated and economically sound may be treated as elites; (3) tribal society has now begun to witness inequality resulting from massive socio-economic measures undertaken by the Central and State governments. The tribal community has realised the significance of education; and (4) they have understood that they are not always the actual beneficiaries of development.

‘As a result of the agricultural capitalism introduced through the massive plans most of them have become landless labourers. This new capitalism, which has come through the plans, has placed a few influential tribal leaders into advantageous positions. The infrastructure created by development agencies has also benefited the well-off segments of tribal society... the situation today is that tribal society is economically getting fragmented into a number of classes.’ (Rao, 1979: 177). The tribal society has now ceased to be homogeneous. The wealth status of the tribals is determined by the ownership of land, barga, patta or hereditary. Most of the poor who constitute the majority have become landless labourers. Many poor tribals are in debt as they have borrowed money from non-tribal money-lenders. They have no access to hybrid seeds, fertilizers, tractors and other farming equipment. A huge supply of agricultural labour force from outside the tribal community has reduced the possible earnings of the tribals in this block. (See Figure 1)
As shown in Figure 1, the huge supply of labour from outside has reduced the earning potential of the tribals. However, the demand for labour is greater than supply. Most of the agricultural labourers are landless. Indebtedness has given way to land alienation and dispossession of tribal land. Low income and the inability to purchase basic necessities and farm equipment has resulted in tribal indebtedness.

Poor socio-economic status is mainly responsible for low levels of literacy and has to be understood in the context of social and cultural approaches to development.

Promotion of literacy in this block is haphazard. Poor economic conditions limit investment in education. Most tribals believe that investment in education would result in further alienation from their land and securing jobs in fields other than agriculture is uncertain. The tribals, therefore, possess lower levels of aspiration as compared to non-tribals and thus have lower levels of achievement.

Damina Choudhary (2000) has pointed out lower levels of aspiration and achievement among tribal girls, both in academic and non-academic sectors. This is in contrast to the higher levels of aspiration and achievement found in non-tribal girls. Not only the level of aspiration, but other influencing factors like socio-economic status, strong determination,
schooling system, curricula, school adjustment and so on need to be considered while understanding achievement standards among tribals. ‘It is true that the higher level of aspiration may in turn lead to higher levels of achievement, both academic and non-academic, but in case of aspiration it loses its influence on the non-academic achievement of both the groups when other factors might prove to be influential than their level of aspiration’ (Choudhary, 2000: 115).

‘It was found that the level of literacy in the family had direct correlation with the socio-economic status of the tribal family, which had further correlation with the size of the family. Bigger the size of the family, higher has been the socio-economic status and high level of literacy in the family. The socio-economic status of the family was determined by assigning scores to each household for (a) land holding, (b) annual produce, (c) levy paid, (d) indebtedness, (e) occupational position and (f) literacy level.’ (Mutatkar, 1990: 19). The above factors: land, agricultural production, income, occupation, literacy and so on, affect the socio-economic status. There is the need for all-round development schemes within a time bound period under strict supervision of government authorities so as to raise the economic status of the tribals. Proper education and better economic status can go a long way in ameliorating and improving the standard of the tribal girls (Rath and Ashraf, 1997). Tribal girls are abused in few cases. To improve their lot they should receive more education. Psychologically, they are more flexible to receive educational facilities. They compare their standard with the non-tribal women and thus they come forward for change and modernisation (Narain, 1997).

As per the data gathered, lack of access to healthy food has resulted in various nutritional and health concerns among the tribals. The high cost of modern medication and treatment has forced the tribals to opt for traditional methods of treatment, sometimes resulting in worsening existing health concerns and even death. For example, there have been reported deaths of individuals suffering from snakebite and jaundice. Tribals largely rely on indigenous medicines. However, tribal healers also indulge in treatment based on cosmological speculations along with witchcraft.

Fever, skin diseases, dental and gum diseases, diarrhoea and anaemia are rampant. Incidences of cardiovascular complaints and ailments related to the nervous system are rare. Incidences of abortion and miscarriages are negligible. Night-blindness, falciparum malaria, hemolytic diseases, mild jaundice, and renal tubular siderosis are common in this area. Females are more
undernourished as compared to their male counterparts. The reasons for this vary from reduction in food intake due to fear of vomiting during pregnancy, low consumption of iron, vitamins and calcium, consumption of alcohol during pregnancy and difficult labour.

Most of the development programmes do not necessarily have the participation of tribals. The implementation of developmental programmes has increased the workload of tribal women and forced the tribals to migrate to other areas. The modernisation process has given birth to total de-tribalisation. Monetisation of tribal economy, integration of national and regional economy, increased trade and commerce, adoption of new technology in agricultural and non-agricultural fields, mass communication and media exposure, intensification of consciousness, foreign investment—all have pulled the tribal culture towards capitalism and consumerism. The tribal people are disorganised and dissociated from their traditional way of life. They have moved from simplicity, self-reliance, homogeneity, co-operation, distinctiveness, optimism and honesty to complexity, heterogeneity, competition, individualisation, conflict, frustration and hypocrisy. In terms of religion and rituals they have undoubtedly drifted towards Hinduism, but they are not Hindu in social organisation.

‘The widespread poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, absence of safe drinking water and sanitary living conditions, poor maternal and child health services, ineffective coverage of national health and nutritional services have been traced out in several studies as possible, contributing factors for dismal health conditions among these vulnerable population’ (WHO, 1990: 8).

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