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STATE, NGOS AND TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT: A STUDY IN DOOARS REGION OF WEST BENGAL WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF THE NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS SINCE 1991.

ABSTRACT

The development discourse has remained abstract to the 8.06% of the total Indian population comprising up of more than seven hundred and fifty scheduled tribe communities of India largely because of their voices representing their demands being left unheard by the agencies of development. The scheduled tribes are regarded to be one of the marginalized sections of society, the development of which has been tried to be addressed since the pre independence era. However, one cannot deny the fact that the desired target achievement for tribal development has not been achieved, the reasons being multiple in numbers. The forceful implementation of ideas of development as perceived by the policy formulators on the scheduled tribes without any consultation with the beneficiaries has resulted in the failure of the achievement of the desired output from the developmental policies for the scheduled tribes. The state along with the non-governmental organizations has been trying to make serious attempts to address the problems of tribal development by acting as the facilitators of development as a catalyst. The post independence era has witnessed the implementation of a huge array of developmental policies aimed at bringing about tribal development based on the approaches designed by the first Prime Minister of independent India Pt. Nehru in close consultation with the eminent anthropologist Verrier Elwin. Elwin who was initially in favour of complete isolation was criticized by scholars like G.S. Ghurye for making an attempt to furthermore make the tribes backward who were referred to by Ghurye as the Backward Hindus. Although Elwin later on changed his stand to assimilations approach, Nehru was in favour of neither complete isolation nor forceful integration of the external agencies to bring them in line with the ongoing process of development at the cost of their culture and identity. The approaches of tribal development has witnessed to be on the lines of top down model where the policies are formulated by the government and implemented on the scheduled tribes often failing to bring about a desired result in spite of the ever increasing financial investments on the developmental plans and projects for the tribals.

The outcomes of such measures are put into question looking at the achievement of the target results. This demands for a complete re-examination of the approaches to tribal development

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and the role of the non-governmental organizations in tribal development especially since 1991. This requires micro level understandings in order to preserve the heterogeneous tribal identities and culture in the process of development without hampering these sensitive elements of development.

The present study tries to understand the meaning of development both from the scholarly point of view as well as through the lenses of the beneficiaries themselves i.e. the scheduled tribes. The mismatch in the conceptualization of development from the two angles has stood to be one of the prime factors behind the failure of the existing policies on tribal development. Understanding the role of the third agencies of development i.e. the non-governmental organizations is also very important because in countries like India where the scheduled tribes are found to be located in the backward rural interiors, the governmental policies and their agents for the development of these communities stand to be missing due to geographical complexities. In such a situation, the non-governmental organizations are expected to cater to the needs of the tribal communities inhabiting the backward areas of the nation. However, the activities and functioning of the NGOs need to be carefully analyzed because in spite of their existence in the area for long, the goals of tribal development fail to portray a positive result. The present study tries to delve deeper in assessing the role of the non-governmental organizations in the development of the scheduled tribes by taking up micro level studies in the proposed area of research i.e. the Dooars region of West Bengal.

The **review of literature** has been made to acknowledge the earlier works conducted in the study area by compartmentalizing it into three specific categories

- Review of Literature on Non Governmental Organizations and Development;
- Review of Literature on Tribal Development in India;
- Review of literature on the Participation of the People for Development.

The **research gap** that has been found out after a careful study of the existing literatures is that in most of the studies the scheduled tribes have been regarded to be a homogenous single group thereby addressing their problems on a single line which has often created problem in addressing the scheduled tribes. The fact that they are composed of more than 750 different heterogeneous groups has not been acknowledged in the due course. Moreover, the lack of serious research works on the role of the non-governmental organizations in the Dooars

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region of West Bengal creates a serious research gap that demands the serious attention of the scholars.

The **conceptual framework** with which we move forward demands a review of the major approaches from the historical point of view starting from the Anthropological approach, the British administrative approach, Political approach, Religious approach Gandhian Workers approach, Missionary approach, Assimilations Approach of Verrier Elwin, the Middle Path of Nehruvian approach etc. However, due to the failure of these approaches to achieve the desired result, we have proposed the Structurationist Approach of Prof. Anthony Giddens an alternative approach to tribal development. Giddens regards the agency and structure to be two faces of the same coin and that the line of distinction between the agency and structure is simply analytical and not distinct in nature. This is regarded to be the duality of structure of Giddens Structuration theory. He compares his idea of structuration as an orchestra where we see the presence of different instruments (agency), producing a single music (structure), yet the variations in the tone of the music produced is distinct and clear representing every instrument. In the structuration process, good and new behaviours that are beneficial to both the agency and the structure are incorporated, while the harmful and useless behaviours are patted out of the system.

The chief **research problem** happens to be the presence of proxy non-governmental organization and the constant efforts to detribalize the scheduled tribes in the process of tribal development.

The research objectives are: i) to understand the model of development implemented in the Dooars region and to link it up with the idea of development that the tribals understand, interpret and perceive as development ii) to find out whether the NGO intervention has been successful enough in achieving the targets of tribal development on the lines of sustainable development iii) to suggest an alternative approach to tribal development if required.

This gives way to the major **research questions** that stand to inquire the role of the non-governmental organizations in tribal development of the Dooars region of West Bengal.

The **research methodology** that we have adopted in the present qualitative study is snowball sampling method. The research design is based on multilayered sample survey where the location of the survey has been carefully chosen using strict parameters of choice. The selection of the sample size has been carefully done using the formula provided by Bryman

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and Carmar. A total of six areas of the Dooars region namely Totopara, Buxa, Mechia Busty, Mendibari, Mechpara and Kumargram have been selected. From each village, we have taken up twenty five respondents thereby leading to the total sample size of one hundred and fifty respondents.

The **organization of the thesis** is done under six major chapters, where the first chapter provides us with the introductory notes that are important for understanding the crux of the thesis. The second chapter is dedicated to the conceptualization of development and the role of the non-governmental organizations in it by breaking up the chapter into three major sections namely – development, the non-governmental organizations and the NGOs and tribal development by linking up the meaning of development to the scheduled tribes. The third chapter provides us with an understanding of the policies of the state for bringing about tribal development since 1991. Chapter number four tries to introduce us with the area of study that is the Dooars region of West Bengal by providing a historical account along with its geographical characteristics. The fifth chapter is dedicated to the field survey where an attempt has been made to analyze the role of the NGOs in tribal development since 1991 alongside understanding the meaning of development to the scheduled tribes of the area. Chapter six concludes the thesis by providing the major findings and suggestions of the present study along with the summary of the chapters present in the thesis.