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Editorial

From time to time development models are evolved so as to bring the disadvantaged/ weaker section of the society to the mainstream. The models are different from place to place. Some macro level models are implemented across the country and also some location specific and need based models are formulated and implemented. The development models available/implemented for Adivasis are periodically reviewed for better result. However, it is generally agreed that desired result is yet to be realized. Therefore, it is not the essence of the policy only but the desire of the mass to empower themselves by deriving benefits from various projects/models merits consideration. The limitations are always there. Traditionally, few only avail benefits and benefits do not percolate down to all strata of the society automatically. The policies, programmes are not being implemented equally or with desired thrust due to various reasons some being absence of awareness, lack of indulgence and seriousness. The environment, association and examples (role models) become the important factors which act as vehicle of upward mobility. Apart from various reasons cited for the backwardness, some of the drawbacks like absence of a clear cut and definite agenda within the community/group can be attributed for the prevailing backwardness.

There are plenty of get togethers, conferences being organized/convened by different groups at different places. But the agenda in almost all occasion miss the point to discuss on development model being pursued or needs to be pursued. The intellectual groups also like to refrain from taking up discussion on these issues. There qualities of the groups are cited by intelligentsia. For Santals, the qualities of fighters and their love for Ol Chiki are always being cited. In fact, Santals have been able to retain the quality of a fighter and also continue to embrace the same. They aspire to keep these two qualities alive. At the time of crisis, they have not become the mere spectator as a result of which there always is a solid repercussion. The spirit of co-existence and tolerance is maximum in this group. But,

whenever the suppression crossed the tolerable limit, they have always waged revolt against the person or center of oppression. The limit of subjugation is also always being demarcated and beyond certain point the voice of dissent is heard. However, it is observed that the community is gradually being confused with many imported guidance, theories and agenda. The foremost external effort is to isolate them and not to allow a process to continue which would work for their unification. Therefore, there are multiple agencies which talks about the path of progress and data on development, but in reality, nothing much has happened and people are still to gather the confidence to talk about how to protect their interest and safeguard their future. Due to multiple agencies their unity has been dwindled and the implementation of Ol Chiki is being slowed down.

Two major initiatives need to be taken up immediately. One is to strengthen traditional institutions and another one is to use Ol Chiki as a medium to eradicate illiteracy. The person knowing his mother tongue becomes literate through acquiring the knowledge of 30 letters which is the easiest method. It is not understood why emphasis is given to introduce an illiterate person with the formal educational system i.e. by studying and learning an alien language. The official recognition should be accorded to the formula and process that are being implemented in the private/voluntary domain.

The jaherthans at village level need special care and mention. The jaherthans have become very old and gradually they are being neglected without proper care and maintenance. This basic institution of identity needs to be preserved and protected. The intellectual masses, which are in the process of alienation, needs to forge bonds with the village level institutions and centre of social control to foster a feeling of share and care. The need of the hour is review, reassessment and reinforcement. The more the people of a particular group forget to care for their society, the more is the likelihood that they would be creating a space, compelling other people to forget their existence.

Scheduled Communities: A social Development profile of SC/STs (Bihar, Jharkhand & W.B.)

(Source: Planning Commission)

{Continued from June 2010 issue}

The *earner* status has been classified as low, moderate, high, very high and highest, spanning a range of 20 percent to 60 percent and above. The Dhobi of Bihar and the Dhobi and Chamar of West Bengal have the lowest earner status (20%-30%). At the moderate level (31%-40%), are the Dusadh of Bihar; Chamar and Dom of Jharkhand; and the Patni and Konai of West Bengal. Castes, which have a high earner status (41%-50%), are the Chamar of Bihar; and the Dom, Mal and Bagdi of West Bengal. The Chaupal and Musahar of Bihar; and the Bauri, Sarki and Bhuiyan of West Bengal have very high earner status (51% - 60%). The only Scheduled Caste having an earner status above 60 percent is the Kami of West Bengal (62%).

It is to be noted that the Chamar in the three States occupy three different earner statuses – low, moderate and high. The Dom has a moderate earner status in Jharkhand and high status in West Bengal. The Dhobi in both the States of Bihar and West Bengal have a low earner status. The same caste may have different earner statuses in different locations.

None among the tribal communities is in the low earner status. Only the urbanbased Munda and Oraon have moderate earner status. As we move up to high earner status, we have the Lohara and Mahali of Jharkhand; and the Santhal in West Bengal.

The Ho and Santhal of Jharkhand; and Mahali, Lodha, Oraon and Bhumij of West Bengal have very high earner status. Only the Munda of West Bengal have an earner status above 60 percent.

Interestingly, the Oraon and Munda in the urban area of Jharkhand have an earner status quite the reverse of that of the Oraon and Munda in rural-based West Bengal.

When compared to 1981 Census work participation figures, the earner status of the Dhobi in Bihar and

West Bengal; the Dom and Chamar of Jharkhand; the Dusadh in Bihar; and the Patni and Bhuiyan of West Bengal more or less, remain unchanged. The work participation has increased among Chamar in Bihar and West Bengal; Chaupal and Musahar in Bihar; Dom, Mal, Bagdi, Bauri, Sarki, Kami and Konai in West Bengal.

Among the tribal communities, the work participation of Munda, Oraon and Mahali of Jharkhand remain, by and large, at the same level. Whilst it has increased among the Lohara, Ho and Santhal of Jharkhand; and Mahali, Bhumij, Oraon, Munda and Lodha in West Bengal.

The work participation of scheduled communities in many cases has shown an increase in our study.

Earning Status: While the classification of earner status is free from any conceptual problem, it is the earning status of households, and of whole communities, i.e. complex, problematic and contentious. As we have noted, household income ideally is the best indicator of earning status but in real terms is very difficult to capture with reasonable accuracy. We have therefore concentrated on *per capita annual expenditure* for each scheduled community as a better practical way out. The recall memory for income is far more weaker than remembering the expenditure on actual consumption needs of daily living. Even so, the entire consumption expenditure cannot be fully captured. In order to reach a better assessment of economic status of communities we can always fall back on different kinds of assets held by them.

As we have done in the case of earner status, we have classified earning status similarly into categories ranging from low (Rs.2000) to highest (Rs.5500 and above) per capita annual consumption for scheduled communities.

The profile of scheduled communities that emerges from their earning status, as expected, is different from the configuration of their earner status. Interestingly, the Chamar and Konai of West Bengal have low earning status. Those classified as having a moderate earning status are the Chamar and Chaupal of Bihar; and Dom, Mal, Bauri and Bagdi of West Bengal. As we move up to the high earning category, the Musahar in Bihar; the Dom in Jharkhand; and Patni, Sarki, Bhuiyan and Kami in West Bengal have high consumption expenditure. Those with very high consumption expenditure include the Dhobi of West Bengal; the Chamar of Jharkhand, and the Dusadh of Bihar. Finally, the Dhobi of Bihar emerges as having the highest earning status.

None of the tribal communities are in the low earning status category. The Lohara and Ho of Jharkhand; Mahali and Oraon of West Bengal have a moderate earning status. The high earning status category is reached by the Munda in both Jharkhand and West Bengal; the Santhal, Lodha and Bhumij in West Bengal; and very high consumption level of expenditure has been reached by the Oraon and Santhal in Jharkhand. Surprisingly, it is the rural-based Mahali in Jharkhand who have the highest earning status among all tribal communities in our sample.

One conspicuous finding relates to the expenditure on food and non-food items. The expenditure on food for the scheduled communities is significantly high varying between 64 and 69 percent of the total consumption expenditure. Only in the case of the Dhobi in Bihar is the expenditure on non-food items greater (60%), when in absolute terms, their expenditure on food items is the highest among all. The Munda and Oraon of Jharkhand come next (44% expenditure on non-food items). Most of the scheduled communities spend around one-third or less of their consumption budget on non-food items. This is a clear indication of the fact that the scheduled communities we have studied have a long way to go to achieve a minimum decent level of living.

*We propose that the **poverty threshold** should be demarcated at the point where the expenditure is such that from that point onwards the expenditure on*

non-food items begins to exceed the expenditure on food items, assuming of course, that expenditure on non-food items is not unduly influenced by excessive and wasteful expenditure on addictions.

Class Stratification of Communities : Normally when we stratify populations according to the structure of classes, it is generally the household, which is the unit of analysis. In this study we are dealing with entire communities in portraying a social development profile. Consequently the situation of whole caste/tribal communities is being assessed.

When this assessment is being done in terms of earning and earner status, in effect we are in some sense entering the material basis of class domain where the unit is the community. Since this is so, it will be useful to attempt class stratification of communities with collectivities (castes/tribes) as the units of analysis.

While pursuing this mode of class analysis, we are aware that this is a level of abstraction, which is qualitatively different from classic class analysis. In the classic mode of analysis, class formations are identified across communities where each community contributes to the different layers of classes. Such a structuring of classes, whether in the Marxist framework of relations of production or Weberian scheme of life chances, lead us to theoretical issues such as *class for itself* as against *class in itself* and issues such as *social mobility*, in the analysis of social change and transformation.

In recent times, ethnically conscious communities in search of stable and strong identities have increasingly inhibited the growth of class-consciousness. Socio-cultural deprivations felt by collectivities have tended to overshadow the awareness of exploitative structures in class term. This seems to have led to the preference for the formation of elite leadership within the framework of ethnically conscious communities in search of identities, which cut across class. Since we are dealing with entire communities in the ethnic frame, class orientations in terms of earning and earner statuses of scheduled communities acquire Weberian overtones. {To be continued...}

Contemporary Tribal Situation and Issues of Broad Based Discourse at various levels

B.K. Roy Burman

{Continued from June 2010 issue...}

By the end of the Fifth Plan it was claimed that as a sequel to TSP approach massive augmentation of plan outlay had taken place. But based on interaction with state governments and field observations as early as 1985 in a published paper, I stated that the claim of enhanced outlay was notional and based on change in accounting procedure. The draft National Tribal Policy (2006) has confirmed it and in effect mentioned virtual collapse of TSP strategy (Para 13.3). Reserve Bank of India publication, 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2003-04' mentions at appendix II (page A-91 – A-92) that in 2001 only 2.16 percent of national expenditure was incurred for ST, SC and OBC together. In 2003 it was 2.11 percent. As originally envisaged with the involvement of the State Tribal Research Institutes and other academic bodies, situational appraisal reports were prepared for most of the project areas. I had personally examined 110 reports, some of them were good, some of fair quality and some were rather of poor quality. Rather than providing development plans for the ITDP areas based on the first two categories of report, the ministry went ahead with their conventional method of planning. This was a source of great frustration for the concerned tribal peoples and the researchers.

The loan component of institutional finance was not available in many areas; in those cases the scheme were implemented in a mutilated manner based, the government subsidy routed through banks. As regards anti-exploitation measures from Seventh Plan onwards most of the working groups for consecutive five years plans reported that no serious effort had been made in this direction. While there has been virtual collapse of TSP strategy, the dependable data-base for generating alternative strategy has been considerably eroded. During the second and fourth Plan organic link between mainstream academics and the State Research Institutes had been established. Due to bureaucratic obduracy the link was cut off. A commission consisting of persons of impeccable credentials should be

set up to make a thorough enquiry and suggest an alternative strategy. As I see it for various reasons now it will be extremely difficult to revive and revitalize TSP strategy.

Draft National Tribal Policy – A people's perspective The Draft National Tribal Policy of 2000 has several positive features. For instance, at Para 20.4 it has made a break with colonial legacy (perpetuated by Lokur Committee) of ascribing to Tribal Communities of possession of primitive traits, shyness of contact, backwardness etc. and has at Para 1.2 highlighted community way of living in harmony with nature, non-acquisitiveness and so on as distinctive traits of tribal cultures. At the level of ethos, these traits of tribal peoples are valuable assets for humanist retrieval when aggressive individualism and greed are pushing humankind to the day of disaster. Also, I am glad that the derogatory labeling of some people as primitive and also use of unscientific and historically motivated criteria like "pre-agricultural" even in respect of those who are engaged in shifting cultivation has been discarded. Frank admission of virtual collapse of TSP strategy is also a positive contribution. Frank admission of the unsettling effects of project related displacement, rehabilitation and resettlement programmes (para 8.1 and 8.5) and of gross insensitivity about human misery as an outcome of the state acts of omissions and commissions are hallmarks of commitment to democratic values. While all these should be taken care of and nothing should be put under the carpet, if as has already been suggested tribal peoples are to play vanguard role for humanist resurrection, complete overhaul of tribal policy must be envisaged. In full consultation with tribal peoples new types of institutions will have to be created, new norms for the functioning of existing institutions will have to be formulated. I am in search of models. I have one or two models in mind, but more models covering different life-situations are needed. {To be continued...}

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