

Preface

The tribal people being the original inhabitants of India constitute a significant part of this vast nation. But due to ignorance and poverty, they do not know their right and privileges. After Independence, the Constitution of India provided safeguards for the tribal people. To translate these constitutional provisions into practice, planned efforts have been made and series of innovative plans, programmes and institutions have been created with a view to bring about a desired change in the life of the people.

Development and welfare work are easier through decentralized administration and local initiative with responsibility and power. Thus, Directive Principles of State Policy gives importance to the Panchayats in this respect. Thus, Panchayat system has gained importance in rural development in general and tribal development in particular. The Panchayati Raj administration is aimed at restructuring of land distribution, choice of appropriate technology and application of appropriate knowledge, development of cottage industries and better coordination of planning and programmes. In addition to land reform measures, detection of benami land and distribution of these among the disadvantaged and recording of bargadars, implementation of Food-for-Work, NREP, RLGEF, IRDP by the Panchayats in identification of beneficiaries, selection of schemes and monitoring the Drought Prone Area Programme [DPAP] schemes relating to 'minikit' distribution in agriculture, small irrigation, social forestry, rural water supply, housing and several important schemes on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and on cottage industries and small scale industries have been under the direct responsibility of the Panchayats.

The present study tries to make a thorough review of the history of administrative measures of Indian Constitution and series of plans and programmes through Five Year Plans for tribal development in India and in the state of West Bengal. Then it is intended to depict with empirical evidence as to upto what extent the panchayats are successful in bringing development and upliftment of tribals living in rural areas of Darjeeling hills and the impact of various development schemes implemented through panchayats in the socio-economic development of the tribes of the Darjeeling Hills.

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