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# Political Economy of Tribal Development: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh

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# Political Economy of Tribal Development: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh

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## ABSTRACT

The tribal population in the State of Andhra Pradesh, and in the country as a whole, is the most deprived and vulnerable community that faces severe economic exclusion. Although certain constitutional safeguards are provided, no significant economic, social and political mobility has taken place across this community. Contrary to Scheduled Castes and other Backward Castes who witnessed certain degrees of progress because of protective discrimination policies of the government, the Scheduled Tribes remain abysmally backward and socially excluded, still living in harsh environs. Our paper on "Political Economy of Tribal Development: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh", delineates the situation of the Scheduled Tribes in the background of various policies of the state during the successive plan periods and its impact on their socio-economic mobility. Politically, this community is the most voiceless in the state. Their unsecured livelihood position in terms of lack of legal entitlements of the resources they use, both land and non-timber forest produce, push them into deep economic vulnerability. The paper also discusses the implications of the new act - Forest Right Act, 2006, on the livelihood security of the tribal communities and whether this act will finally lead to the inclusion of these people into the mainstream.

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## Introduction

Development is usually conceived as an aspect of change that is desirable, broadly predicted or planned and administered, or at least influenced, by governmental action. Thus, the concept of development consists of (a) an aspect of change; (b) a plan or prediction; and (c) involvement of the government for the achievement of that planned or predicted goal. The term “development” is also used for the process of allowing and encouraging people to meet their own aspirations. It, therefore, must relate to transforming the entire society enmeshing together its economic, social, political and administrative aspects on all-round balanced upward change (Basu A.R., 1985).

The term “development” involves all aspects of human activity. In still broader context, nations have been defined as developed or developing. But how can one justify that one is more developed than those who are to be developed. These questions have become very sensitive nowadays when one finds underdevelopment in some sphere or the other everywhere. For example, a society or nation may be more developed in the economic front; however, it may be underdeveloped on the social front. So, one cannot define development in some aspects only; rather, it should be viewed multi-dimensionally. The narrow concept of development prevalent in the fifties and early sixties has been seriously questioned and has been widened to include non-economic aspects as well. The negative consequences and social injuries of rapid technological changes witnessed in the form of widespread alienation, increase in divorce rate, crime, social violence, drug addiction, AIDS and other patterns of social pathology, not to speak of pollution and depletion of resources, have brought the narrow economic conceptualizations under critical study. Hence, development is not merely an economic phenomenon; it is rather a societal phenomenon encompassing all aspects of human life.

A number of studies on development of tribal communities have been carried out by researchers from various disciplines. The problems of tribal development have long

baffled the policy makers, administrators and social scientists in India, and the debate on the meaning, character and direction of their socio-economic transformation continues. Earlier studies carried out by Anthropologists and other Social Scientists among various tribal communities have constantly pointed out various problems of tribal development and offered suggestions for bringing better results. Based on various committees' reports and studies on tribal development, efforts have been subsequently made to improve the tribal situation by providing various kinds of provisions and schemes. However, unfortunately, the tribals have not been able to derive sufficient benefit from this process of planned development. It is true that tribal development problem in the country cannot be considered as stereotyped phenomenon. It varies from one region to another.

The tribal population in the State of Andhra Pradesh and in the country as a whole is the most deprived and vulnerable community that faces severe economic exclusion. Although certain constitutional safeguards are provided, there has been no economic, social and political mobility across these communities. Contrary to Scheduled Castes and other Backward Castes who witnessed certain degrees of progress because of protective discrimination policies of the government, the Scheduled Tribes remain abysmally backward and socially excluded, still living in harsh environs. The present paper "Political Economy of Tribal Development: A Case Study of Andhra Pradesh", delineates the situation of Scheduled Tribes in the background of various policies of the state during the successive plan periods and its impact on their socio-economic mobility.

## **2. Andhra Pradesh State Profile**

Andhra Pradesh was formed on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1956, with Hyderabad as its capital. It lies between 12°38' and 19°55' N and 76°45' and 85°45' E and is bounded by Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa in the north, Karnataka in the west, the Bay of Bengal in the east and Tamil Nadu in the south. Andhra Pradesh is the fifth largest state, spreading over an area of 275,045 sq km and accounting for 8.4% of India's territory. It has a 974 km coastline, which is the second longest after Gujarat. Andhra Pradesh is divided into three distinctive characteristics regions - Rayalaseema areas, Coastal Andhra and Telangana. Rayalaseema covers 24.47%, Telangana 41.5%, and Coastal Andhra 33.78% of the total geographical area of the state. Administratively, the state is divided into 23 districts. Andhra Pradesh has a total population of 7.57 core population as per the 2001 census, of which 73% live in rural areas. The density of population in 275 per sq km is below the national average of 324 sq km. The literacy rate for male population is 70.32, while for the female population, it is 50.43%. About 35% of the state's domestic product comes from primary sector, i.e., agriculture, forestry, etc., 19% from secondary sector (manufacturing sector) and 45% from tertiary sector

(service sector). About 76% of the workforce includes cultivators and agriculture labourers in the state. The sex ratio is 978 females per 1000 males. The population growth rate in the state showed a decline (13.8 percent) compared to the previous decade (24 percent over 1981-1991). Literacy rates improved from 44 percent (1991) to 61 percent (2001).

The hilly areas cutting across the Coastal Andhra and Telangana regions are dominated by tribal communities and can be considered as another region of the state, owing to its unique set of problems and underdevelopment. Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema regions were part of the Madras Presidency until 1953, when they were formed as a separate state of Andhra. Telangana was part of the erstwhile Hyderabad State ruled by the Nizams, and merged with Andhra state to form the second state along linguistic lines (Orissa was the first) in the country.

Physiographically, the state can be divided into three zones, viz., Coastal Plains, Eastern Ghats and Peneplains. The state being a part of peninsular India is seismically highly stable.

**Coastal Plains:** Towards the eastern side of the state the sea coast extends from Srikakulam in the north to Nellore in the south. The length of the coastline running along the Bay of Bengal is about 980 km. The coastal plains are bordered by the Eastern Ghats towards the landward side.

**Peneplains:** The topography of the Peneplain region consists of rounded with low hills and the Deccan Plateau. The Eastern Ghats slope towards the eastern border of this area. These Peneplains are formed due to intense weathering and denudation over a long period. Soils in this area are generally red sandy loams. Black soil also exists in the central and north-eastern regions. The Peneplains exist in districts of Anantapur, Kurnool and in all the districts of Telangana. The climate is generally hot and humid. The average rainfall in the state is about 925 mm. The Krishna and the Godavari are the major rivers in the state. With a 970 km coastline, AP is the largest maritime state in India.

The 23 districts of Andhra Pradesh are further sub-divided into 1,104 revenue mandals for administration, revenue collection and implementation of development programmes. The Mandals in turn, constitute village Panchayats. There are no intermediate administrative divisions between the district and the development block as in most other states. The demographic profile of the state has one of the lowest urbanisation rates amongst the southern states (second to Kerala) with urbanisation being more pronounced during the 1971-1991 period. The annual growth rate of the rural population has shown a steady decline and is currently estimated at 1.4 percent.

Two belts of low population distribution are seen, the first covering most of the areas of Adilabad and Khammam districts and passing through the hilly areas of Karimnagar, Warangal, West Godavari, East Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts, and the second in the Telangana Region. These belts enclose the districts of Medak, Nalgonda and Nizamabad which have medium density of population. The highly populated districts of the state include East Godavari, West Godavari spread across the delta region of river Godavari, and Krishna and Guntur districts in the delta region of the Krishna River. These four districts account for just less than 25 percent of the state's total population. Vizianagaram, Adilabad and Nizamabad districts have low population and together account for only 9 percent of the state population.

The Other Backward Classes (OBCs) constitute a large proportion of the state's population (46 percent). They are in turn divided into several castes and sub-castes. However, the most dominant castes in the state are the Reddy, Kamma and Velama, who are categorised as Forward Castes. They are traditional land-owning communities who have moved into other economic spheres and also dominate state politics. The Kammas are numerically stronger in the Coastal Andhra Region, while the Reddys are numerically stronger in the Telangana and Rayalaseema regions.

There are 59 Scheduled Castes (SC) in Andhra Pradesh, which are unevenly distributed across the state, the maximum proportion being in Nellore District (20.7 percent) followed by Ranga Reddy (19.5 percent) and Prakasam. The north coastal districts have a lower proportion, less than 10 percent of the total population. In the other districts, the proportion of SC population ranges between 10 to 20 percent. At the Mandal level however, the scenario changes significantly with a higher distribution of SCs in the coastal and delta regions and a gradual decrease towards the more inland and hilly regions. The irrigated areas have a greater proportion of the SC population reflecting the greater agricultural employment potentials of these regions. The Malas and the Madigas are the two most significant SC communities comprising the bulk of the agricultural workers in the state.

The literacy levels in the state had shown a very slow increase over the past decades, except for the 1981-91 decade when the percentage increase crossed the single digit growth of the previous decades. Provisional figures of the 2001 Census indicate an overall literacy rate of 61.1 percent, with male literacy at 70.8 percent and female literacy at 51.1 percent. This is a major improvement in one decade, though it still lags behind national rates – 65 percent overall and 76 percent and 54 percent for men and women respectively. This improvement is reflected in the district-level data where the backward districts of Rayalaseema and Telangana are seen to have made major improvements over 1991 figures. There has also been an overall narrowing of gender differentials due to



major improvements in female literacy figures. But overall, the backward districts of North Coastal Andhra, Telangana and Rayalaseema continue to lag behind developed districts of Coastal Andhra.

### **3. Tribal Groups in Andhra Pradesh**

Andhra Pradesh is home to 35 communities officially designated as Scheduled Tribes (STs). They numbered 50,24,104 in the 2001 Census. Out of the 35 STs, recently two communities, namely, Nakkala/Kurvikaran, Dhulia/Paiko/Putiya (in the districts of Vishakhapatnam and Vizianagaram) have been denotified in the state. Twelve tribes, namely, Bodo Gadaba, Gutob Gadaba, Bondo Poraja, Khond Poroja, Parangiperja, Chenchu, Dongaria Khonds, Kuttiya Khonds, Kolam, Kondareddis, Konda Savaras and Thoti have been recognized as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs).

Except Kondareddis and Thoti, the population statistics of other PTGs are not available separately as these are notified as sub-groups/sections of main communities. The population of KondaReddis and Thoti is 83,096 and 2,074 respectively, as per the 2001 Census.

#### ***3.1 Population Size and Distribution of Tribes***

The STs of Andhra Pradesh constitute 6.75 percent of India's tribal population. Although the state's STs comprise only 6.59 percent of the state's population, they account for the largest tribal concentration in Southern India. The Scheduled Areas of Andhra Pradesh, covered by the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) approach, are spread over 31,485 sq km in 5936 villages (11,855 habitation) in the districts of Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Warangal, Khammam, Adilabad and Kurnool. The 35 reported ST communities are mainly concentrated in nine districts declared as Scheduled Areas by special government order in 1950. Sixty percent of the STs live in forest areas in the Eastern Ghats, on the banks of the river Godavari. Two-thirds of the ST population in the State of Andhra Pradesh live in these areas. This constitutes 11% of the total geographical area of the state. Among the 23 districts, Khammam has the highest ST population (26.47%), followed by Adilabad (16.74%), Visakhapatnam (14.55%), Warangal (14.10%) and Nalgonda (10.55%). This zone forms the traditional habitat of 31 tribal communities in Scheduled Areas (sprawling 30,030 sq km) and the rest outside. The other three tribal groups, i.e., Lambada, Yerukala and Yanadi mostly live outside the Scheduled Areas. Out of the 33 STs, Sugalis are numerically the largest ST with a population of 2,077,947 constituting 41.4 percent of the state's ST population. They are followed by Koya 568,019 (11.3 percent), Yanadis 462,167 (9.2 percent), Yerukulas 437,459 (8.7 percent) and Gonds 252,038 (5 percent). These five ST communities account for 76 percent of the total ST population in the state. Of the

total ST population, 92.5 percent live in the rural areas. Among the major STs, Gonds have the highest (97.6 percent) rural population, followed by Koya (95.5 percent), Sugalis (93.7 percent), Yanadis (86.4 percent) and Yerukulas (77.5 percent). District-wise distribution of ST population shows that they are mainly concentrated in the districts of Khammam, Visakhapatnam, Warangal, Adilabad and Nalgonda. These five districts constitute 48.9 percent of the total ST population of the state (Office of the Registrar General, India 2001).

#### **List of Officially Recognised Scheduled Tribe Groups in the State**

1. Andh, Sadhu Andh (Agency areas of Adilabad District)
2. Bagata (Agency areas of Visakhapatnam District)
3. Bhil (Agency areas of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram Districts - North Coastal Area)
4. Chenchu (Agency areas of Mahbubnagar, Nalgonda, Kurnool, Prakasam and Guntur districts - Nallamala Forests)
5. Gadabas, Bodo Gadaba, Gutob Gadaba, Kallayi Gadaba, Parangi Gadaba, Kathera Gadaba, Kapu Gadab (Agency areas of Visakhapatnam District - North Coastal Area)
6. Gond, Naikpod, Rajgond, Koitur (Agency Areas of Adilabad District)
7. Goudu (Khammam, East and West Godavari Districts)
8. Hill Reddys (Khammam, East and West Godavari Districts)
9. Jatapus (Agency areas of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram Districts - North Coastal Area).
10. Kammara (Khammam, East and West Godavari Districts)
11. Kattunayakan (Warangal, Khammam)
12. Kolam, Kolawar (Agency areas of Adilabad)
13. Konda Dhoras, Kubi (Khammam, East and West Godavari Districts)
14. Konda Kapus (Khammam, East and West Godavari Districts)
15. Kondareddis (Khammam, East and West Godavari Districts)
16. Kondhs, Kodi, Kodhu, Desaya Kondhs, Dongria Kondhs, Kuttiya Kondhs, Tikiria Kondhs, Yenity Kondhs, Kuvinga (Agency tracts of North Coastal Area)
17. Kotia, Benth Oriya, Bartika, Dulia, Holva, Sanrona, Sidhopaiko (Agency tracts of North coastal area)
18. Koya, Doli Koya, Gutta Koya, Kammara Koya, Musara Koya, Oddi Koya, Pattidi Koya, Rajah, Rasha Koya, Lingadhari Koya (ordinary), Kottu Koya, Bhine Koya, Rajkoya (Khammam, East and West Godavari District)
19. Kulia (Agency areas of North Coastal Area)
20. Malis (excluding Adilabad, Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Mahbubnagar, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Warangal Districts)

21. Manna Dhora (Khammam)
22. Mukha Dhora, Nooka Dhora (Khammam, East and West Godavari Districts)
23. Nayaks (in the Agency tracts North Coastal Area)
24. Pardhan (Adilabad)
25. Porja, Parangiperja (Agency areas of Visakhapatnam District and North Coastal Area)
26. `Reddy Dhoras (Khammam East and West Godavari Districts)
27. Rona, Rena (Agency areas of North Coastal Area)
28. Savaras, Kapu Savaras, Maliya Savaras, Khutto Savaras (Agency areas of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram Districts - North Coastal Area)
29. Sugalis, Lambadas, Banjara (Adilabad, Warangal, Nizamabad, Khammam)
30. Thoti (Adilabad, Hyderabad, Karimnagar, Khammam, Mahbubnagar, Medak, Nalgonda, Nizamabad and Warangal Districts)
31. Valmiki (in the Scheduled Areas of Vishakhapatnam, Srikakulam, Vizianagram, East Godavari and West Godavari Districts)
32. Yenadis, Chella Yenadi, Kappala Yenadi, Manchi Yenadi, Reddi Yenadi
33. Yerukulas, Koracha, Dabba Yerukula, Kunchapuri Yerukula, Uppu Yerukula (Mahaboobnagar, Warangal, and West Godavari)
34. Nakkala, Kurvikaran (Agency areas of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram Districts - North Coastal Area)
35. Dhulia, Paiko, Putiya (in the districts of Vishakhapatnam and Vizianagaram)

In some districts, the tribal population is spread thinly and they live along with non-tribal communities. The indigenous tribes are mostly concentrated in contiguous tracts of the above districts that have been designated as Scheduled Areas administered by the Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs). There are around one million ST households in the state and about half of them live in 5,936 villages in the nine ITDA areas. The Scheduled Areas are inhabited by an estimated 2.8 million tribals who are entitled to the benefits of TSP projects and protective legislations. In conformity with the national TSP strategy, Andhra Pradesh tribal population is divided into four categories: (i) those living in tribal concentration areas in the scheduled villages and adjoining areas, i.e., the TSP areas administered by ITDAs. Each of the above nine districts has one ITDA named after the tribal concentration block where it is headquartered; (ii) PTGs, i.e., communities who live in near isolation in inaccessible habitats in and outside the Scheduled Areas who are at the pre-agricultural stage of the economy; (iii) those living in small pockets outside the scheduled areas, i.e., Modified Area Development Agency (MADA) areas and tribal clusters; and (iv) Dispersed Tribal Groups, i.e., those dispersed throughout the state.

**Table 1: Basic Information about Scheduled Tribes in the State**

Andhra Pradesh population (2001 Census)	762 lakh
ST population	50.24 lakh (6.59%); Male - 25.48 lakh, Female - 24.76 lakh
ST population in tribal areas	30.47 lakh
ST population in plain areas	19.77 lakh
Tribal groups	35 tribal groups
Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)	8
Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDA)	10 Seethampeta, Parvathipuram, Paderu, R.C.Varam, K.R.Puram, Bhadrachalam, Eturunagaram, Utnoor, Srisailam and Nellore
ITDA area	31,485,34 sq kms
Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) pockets	41
Clusters	17
Scheduled villages	5938
Non-Scheduled villages	809
No. of habitations in ITDA areas	11855
Total No. of SHGs in tribal areas	475646
Total No. of ST members enrolled	10,46,371

### **3.2. Sex Ratio**

The overall sex ratio of the ST population is 972 females per 1000 males, which is marginally lower than 978 reported for the state population as a whole at 2001 Census. The over all sex ratio of the ST population has registered an increase over 960 reported at the 1991 Census. The sex ratio of above 1000 among ST population in the five contiguous districts namely, Srikakulam (1009), Vizianagaram (1025), Visakhapatnam (1003), East Godavari (1011) and West Godavari (1018) have returned higher sex ratio among STs. In the remaining 18 districts it varies between 994 (Nizamabad) and 921 (Nalgonda) (Office of the Registrar General, India 2001).

The Statement below shows the sex ratio and child sex ratio (0-6) at the national, state and numerically the largest five STs at 2001 Census:

**Table 2: The Statement below shows the sex ratio and child sex ratio (0-6)**

Age Groups	All STs (India)	All STs (Andhra Pradesh)	Sugalis	Koya	Gond	Yanadis	Yerukulas
All Ages	978	972	939	1006	1013	957	984
0-6	973	972	944	1000	999	950	971

(Source: Office of the Registrar General, India 2001)

As shown in the statement, the child sex ratio (0-6) of ST population of Andhra Pradesh is equal to the child sex ratio of ST population at the national level. Among the numerically major STs, Sugalis and Yanadis have lower sex ratio both in overall and 0-6 age group populations than the state ST population and the other major STs.

### *3.3 Literacy and Educational Level*

Literacy and level of education are two basic indicators of the level of development achieved by a group/society. Literacy results in more awareness besides contributing to the overall improvement of health, hygiene and other social conditions. According to 2001 Census, the percentage of literate persons (those who can read and write with understanding), aged 7 years and above, among ST population of Andhra Pradesh is 37 percent, which is lower than 60.5 percent reported for state population as a whole. The literacy data show that the ST population of the state has made significant improvement in literacy during the decade 1991-2001. The literacy rate, which was 17.1 percent in 1991, has increased by 19.9 percentage points in 2001. But in comparison to other states/UTs, the position of ST population of Andhra Pradesh is not satisfactory. It is just above Uttar Pradesh (35.1 percent) and Bihar (28.2 percent), which are bottom two states in literacy rate for ST population among all states/UTs. At the district level, the highest literacy rate has been recorded in Hyderabad (55.4 percent) and the lowest in Mahbubnagar (25.8 percent). Among the major STs, Yerukulas have reported the highest literacy rate (45.4 percent), followed by Koyas (41.8 percent), Gonds (36.4 percent), Yanadis (35.3 percent) and Sugalis (34.3 percent). Female literacy rate of 26.1 percent among the ST population is a matter of concern as almost a fourth of ST females are illiterate in the state.

As against the general literacy rate of 61.01 percent, literacy among the tribals is 17.16 percent and among tribal women it is 8.68 percent. The highest literacy rate is in the district of Anantapur (26.73 percent), followed by Kurnool (24.86 percent) and the least (10.06 percent) is in Mahabubnagar District. The highest female literacy is in Hyderabad (32.28 percent), while the least is in Mahabubnagar District (3.10% percent). Literacy and other basic development indicators among the PTGs like the Khonds, Chenchus, Gadabas, and others are even less than this average. The growth rate of ST population in the decade 1991-2001 at 19.6 percent has been higher if compared to the overall growth rate of 14.6 percent of the state population as a whole. Among the numerically major STs, a highest growth rate of 36 percent has been recorded in the case of Sugalis, followed by Koyas (24.4 percent), Gonds (18.9 percent), Yanadis (16.8 percent) and Yerukulas (12.8 percent).

**Table 3: Educational Levels Attained by Major STs**

Educational Levels Attained by Major STs							
Name of ST	Literate Without Educational Level	Below Primary	Primary	Middle	Metric/ Secondary/ Higher Secondary/ Intermediate, etc.	Technical & Non-technical Diploma	Graduate & Above
All STs	6.3	42.0	28.4	8.5	12.3	0.6	1.8
Sugalis	5.6	43.6	25.7	8.7	13.3	0.8	2.3
Koya	6.5	43.4	29.2	8.5	10.9	0.4	1.2
Gond	7.7	50.0	25.1	7.2	9.1	0.2	0.6
Yanadis	9.7	47.0	29.7	5.3	6.9	0.4	1.1
Yerukulas	4.4	32.2	30.8	10.3	17.7	1.3	3.3

(Source: Office of the Registrar General, India 2001)

Out of total literates, 48.3 percent are literates without any educational level or have attained below Primary level. The literates, who have attained education up to Primary level and Middle level, constitute 28.4 percent and 8.5 percent respectively. 12.3 percent are having educational level up to Metric/Higher Secondary, etc. levels, implying that every 8<sup>th</sup> ST literate is a Matriculate. Literates with educational level of Graduation & above are 1.8 percent. Individually, Yerukulas (3.3 percent) have the highest percentage of Graduate & above educational level. The educational level table also shows that the drop out is conspicuous after the Primary level and again after Metric/Secondary levels. This pattern is consistent among all the major SCs. Population in the age group 5-14

years are the potential students. Only 60.7 percent of the ST population in this age group has been attending various educational institutions.

### *3.4 Livelihoods of the Tribe*

The economy and livelihood practices of the tribals are closely associated with the ecological factors and habitats which they inhabit. Among the plain tribes, the Yerukulas are the traditional basket makers and swine herders. They are known as the ex-criminal tribe of Andhra Pradesh. They live mostly in multi-caste villages, maintaining symbiotic relations with the non-tribals. The Yanadis' habitats are mostly found on the banks of rivers, lakes, tanks and canals. Their main livelihood is fishing. Besides this they also catch the field rats exclusively for their own consumption purpose. The settlements of the Lambadas are found in separate hamlets, locally termed as *Tandas*. Most of their habitats are located nearer to hillocks or in the places with green pastures where they could rear cattle. Earlier, the Lambadas were known to be nomads, but in modern times, they are becoming sedentary cultivators, and rearing of cattle has become their secondary occupation. They are mostly distributed in the Telangana Region and sparsely in Rayalaseema and the coastal areas. The Yerukulas are found throughout the state whereas the Yanadis are mostly concentrated in Nellore District and sparsely distributed in Coastal Andhra Region.

Among the hill tribes, Chenchu, Kolam, Thoti, Kondareddi, Khond, Porja, Savara and Gadaba are classified as primitive tribes. The habitats of the primitive tribes are located on hill tops and slopes where plain landscape is totally absent. These tribes largely depend on shifting cultivation and minor forest produce collection. The Chenchus are considered to be the most primitive and they still largely depend on food gathering. However, some of the Chenchus are presently in the transitional stage - from food gathering to food producing. The traditional habitats of the Chenchus are found in contiguous forest tracts of Nallamalai Hills. Much area of the Nallamala hills through which Krishna River flows is presently declared as the Tiger Project Area.

Most of these communities are found inhabiting the border districts of the state in the north and the northeast. The tribals live in forests and use forest land for cultivation. They collect forest produce which varies from forest to forest to supplement what they grow on land. Land is used for living and livelihood. The lives of the tribals are influenced by their habitat, level of traditional and ancient knowledge, and the skills they possess in using the resources that are available. Land is the main stay of the tribal people. Any discussion on the lives of tribals, irrespective of what aspect is being discussed is incomplete when the issue of land is left out. Not only their economies and livelihoods, but also their social relations, respective role of men and women, nature of struggles,

their relationship with the state, with non-tribals, their religious rituals, are all closely related to land issues - particularly the land in and around forests.

Unlike the social structure of caste groups in the state, the tribal social organization is generally based on totemic clans. The various tribal groups claim mythical affinity with certain species of natural phenomenon of specific animate or inanimate objects and they regard these animate or inanimate objects as their ancestors. Such belief system and its associated practices are known as totemism. These totemic objects are considered as sacred and killing or eating of their flesh is a taboo. If their totemic animal dies, the concerned clan members observe all kinds of rituals and ceremonies and bury it as if their own dead kith and kin. The totem clans are found among Jatapus of Srikakulam and Vizianagaram districts, in all the 15 tribal groups of Visakhapatnam district; among Koyas of Godavari gorges and Gonds, Kolams, Pardhans and Thotis of Adilabad District.

The present economy of the tribals in AP is a consumption-subsistence economy with its main occupations being settled agriculture, *podu* (shifting) cultivation and collection of Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP), which totally comprise 88% of their occupation status. A vast variety of food grains, millets, pulses like rice, ragi, maize, jowar, legumes, vegetables and fruits are cultivated in the valleys and uplands/hills most of which are consumed domestically. Pulses and spices like chilly are the main source of cash flow from agriculture. In some of the areas closer to plains, the tribals have learnt to cultivate cash crops such as cotton, cashew, *dumpa* (tubers), brinjal, tomato, ginger, turmeric and chilli.

The tribal economy, however, is in a state of transition. The complete isolation of the past has long since passed; interaction with and dependence on the outside is gradually increasing. However, being backward and illiterate, the tribals are ill-prepared to deal with the outer world, and thus fall easy prey to exploitation by the non-tribal traders. Due to low productivity and lack of food security, the tribals have become dependent on the traders. But price manipulation and indiscriminate money lending has led many tribals into a debt trap from which they cannot escape. This has been due to the deterioration in the tribal eco-system which means that the former survival strategies have become less sustainable. Thus, the tribals are in a transition phase from a forest-centered lifestyle to a rural, settled cultivation lifestyle, but the production from agriculture is not commensurate with the food requirements, whilst the scope for supplementation by way of intake of natural foods is diminishing due to depletion of the forests. The tribals are caught in a situation where they are on the one hand losing command over the natural resources, and are unable to take command over the new resources at their disposal on the other.



The types of forest-based livelihoods of the poorest sections of communities are: NTFP-based (57%), fodder for goats and sheep (26%), fuel wood sale (12%) and wood-based craft making (5%). Among the three regions, households dependent on NTFP collection and sale are more in Telangana (73%) and Coastal (47%) regions, whereas in Rayalaseema Region the forest dependence is more for fodder to feed goats and sheep (51%). Head loading (fuel wood collection and sale) as a livelihood option is more prevalent in the North Coastal Region (20%) than in Telangana (7%) and Rayalaseema (8%) regions where it is a dwindling option due to degradation of forests. About 40 to 70 percent of the income for the tribal and other resource-poor communities is from the collection and sale of NTFPs. There are more than 65 different kinds of NTFPs available in the forests of Andhra Pradesh (D. Suryakumari, K.Bhavana Rao and C.Vasu 2008).

### *3.5 Work Participation Rate (WPR)*

The Work Participation Rate (WPR) is the percentage of workers to the total population. The WPR of the ST population is 53.9 percent according to the 2001 Census, which is almost equal to 54.3 percent recorded in 1991. The WPR among males is 55.7 percent and females is 52 percent; more than half of the males/females have been returned workers among ST at 2001 Census. At the individual caste level, by and large, a consistent pattern is noted in the WPR. The highest WPR of 56.5 percent is reported for Yanadis and lowest among Yerukulas (50.5%). The Yerukulas have also recorded the lowest female WPR of 45.2 percent (Office of the Registrar General, India 2001).

### *3.6 Category of Workers*

There has been a decline in the main workers from 93.9 percent during the 1991 Census to 79.3 percent during the 2001 Census. This, in turn, has resulted in a corresponding increase in the marginal workers from 6.1 percent in 1991 to 20.7 percent in 2001. Out of the total number of workers, “agricultural labourers” constitute 49.3 percent, which is significantly higher when compared to 36.9 percent recorded for ST population at the national level. “Cultivators” accounting for 34.3 percent and 13.5 percent, have been returned as “other workers”. The remaining 3 percent have been workers in “household industry”. At the individual caste level among the major STs, the Yanadis have the maximum 76.2 percent of “agricultural labourers” (Office of the Registrar General, India 2001)..

### *3.7 Marital Status*

Marital status is one of the important determinants of fertility and growth of a population. The 2001 Census data on marital status show that 48.7 percent persons among the STs of Andhra Pradesh are “never married”. The “currently married” constitute 46.9 percent, while 4 percent are “widowed” and only 0.5 percent are “divorced and separated”. A

majority of the girls and boys among STs in Andhra Pradesh are getting married after attaining the legal age of marriage. However, marriages of ST girls below 18 years (3.2 percent) are higher than that recorded among ST population at the national level (2.1 percent). Similarly, the incidence of marriage among boys below 21 years at 3.6 percent is also higher than 2.8 percent aggregated for ST population at the national level. The mean number of children ever born per ever married ST woman of all ages as well as 45-49 years age group are 2.7 and 3.6 respectively, which are lower than corresponding figures of 3.2 and 4.1 for the ST population at the national level (Office of the Registrar General, India 2001)..

### *3.8 Religion*

The 2001 Census data show that Hindus constitute 49, 84,478 (98.9 percent) of ST population of Andhra Pradesh, followed by 35,983 Christians (0.7 percent) and 4,643 Muslims (0.1 percent) (Office of the Registrar General, India 2001).

### **4. Forests in Andhra Pradesh**

Andhra Pradesh has about 63,814 sq km (23% of the total geographic area) under forests. The state is ranked third in the country in terms of area under forest - including reserved, protected, and unclassified – and these fall under five ecosystems in the state:

- Southern Tropical Moist Deciduous forests, mostly in the Eastern Ghats;
- Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous forests in the Godavari and Krishna valleys;
- Southern Tropical Thorn forests in Anantapur, Cuddapah, Chittoor, Nellore, Prakasam, Nalgonda, Mahbubnagar, Medak and Ranga Reddy districts;
- Littoral forests; and
- Tidal swamps and mangrove forests in the coastal districts of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Krishna, Prakasam, Guntur and Nellore.

In the state, there are four national parks spread over an area of 0.33 mha and 21 wildlife sanctuaries over 1.25 mha. There are also 13 deer parks and four zoological parks. Thus, a total of about 1.58 mha amounting to 5.76 percent of the total geographic area of the state is protected.

There are 26,586 villages in the state of which 5,080 have forest for land use; the forest area in these villages is 2.57 mha and the total population in these villages is 10.67 million persons (21.95 percent of the state's rural population). Only 26 percent of these 5,080, with forest villages have more than 500 ha of forested area.

## 5. History of Tenure – Forest and Tribal People in Andhra Pradesh

The forest area under consideration happened to be in two administrative domains prior to the formation of the state in 1956. While the forests of the north-eastern districts Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, East and West Godavari - were administered by a separate line of administration instituted by the British, the forests in the northern districts Adilabad, Khammam, Nizamabad, Warangal were under the Nizam's administration. The forests of Kurnool – the Nallamala Range inhabited by the Chenchus had a troubled history of being under individual rulers, followed by the Nizam. Until the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, the tribal areas of these regions were governed by two distinct administrative systems.

Amidst this tale of progress in scientific forestry across the territory of modern Andhra Pradesh, there existed differences in management and legislation pertinent to the forest areas in the British-administered Presidency, the ceded districts and the Telangana Region. In the Telangana Region, the forests were under the control of the revenue administration till the Nizam created a Forest Department in 1857. Prior to 1857, forests were exploited through the permit system under which permit holders were allowed to cut trees without much control on the manner and extent of felling. However, the customary rights of communities residing in or near the forests to first use minor forest produce, timber for housing and agriculture, fuel wood are reported to have been respected. The *Abkari* administrative system in the state also conferred rights to certain communities over select species. When the Forest Department was established (which was for several years placed under non-professional officers), only thirteen species were placed under its control, leaving the rest to be managed by the Revenue Administration.

The period following independence (after 1947) saw the takeover of the British-Managed system of forest administration by the Indians. The legislation to abolish *Zamindari* tenure systems (1961) led to large areas of forests coming to vest with the Forest Department (FD). However, this period is reported to have been one of the worst periods for forests and forest dwellers as there was large-scale in-migration and encroachment of land by the non-tribals from the plains, and most of the forests transferred to the FD after the land ceiling were fully worked and cleared of any economic timber before transfer. The major programme of the FD became regeneration of the forests in these patches. The tasks of consolidation of forests, unification of laws and extension of scientific management on a reasonably uniform basis became a major pre-occupation for the forest officers. The National Forest Policy enunciated by the Indian Government in 1952, attempted to extend the 1894 policy and make good omissions noticed, especially the protective functions of forests. In the newly formed state of Andhra Pradesh, regulation of land in the Scheduled Areas was made uniform across

the state through the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation (APSALTR) in 1959. This Act provided the right for civil courts to adjudicate on tribal land issues and increased litigation and subsequent land alienation, as the tribals were ill-informed to fight such cases. Subsequent amendments enacted in 1970 and 1971 prohibited all transfer of land in scheduled areas – not only tribal to non-tribal but also non-tribal to non-tribal – and prohibited attachment of tribal land in any money decrees.

## **6. Marginalisation of Tribals in the State**

During the pre-colonial period, lower population density and low value of timber, led to the gradual process of rolling back forest frontier as there was more demand for agricultural land. Under the Mughals, there was a growing demand for construction timber, and the price of timber began to rise.

During the Pre-British rule, the tribal areas were far from the reach of the administration. However, the extension of centralized British administration over these areas gradually deprived tribals of their autonomy. The British colonial policies exposed the tribals to the pressures of the plains' commercial interests. Outsiders such as traders, moneylenders, followed by settlers successfully acquired large tracts of the aboriginals' land through different clandestine transactions, exploitive practices, land grabbing, etc. However, in the Nizam areas, the policy of the State of Hyderabad itself was the cause of alienation of lands in tribal areas to outsiders. The Nizam invited the outsiders for acquisition of lands and payment of tax to the state. In this process, the outsiders dispossessed the tribal communities and appropriated the land.

The state gradually gained monopoly control over forest areas from the early colonial period, and as forests were Reserved Forests the people's rights were curtailed and they were driven out. The first step in the administrative control of forests in India began in the South. As a result of the report of the Forest Committee set up in 1805, a proclamation was made declaring royalty rights over teak in the south and prohibiting unauthorised felling of the trees. The Indian Forest Act of 1865 was the first attempt at a legislation relating to forests in India by the British. Such steps were envisaged to prevent acts which caused injury or destruction to the forests. Thus, control over the forests was attained, and restrictions were imposed on usage by communities. This started in the way back in 1805. In Hyderabad State, the forests were considered subservient to the interest of agriculture and were consequently administered by the district officials, and cultivations in the forests were permitted. However, in the year 1893, the government declared vast tracts covered by forest growth as Protected Forests and placed them under the sole charge of the Forest Department, removing the administrative powers of district revenue officials. Further, to have legal control over

the forests, a Forest Act was enacted in 1900. The effort of the department was directed mainly towards the survey and reservation of forest areas, the introduction of felling schemes and works of improvement, systematic exploitation of forest produce, etc. So the historic injustice was caused not only during reservation process under the Indian Forest Act 1927 and the subsequent survey and settlement operations in 1979 in Andhra, but even prior to this.

### 6.1. Forest Administration and Forest Rights Deprivations under the Nizam

As the Mughal Empire declined in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century client Nizam controlling the Telangana Region became independent (the current districts of Adilabad, Karimnagar, Medak, Khammam, Nalgonda, Nizamabad, Mahbubnagar and Warangal). The forest resources were under the control of the Nizam's Revenue Department.

Prior to 1857, forests were exploited through a permit system under which permit holders were allowed to cut trees without much control over the manner and extent of felling. However, customary rights of communities residing in or near the forests to first use the minor forest produce and timber for housing and agriculture, fuel wood are reported to have been respected. The *Abkari* administrative system in the state also conferred rights to certain communities over select species.

In 1857 a separate department for forests was established (which was for several years placed under non-professional officers), thirteen species valued for timber were placed under its control, leaving the rest to be managed by the revenue administration.

Several Forest Acts were produced at different points of time, but each consolidated only the revenue aspects. The Forest Policy announced in 1890 envisaged preservation and improving the existing forests and led to the passing of the Forest Act in 1900. The Forest Act transferred all species to the Forest Department, putting an end to the dual control and also classified the forests into two classes – reserved and open. This was a comprehensive abrogation of centuries-old customary rights enjoyed by the tribals to the hands of the state, in those areas declared as Reserve Forests. The open forests were set apart to meet the domestic requirements of the villagers. Most of the tribals in the region cultivated land under a tenure system known as *siwa-i-jamabandi*, which did not confer ownership on the land on which they worked. In the northern districts of Telangana, populated by the Gonds, Kolams and Naikpods, the Gonds cultivated settled agriculture, while the Kolams and Naikpods practised shifting cultivation on the hill slopes. Even the Gonds who practised a more settled type of agriculture were in the habit of leaving lands fallow and cultivating alternate lands in two-year cycle. The demarcation of Reserve Forests did not take notice of these practices and in one stroke, rendered many tribals without rights and led to forced evictions, thus setting the stage for tribal-state conflicts. In the name of forest conservation, large-scale evictions occurred in the 1920s and mopping operations are reported to have continued till 1940, creating an atmosphere of unending insecurity (Haimendorf, 1985).

The process of revisions of the Forest Act continued till Independence: the 1916 Forest Act laid the foundation for the establishment of a more comprehensive Forest Administration, and this was subsequently superseded by the Hyderabad Forest Act of 1945, modelled on the lines of 1927 Indian Forest Act (Gogia, 2002).

The tribals under the Nizam's rule were constantly at the receiving end, with their customary rights continually denied.

## 6.2. Forest Administration under the Madras Presidency

The Rayalaseema and Coastal Andhra areas came under the Madras Presidency. At the time of debate within the Colonial Administration over the 1878 Forest Act it was the Madras staff who were most vocally opposed to the draconian provisions for rights extinguishment. Thus, a separate Madras Forest Act was developed in 1882, which applied to the Coastal and Rayalaseema districts of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, Kakinada, Eluru, Machilipatnam, Ongole, Godavari, Krishna, Anantapur, Kurnool, Cuddapah, Nellore, Chittoor and Guntur.

The tribal people are facing serious problems with regard to utilisation and rights over forest resources. Due to the increasing pressure on forests by various interest groups, there is a corresponding pressure on the tribals to reduce their dependency on forests. This is creating serious situations of conflict, as tribal life is symbiotic with land and forests and their livelihood and culture are based on their relationship with the natural wealth around them. The tribals are being harassed for using forest lands and are being evicted from many places such as Khammam, Visakhapatnam, Vizianagaram, Adilabad and Srisaïlam. In Khammam District, in one particular village, the Forest and Police Departments allegedly branded the tribals on their shoulders as an indication that they were destroying the forests.

There are ambiguities in forest-revenue land demarcation. In places like Nellore District, a lot of land on Velugonda Hills is indicated as "*poramboku*" in revenue records and as Reserved Forest (RF) as per the Forest Department (FD). These lands do not have any forest growth. The FD is taking up palm oil plantation in these RF lands (which is not a forest species). However, landless tribals are either booked in criminal cases or prohibited from using these lands for agricultural cultivation. In some areas like in Visakhapatnam District, the lack of clear forest boundaries is making the tribals vulnerable to the exploitation of both the forest and revenue departments. The Forest-Revenue Boundary dispute is a perpetual problem in Adilabad and Warangal districts, leading to booking of cases by the Forest Department and tension in these tribal villages.

In Visakhapatnam Agency and Nallamala areas, there is the unique problem of Enclosure Villages. There were many tribal villages that were not enumerated in the forest surveys. Due to such sheer negligence, the villages were not given revenue status and to this day, they do not have *pattas* for their lands. They face constant harassment from local forest officials, as they do not possess land records. In Buttapur (Adilabad District) and in Nellore District, the tribals (Yanadis) were given lands decades ago under the social forestry scheme and are cultivating there. But due to lack of *pattas*, they are being harassed by the police and forest departments and also do not have access to bank loans as they cannot prove their ownership. Attacks on tribals, their properties and livestock by wildlife are not compensated by the FD. Several cases are pending where tribals have been either killed or disabled and yet have not received any monetary compensation as due to them under the Wildlife Act.

In districts like Visakhapatnam, East Godavari and Vizianagaram, where there is high prevalence of *podu* cultivation, the tribals are facing threats of eviction by the FD. The Joint Forest Management (JFM) programme now renamed as the Community Forest Management (CFM) programme of the AP Forest Department has caused grievous violations with regard to tribal rights. One major violation is the displacement of tribals from their *podu* lands by reclaiming them into the forests through the JFM programme. The official reports of the FD and the World Bank (which has funded the project) reveal that 37,000 hectares of forestland has been reclaimed from the people. In Srisailam area, the Rajiv Gandhi Tiger Sanctuary has led to eviction of tribals from their original homes. They have not been properly settled so far. In the Srisailam Tiger Sanctuary area, the Chenchus, who are traditional hunter-gatherers, go into the forest everyday for all their needs. They are being harassed by the FD for trespassing into the sanctuary.

#### **7. Dispossession of Tribals by Development Projects in the State**

At the national level, the tribals constitute at least 55 percent of the persons displaced by development projects such as irrigation systems, hydroelectric projects, mining operations, power-generating units and mineral-based industries (Saxena, 2006). In the name of development, the tribals are displaced from their traditional habitat and are deprived of their livelihoods. The track record of governments on the resettlement and rehabilitation front leaves a lot to be desired. Even according to the official estimates, only 29 percent of the affected have been rehabilitated. In the recent past, some development projects in AP have become highly controversial due to their implications on tribal land and livelihoods. The present Congress Government identified 26 irrigation projects with an estimated cost of Rs.460 billion. Some of these projects, under various stages of implementation, have become more controversial as they will displace tribal villages and submerge forest areas. The Polavaram Project is the most contested of the

ongoing projects as far as the tribal livelihoods are concerned. This multipurpose mega project on the Godavari at Polavaram in West Godavari District is expected to irrigate 727,000 acres. The project would displace 276 villages and uproot 44,574 families in three districts; and tribals comprise almost 50 percent of the population of these villages (Laxman Rao S, Priya Deshingkar, John Farrington, 2006).

## **8. Tribal Movements in Andhra Pradesh**

Tribal revolts took place in British Andhra against colonialism as well as indigenous privileged sections. Tribal movements happened because of the inherent contradictions between the state and tribes; between tribal people and moneylenders; and tribal people and non-tribal land-owning classes. The British introduced laws in favour of individual rights over land, forest acts, courts of law, revenue, forest and excise machinery from the district level to the smallest village. This process dismantled the collective structures and established individual rights over resources. The Rampa Revolt of 1802-03 was inhumanely suppressed by the British and was projected as anti-social. The tribal movements were not merely against moneylenders or migrants to tribal areas as often portrayed by European Scholars but were against alien rule and were a quest for identity and self-rule (Janardhan Rao, 1997). Legal acts came into existence after every show of resistance by the tribals in the country, but were implemented inadequately. The movement led by Komaram Bheem during 1938-41 in the agency area of Hyderabad State was for rights over land and forest. The European anthropologist Heimendorff brought forth the problems faced by the adivasis of this region to the attention of Nizam Government. As a result, in 1946, the Gonds, Kolam, and Pardhan adivasi communities gained legal land rights over their lands. In spite of this, the adivasis could not be at peace because of encroachment on their land by non-tribals from neighbouring districts and states such as Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Progressive legislation like the Land Transfer Regulation Act (LTRA) 1959 could not stop illegal encroachment on tribal land, which continued with the connivance of political parties and forest bureaucracy, taking advantage of the ignorance and illiteracy of the tribals.

The late 1960s was a period of agrarian tensions. 1969-72 witnessed the Srikakulam tribal revolt and the Naxalite movement. The tribal land issue came to be focused upon through the Srikakulam Revolt which arose because of the oppressive social order in which social relations were dominated by local and settler landlords, moneylenders, contractors and corrupt bureaucracy. The movement succeeded in social liberation and was also economically effective. Active and politically conscious women participated in small groups. The gains secured by the revolt were four-fold: relief from the power of money lenders; regaining mortgaged lands and wastelands from landlords and government; relief from bonded labour, with a hike in wages; and elimination of



restrictions and extractions imposed by the forest officials. As a result of this movement, the government brought an amendment to the LTRA in 1970, which is popularly called the “One of 1970” Act. According to this Act, land in the Scheduled Area belongs to the tribals. The Srikakulam movement contributed significantly to the struggles that took place in the subsequent decade of eighties, in terms of spirit and message. The Godavari valley tribal struggles like Adilabad-Indervelli Gond revolt in North Telangana and also in the North Coast Agency region took place from 1976 onwards led by the radical left (CPI ML group). The Scheduled Areas of Telangana Region witnessed mobilization of tribes especially in the districts of Adilabad and Khammam. The Gonds of Adilabad were exploited by the landlords and immigrant peasants from the plains. There was militant mobilization of tribals on the issues of land and moneylending by non-tribal trader-cum-moneylenders. At the same time, the tribals of Kondamodulu fought a heroic battle in the Papi hills against non-tribal landlords who controlled thousands of acres of tribal land. When the *Girijana Sangham* formed by the tribes challenged the power of non-tribal landlords, the state machinery did not come to the rescue of tribals, but took the side of landlords. Ultimately, the *Girijana Sangham* could forcibly take possession of 2000-4000 acres. Land restoration by the state arising out of the 1970 Act was considerable till 1979. However, in East Godavari District, the land which has been conferred on non-tribals was the highest and much more than the land restored to tribals in the other tribal areas of the state. The failure of the state in land restoration motivated tribals to organize themselves under various social movements to get their lands back.

By the mid-1970s the, Srikakulam uprising had moved up the Godavari Valley into the plains of Telangana. Peasant struggles were organized under the leadership of radical left and “*Rytu coolie sanghams*” (peasant and agricultural labour organisations), which struggled against social oppression and feudal practices; for a hike in wages and for land. “Social boycott” against the landlords was the popular form of struggle (Papi Reddy, 1990). Land is seen as a livelihood for tribals. The process of transforming land into a commodity and acquiring economic and political power over it has been the single agenda of the ruling class which made possible the entry of non-tribals into tribal areas. Coal mining, paper industries, trade and commerce were the major ventures in the forest areas and organs of the state like the revenue, police, excise, development, and forest departments made inroads into tribal areas. Thus non-tribal encroachment into tribal lands and forest has been the root cause for continuing tribal struggles. The “*Tudum Debba*” movement from the mid-1990s has been agitating for categorization of tribals according to their relative socio-economic status for the purpose of reservation within the Scheduled Tribes. The tribals have been further marginalised by recent policies of Government of India (Guha, 2007). Though legislations empowering the tribals

such as the PESA (Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas) and Land Acts (Recognition of Forest Rights) 2006 have been passed, their rights are not conceded. With economic reforms, commercialization has entered through trade and industrial activity into tribal areas because of their rich mineral resources. This process is making them lose their rights over land and resources. Besides, World Bank projects like the JFM and CFM have not improved access to resources except for wage benefits. Tribal development programmes have also created class differences among them. All these changes in the lives of the tribals in recent times have become issues for struggle (CESS, 2007)

## **9. Tribals and Forest Policy**

Right from colonial times, forest laws and forest policies have been anti-tribal. The tribal is perceived as an encroacher and an enemy of the forest, who plunders the forest for his selfish needs. With the Indian Forest Act 1878, Forest Act 1927 and State enactments after independence in India, the state gradually gained monopoly over forests. Forests were declared to be Reserve Forests from where tribals were driven out. Cultivating land, collecting Non-Timber Forest Produce and felling of trees became illegal. Tribals who occupied these forests earlier, lost their habitat, their land, livelihood and all else that they had. No title deeds or any other rights were given in these forests. Over a period of time, the tribals and other poor people's access to forest land and forest produce has been severely curtailed; the tribals were removed from their familiar and settled livelihoods. Large forest areas were either declared as Reserve forests, or as sanctuaries and national parks. Construction of dams, reservoirs and hydro-electrical projects further resulted in huge displacement of tribals on thousands of hectares of forest lands. Many tribal villages were washed out in the process. Compensation and rehabilitation have touched only the fringe of the problem. The price the tribals seem to pay for the so-called development appears very high. As the, tribals seem to be struggling for survival (P. Madhavi [http://www.rupfor.org/downloadq/casestudy\\_P\\_Madhavi.pdf](http://www.rupfor.org/downloadq/casestudy_P_Madhavi.pdf))

### **9.1 Forest Policy Prior to 1988**

The post-independent period forest policy by and large reflected the colonial forest policy. However, some important changes were made after the submission of the Report of National Commission on Agriculture in 1976 which advocated commercialization of forest at all costs and with disregard to the sustenance of tribals derived from the forests. It recommended that the National Forest Policy should be revised to cater to the important needs of the country. It also recommended classification of forests into protected forests, production forests (commercial forests) and social forests. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 is mainly based on the recommendations of the Commission. The Act was passed with a view to protecting forest and ensuring ecological balance. The State Governments were given the privilege to declare any forest as "Reserve" Forest.

However the act does not define a “Reserve” forest. For instance, in the State of Andhra Pradesh, forests recognized U/s 15 of the AP Forest Act, 1967 are Reserve Forests. This provision gives extensive freedom to the State Government not only to declare any forest as RF, but also refuse to give legal right to the dwellers to occupy the land, evaluate the position of those occupying the land, and if convinced that they are illegal occupants and encroachers, evacuate them in the name of developing forest land. Further, title deeds cannot be given over lands within the area of the RF. Forest lands or forest produce cannot be used or permitted to be used in a way which results in destruction of the forests. Violators are punishable with imprisonment. This act resulted in massive evacuation of forest-dwelling tribals from their lands. Only those who had title deeds prior to 1980 were recognized. Even the Tribal Act, 2005, provides for recognizing rights enjoyed by the tribals before 1980 (P. Madhavi).

### **9.2 Forest Policy After 1988**

The National Forest Policy 1988 declared that the primary task of all agencies responsible for forest management, i.e., the Forest Department’s *Girijan* Cooperative Corporation (marketing agencies for NTFP), and any other community-based organizations, should be to associate the tribal people in the protection, regeneration and development of forests, as well as to provide gainful employment to the people living in and around forests. Consequent to the 1988 Forest Policy, the Central Ministry of Environment and Forest issued detailed guidelines to State Governments on June 1, 1990 to involve village committees living close to the forests, in the protection of forests and the development of degraded forest land. It also prescribed usufructuary rights (custodial rights) to participatory village communities to meet their demand of forest produce and active participation in afforestation programmes. This was the beginning for an active interface between the forest/village communities, voluntary agencies, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and the Forest Department for the revival, restoration and development of degraded forests (GOI, 1-6-1990 Ministry of Environments & Forests). The Programme came to be called Joint Forest Management (JFM). West Bengal was the first to adopt the principle of involving local communities in forest management. Although the state had started the programme in 1972 in Midnapore District, JFM was officially started in 1989 in South Bengal. It was followed by Haryana, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Tripura, Jammu Kashmir and Andhra Pradesh between 1990 and 1992. The Government of Andhra Pradesh passed the JFM order on August 28, 1992, which was amended in 1996.

### **9.3 Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) and Tribal Rights**

The association and dependency that tribals have with forest goes beyond cultivating forest land. Some forests are rich with various other resources such as fruits, nuts, herbs,

leaves, bamboo and gum. They are presently referred to as Non-timber Forest Produce (NTFP), which provide supplementary food to the tribals and some of them can even be sold for cash. Each forest region contains unique NTFP. Seventy percent of India's NTFP is collected from six states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. Around 65 percent of the country's tribal population lives in these regions. Most of the collection of NTFP is done in the lean agriculture months of March to July where other employment is not available. Tribals depend on NTFP for their livelihood. Survey in Andhra Pradesh shows that on an average, tribals derive 10-50 percent of their income from NTFP. *Beedi* leaves, gum, *karaya*, *adda* leaves, broom, tamarind, soap nuts, are among the important NTFP available in the state.

State policy on NTFP is also inconsistent with the goal of tribal protection. NTFP policy of individual states is not consistent with this. For instance, in the State of Andhra Pradesh, Girijan Co-operative Corporation (GCC) was set up to give monopoly to the state over NTFP under a law called A.P. Scheduled Areas Minor Forest Produce (Regulation of Trade) Regulation, 1979. These regulations impose restrictions on the purchase, sale, curing, processing, storage and transport of any NTFP. GCC is the monopoly agent for purchase of 35 NTFP varieties in Scheduled Areas of the state. The prime objective of the GCC is to procure NTFP from tribals and market it to their best advantage. It has the right to fix prices for the products it procures. It generally fixes prices at the wholesale rates, which is not fair to the tribals, whose time, labour and risks taken in collecting NTFP are not sufficiently covered. In fact, the price is so low and unprofitable for them that, they often cheat on the GCC and sell the NTFP in the weekly markets organized in centrally located villages, or at Mandal headquarters. However, they also report that GCC uses appropriate weights for their produce with which they were happy.

Another factor also adversely affects the price procured by the tribals in Andhra Pradesh - the influx of similar types of stocks from border areas of neighbouring states such as Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh. Tamarind and *adda* Leaves from Orissa and Madhya Pradesh have increased the supply of the products resulting in a fall in the price. Market for *sheekakai* and soap nuts faces threat from Karnataka and Chennai (P. Madhavi). The next serious problem is the complexity of issues related to forest lands and the tribals' access to these resources. Ambiguities over revenue-forest boundaries have given opportunities for both departments to victimize the tribals on false cases. Notification of forest lands created a number of problems where tribals living within forest enclosures were not demarcated as areas under community use making them illegal encroachers into forest lands. In the districts of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari this is a very widespread problem.

The first four plan periods were characterised by development programmes launched under the CDP and NEP, which combined tribal development along with multi-sided activities and placed the Tribal Welfare Department at a position subservient to other departments. The APSALTR removed the powers of the social security officers in the Telangana area and provided increased control by the revenue administration manned mostly by non-tribals. The introduction of administrative and development systems meant for the developed tracts into the tribal environs which had a different ecological and social setting, resulting in the deterioration of the tribals' position. The Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks, 1960, reported that the programmes lacked any specific tribal bias with the result that non-tribals residing within the area benefited more. The development schemes of the Tribal Welfare Department aimed at development of agriculture on lands occupied by tribals and failed to take into account the symbiotic nature of the tribal-forest relationship. Also, the *pattas* provided by the revenue administration were either contested or not accepted by the FD, resulting in conflicts and reported action by the FD. The developments in transport, communication facilities and industry also made the forest areas vulnerable as they pulled in large numbers of non-tribals for their creation, who stayed on after. Also, the relations between the non-tribal landowners and the hill tribes were exploitative in nature and gave rise to increased discontent amongst the tribesmen. The period between 1965 and 1975 is reported (Haimendorf, 1985) to have been the period of maximum influx from the plains. This period is also noted for militant activities of the naxalites, whose class struggles in Srikakulam and the surrounding agency areas earned them the sympathy and support of the exploited population and also reflected the shortcomings of state policy.

The political decision of the State Government to notify the Lambadas as ST (1977) resulted in increased influx of Lambada families from neighbouring districts and Maharashtra to encroach forested areas. The survey of forestland during 1963-1965 and the decision to regularise the pre-1964 encroachments came into effect by 1972, but failed to evict the post-1964 encroachments. These disputes were still being contested when the Lambadas were notified in 1977 and about 20,000 acres made out (Rangachari and Mukherji, 2000) as *patta* to them during 1978-1979, which exceeded all lands allotted to tribals during 1956-1978. The Lambadas who were more aggressive and financially better placed, sparked off the next wave of influx into the forested areas, causing more encroachments in the post-1980 period.

The tribals of Telangana who were most affected by the notification of Lambadas and the subsequent encroachment, seemed to lose faith in the administration and the Telangana jungles provided the space for the second wave of Marxist-Leninist movements. The People's War Group developed into the most formidable Naxalite formation in the

country during 1980-1990 and also spread to the neighbouring forested areas of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. While regularisation of encroached land was welcomed, accompanying evictions were often resisted with force. The activities of the Naxalites in organising armed insurrections and supporting the dispossessed resulted in FD staff, as well as other administrative staff exercising virtually no control in the hill areas during 1980-1985. Also, there was significant redistribution of land carried out by the Naxalites during this period along with initiatives for agrarian justice like increasing minimum wages and the annual fee for the *jeetagadu*. The Telugu Desam (TD) Party, which had referred to them as patriots during the election campaign of 1983, was forced by administrative compulsions to take a tough line. The Naxalites retaliated through a spate of kidnappings and killings of party leaders. The soft approach by the Congress Government in 1989, and the launch of a Remote Area Development Programme to wean away the tribals from Naxalite influence failed to stop the violence, forcing the state administration to adopt a hard line, ban the organisation and carry out massive flushing-out operations with the aid of central paramilitary forces. Internal dissensions within the movement and the success of counter-militancy operations lessened the influence of the movement by about 1993, even though encounters and death figures have not shown any remarkable decrease.

#### 10. Land Tenure in Tribal Areas

The tribals in the state, in general, belong to small and marginal farm categories. The total number of tribal holding as per 1985-86 Agricultural Census is 7,648, which constitutes less than 8% of the total holdings in the state. In terms of area, the STs operate 17,234 thousand hectares which is a little more than one-tenth of the total operated area in the state.

The tribals, especially in the north coastal (Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and East Godavari) and north Telangana (Adilabad, Khammam, Karimnagar and Warangal) districts traditionally practiced shifting cultivation. The cycle of cropping, other details of agriculture and different social practices were regulated through a well-defined and structured system of local governance, which is similar to the panchayat system at the village level. The practice of shifting cultivation, though not environment friendly did not cause much loss as long as the population was limited and the cycle of shifting had wide gaps. The cycle however gradually started reducing with the growth in local population. The state's policy on reservation of forested areas for forestry purposes affected the tribals' dependency on forest for their livelihood as their access to forest for cultivating crop decreased considerably. To provide land to tribals and to settle the land tenure, the government took a number of measures such as abolition of private estates, conversion of *muttadari* and *mahalguzari* rights into *Ryotwari* rights. Further, dis-

reservation of forest lands was also done in some cases to assign land to tribal agriculturists. But the policy of dis-reservation of forests and converting the land-use from forestry to agriculture resulted in encroachments. The initiatives in the 60s and mid 70s which accorded tribal status to the community of lambadas led to their migration from Maharashtra to Adilabad District, where they did not enjoy such a status. Similar migration took place from Orissa into the neighbouring Visakhapatnam District around the same time where tribals displaced by Hydel projects migrated to Andhra Pradesh in search of land and employment.

Since mid 80s, the law and order situation, especially in the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh, had deteriorated due to the increase in activities of extremists (locally called naxalites) and other anti-social elements. Many times, Forest Officers were reduced to being mute spectators to the large-scale plundering of forests that took place. In 1987, the situation was so bad that in an ambush, many senior police officials were killed in Alampalli in Adilabad District. This attracted the attention of the government. Various incidents clearly pointed out that land, in general, and forestland, in particular, was the major issue for tribal unrest, which was exploited by the extremist elements and that this was also the reason attributed for the ambush. A decision was taken in November 1987 to identify all the encroachments that existed prior to 1980 for considering their dis-reservation. (the cut off date being the date on which the Government of India had passed the Indian Forest Conservation Act, according to which no forest land was to be diverted for non-forestry activity without the prior approval from the Government of India). This further encouraged encroachments. It is estimated that nearly 1,00,000 ha of forestland was encroached consequent to this decision by the government to consider dis-reservation of pre-1980 cultivations. After nearly seven years from the cut off date, the virtual impossibility of making any distinction between pre-1980 and post-1980 encroachments, and the worsening law and order situation added to the misery of foresters. Realizing the potential ill effects of such large-scale encroachments, the government subsequently (in 1995) withdrew its decision of 1987 to consider regularizing pre-1980 cultivations. In this entire bargain nearly 25% of forestland was encroached in Adilabad District itself.

Efforts made by the government to evict the encroachments by treating the encroachers as lawbreakers and dealing with them by invoking punitive measures under the AP Forest Act 1967 did not yield any positive results. On the contrary, such measures resulted in conflicts and tensions among the foresters and villagers. The community of foresters lost public sympathy and they were the *persona non grata* in tribal areas. However, with the advent of Joint Forest Management (JFM) since mid 90s, a greater harmony was established between the foresters and the tribals. There was also a reduction in fresh

encroachments as the livelihood issues of the forest-dependent communities were addressed. Sincere efforts were made to educate the tribals of ill effects of destroying forests and on unscientific and unsustainable cultivation of food crops. The concept of declining crop productivity; decreasing soil fertility; enhancement of soil erosion, etc., were also explained. By providing viable alternatives during the implementation of JFM, nearly 37,000 ha of forestland under possession and cultivation of the local people was reclaimed through afforestation, and put under productive tree crops through *Vana Samrakshana Samiti* (VSS). However the above data is only an estimate; the village and family-specific data will have to be gathered during the course of site-specific planning through the process of micro-planning. Thus, persuasion and motivation, coupled with education, have yielded positive results that could not be achieved through coercion.

The tribal people in the state have historically been vulnerable to large-scale exploitation from non-tribals from the plains and due to severe neglect from the government. In spite of the existence of constitutional safeguards and reservations, the apathy of the State Government has led to vast areas of land in the agency (tribal) areas being transferred to non-Adivasis or non-tribals. This is particularly prevalent in the foothills where the majority population is tribal; yet the areas have been excluded from Scheduled Areas, implying that the tribals do not enjoy the legal protections enjoyed by those in the hills. The official record of the Tribal Welfare Department for the year 2001-2002 states that out of the 69,170 cases of land alienation in the state, only 23,635 have been restored to tribals, which indicates the pace at which cases are disposed where tribal lands are concerned.

Non-forest activities like setting up of industries, mining projects, construction of big reservoirs and other “development” projects led to large-scale and multiple displacement of tribal population who were forced to migrate. They face constant harassment for being “criminals” and are forcefully evicted from lands occupied by them. Their rights and access to forest resources are curtailed by government and local communities who were the earlier settlers. Such problems are highly prevalent in districts like Visakhapatnam where cross-border migration from neighbouring Orissa due to projects like Bailadilla, NALCO, HAL and other Mining projects, DBK railway line, five reservoir projects, tourism industry and government infrastructure have led to severe pressure on land and forests.

## **11. Tribal Development Policies and Programmes**

The greatest challenge that the Government of India has been facing since independence is the proper provision of social justice to the Scheduled Tribe people, by ameliorating their socio-economic conditions. Scheduled Tribes constitute the weakest section of



India's population, from the ecological, economic and educational angles. They constitute the matrix of India's poverty. Though the tribals are the sons of the same soil and the citizens of the same country, they are born and grow as the children of the nature. From the historical point of view, they have been subjected to the worst type of social exploitation. They are practically deprived of many civic facilities and are subjected to isolation from modern and civilized way of living since so many centuries. By British the Scheduled District Act of 1984 had initiated the tribals to keep most of these areas administratively separate; the same situation was allowed to continue under the Government of India Acts of 1919 and 1935. However, after independence this policy was abandoned and new policy of tribal development and integration was initiated. The Constitution of India made definite provisions for the welfare and upliftment of the tribal people throughout the country. A review of the tribal situation would indicate that the strategy for development would require an intensive approach to the tribal problems in terms of their geographic and demographic concentration, if faster development of the community is to take place. The community development efforts in the tribal areas were therefore, taken up for supplementation by stating a few special multipurpose tribal development projects covering a few blocks in 1954. A number of commissions and committees were appointed in the recent past to look into the problems of developments in the tribal areas in the country and they have recommended a number of measures to remove the socio-economic imbalances and also to break down their old psychological barrier, which existed in the tribal areas. The special programmes for tribal development have been implemented in our country and state to benefit the tribal population under the backward classes sector from First Five Year Plan.

Recognizing the special needs and problems of tribals, a special niche was accorded to tribal development in the country and state development agenda from the very beginning of the Plan Era. Some important landmark achievements in tribal development are as follows:

Special programmes for tribal development have been implemented in the country to benefit the tribal population under backward classes sector from First Five Year Plan (1951-56) which did not play any specific and special attention towards the development of tribal areas, because only certain piecemeal attempts such as educational schemes and welfare schemes were introduced. These schemes left concrete impact on tribal development. The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) envisaged welfare programmes of STs based on the understanding of their culture and traditions, for their socio-economic upliftment. Forty-three Special Multi-Purpose Tribal Blocks (SMPTBs) were created for about 25,000 people as against 65,000 in a normal block, which is an important landmark during this plan. The Third Five Year Plan (1961-66) followed the approach

of equity of opportunity and to bring about reduction in disparities. The approach of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74) was to increase the standard of living of the STs. Special development projects in the agency areas of AP, Bihar, MP and Orissa were set up for targeted development of tribal areas, besides combating political unrest and left wing extremism. The Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-78) marked a shift in the approach with the launching of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) for the comprehensive development of the tribals. The TSP stipulated that the funds of the State and Centre should be quantified on the ST population on a proportional basis, with budgetary mechanisms for the welfare and development of the STs. For implementing the TSP strategy, Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) were delineated in the tribal concentrated States. Special Central Assistance (SCA) to TSP and Grant-in-Aid under Article 275(1) of the Constitution were also initiated in this plan to provide additional funds to TSP implementing states for income-generating activities, infrastructure development and administrative reinforcement.

During the Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85) emphasis was more on family-oriented economic activities rather than infrastructure development schemes. A “Modified Area Development Approach” (MADA) was adopted for tribal concentrated pockets of 10,000 populations with at least half of them being STs. Primitive Tribal Groups were also given emphasis for their overall development. During the Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90), there was substantial increase in the flow of funds. Two national-level institutions - Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) as an apex body for State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations, and National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) - were set up to provide remunerative price for the Forest and Agriculture Produce of tribals and credit support for employment generation and skill development. The Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97) emphasized elimination of exploitation, land alienation, non-payment of minimum wages and restrictions on right to collect minor forest produce, etc., besides the socio-economic upliftment of the STs. The approach of the Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) envisaged advancement of STs through a process of: (i) Social Empowerment; (ii) Economic Empowerment; and (iii) Social Justice for socio-economic development. An exclusive Ministry of Tribal Affairs was set up in 1999 for a focused approach to the development and welfare of the tribals in the country.

The Tenth Plan (2002-07) continued the approach of Ninth Plan of Social Empowerment through promotion of new educational development schemes, Economic Empowerment through employment-cum-income generation activities and Social Justice through elimination of all types of discrimination. These strategies have been supported by the ongoing schemes of Central, Centrally Sponsored by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and

other Central Ministries and Departments. There was substantial increase in the outlays for the STs' development for various schemes in this plan period with emphasis on education, minor irrigation and development of forest villages. The planning commission approved an allocation of Rs.1,754 crores for the tenth plan. This allocation does not include grants for Special Central Assistance (SCA) and TSP.

## **12. Tribal Sub-Plan for Tribals**

In order to focus on tribal development, a Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy was initiated in the state since 1974-75 in the 5th Five Year Plan, having objectives of socio-economic development and protection of STs against exploitation through legal and administrative support for narrowing the gap between their levels of development to that of the general communities. The important aspect of this strategy is to ensure allocation of funds for TSP areas at least in proportion to the ST population of each State/UT. The TSP strategy is now being implemented through 196 Integrated Tribal Development Projects/ Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDPs/ITDAs), 259 Modified Area Development Approach (MADA) pockets, 82 clusters and 75 Primitive Tribal Groups in 23 TSP States/UTs. Over the years, changes have been made in modalities to make the approach more effective and beneficial to the tribals. In the Sixth Plan, MADA was adopted to cover smaller areas of tribal communities having 10,000 population of which 50% or more were tribals. In the Seventh Five Year Plan clusters having a total population of at least 5000 and above with ST concentration of 50% or more outside the TSP were included. Later, the development of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) has also been included in the strategy. The TSP Programmes are to be financed by the following sources: (a) Tribal Sub Plan funds form State /UT Plans and Central Ministries/ Departments; (b) Special Central Assistance (SCA) to Tribal Sub Plan (TSP); (c) Grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution to the States/UTs; (d) Funds through Central Sector Schemes; (e) Funds from Centrally Sponsored Schemes; and (f) Institutional Finance.

The tribal development under TSP envisages: (i) Educational promotion schemes of schools, residential schools, hostels, scholarships, special coaching/training, etc.; (ii) Agriculture and allied activities by providing minor and medium irrigation facilities, animal husbandry, dairying, poultry, etc.; (iii) Improvised credit and marketing facilities for agriculture and minor forest products; (iv) Special training programmes to tribal farmers; (v) Irrigation and power facilities to promote agricultural production and small scale industry, etc.; (vi) Provision of basic infrastructure for speeding up the socio-economic development of the tribal areas through community centres, communication network, schools, health centres, rural electrification, drinking water and other facilities etc. that are to be provided to the tribals; (vii) ITDP, MADA, Cluster and Primitive

Tribal Groups special comprehensive developmental projects were to be prepared by the States/UTs; and (viii) Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) were created for the development of tribals in the tribal Schedule Areas. The above-mentioned Central or State schemes are implemented by ITDA. The TSP is funded through earmarked components of: (a) the State Plan (48%); (b) Plans of Central Ministries and Departments, Centrally Sponsored Schemes (38%); (c) Special Central Assistance (7%); and (d) Institutional finance for the credit portion of beneficiary oriented schemes (7%). The State Plan allocation takes the form of a Sub-Plan item in the budgetary allocations of each line department. In Andhra Pradesh, most of the key departments place their Sub-Plan allocations

### 13. Legal and Policy Framework for Tribals in AP

The government, both at Centre and State, has not only formulated a number of policies to safeguard the interests of the tribals but also has initiated a number of development schemes for the welfare and upliftment of the tribal communities. They are broadly categorized into the following and discussed in the subsequent sections:

**13.1 Constitutional Safeguards:** A number of constitutional provisions are already in place to safeguard the interests of the tribals in the country. Some of the important ones are indicated below.

- \* *Administration:* Under Clause (1) of Article 244, the Fifth Schedule applies to the administration and control of the Scheduled Areas and STs in a state.
- \* *Tribal Development:* Article 275(1) provides for Grants-in-Aid of the revenues of a state to enable it to meet the cost of development schemes for the welfare of STs in that state.
- \* *Promotion of Education:* Article 15(4) along with subsequent amendments empowers the state to make any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes including STs and also enables the state to reserve seats for them in educational institutions.
- \* *Political Safeguards:* Article 330 & 332 provides for reservation of representation of SCs & STs in the Lok Sabha (Parliament) and Vidhan Sabhas (State Legislative Assemblies).
- \* *Employment:* Article 16(4) empowers the state to make, “any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens (including STs) if not represented adequately in the services under the state”.
- \* *Reservations in Educational and Employment Opportunities:* The Constitution of India provides for reserving certain percentage of seats in all educational institutions and public employment in proportion to the tribal population. Residential or “Ashram Schools” are being run in the ITDA areas to provide primary and secondary education for the STs. According to Article 17: Civil Rights, “Untouchability” is

abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. Enforcement of any disability arising out of “Untouchability” shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

**13.2 Policy Regulations:** The following laws, rules and regulations and policies pertaining to tribals and tribal tracts have special relevance to the project under assessment.

- \* *The Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act, 1917* restricts transfer of land in the Agency (tribal) tracts. It regulates debt and interest on the borrowings by the hill tribes and transfer of their immovable property. It was enacted primarily to safeguard the interest of the hill tribes in the area over which it extended, and to protect them from exploitation by non-tribals and moneylenders. It permitted transfer of land only among tribals and laid down that the interest accrued over the debts borrowed by the tribals shall not exceed the principal amount.
- \* *The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, 1959* extends the provisions of the above Act.
- \* *The Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Scheduled Areas) Estate (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Act 1948, The Andhra Pradesh Mahals (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Regulation, 1969, and The Andhra Pradesh Mutta (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Regulation, 1969:* These are landmark enactments and promulgations that facilitated state ownership of private estates and lands in the Scheduled Areas and paved the way for settlement of land tenure. Prior to these enactments and promulgations, lands in the Scheduled Areas were under private ownership in the form of estates. *Mahals* were private estates in certain parts of the present Khammam District. Estates’ and *Mahals*’ owners leased parts of their lands to tenants for cultivation. In the Scheduled Areas of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts, the then rulers granted “*Mokassas*” and “*Mutta* rights” to certain individuals in recognition of the service rendered by them like assisting in collection of land revenue, maintaining law and order, etc. Since these were basically grants, the tribals did not have absolute rights over these properties. Through abolition of Estates and *Mahals*, the state paved the way for settlement of rights of all the tribal tenants who tilled these lands. The forested areas of these Estates were taken over and reserved as State Forests. Further, through abolition of *Mutta* rights and their conversion into *Ryotwari Pattas*, the *Mokassas* and the *Mutta* rights were settled in favour of the tribals who tilled these lands. Thus, the enactments and promulgations paved the way for settlement of land rights to the tribals.

**National Forest Policy 1988:** The GOI, through a Resolution dated 7<sup>th</sup> December 1988, has revised its Forest Policy. The strategies relevant for Tribal welfare and development in this policy states: “Having regard to the symbiotic relationship between the tribal

people and forests, a primary task of all agencies responsible for forest management, including the forest development corporations should be to associate the tribal people closely in the protection, regeneration and development of forests as well as to provide gainful employment to people living in and around the forest”.

**14. Development and Welfare Measures:** Following are some of the important initiatives and programs taken up by the government for the overall socio-economic development of tribal areas and tribal people. These include both economic schemes as well as infrastructural development in tribal areas. Economic schemes are both individual-oriented and group-based, and include in most of the cases, subsidy in the range of 50-75%.

*Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) Strategy:* In order to focus on tribal development, a TSP strategy is being implemented in the state since 1974-75. This strategy comprises identification of tribal majority blocks, earmarking of fund under various sectoral programs for these identified areas along with mobilization of institutional finance and creation of administrative structure. This has provided focused development of tribals across all sectors.

Ten Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) have been created for the development of tribals in the tribal Schedule Areas in order to provide single line administration so as to deliver prompt and accessible government services. Legal provisions such as special agency courts were also set up to give speedy justice to the tribals. The main schemes implemented by ITDAs include minor irrigation, soil conservation, horticulture, fisheries, sericulture, health and infrastructure for social support services. Centrally sponsored schemes are also being implemented to tackle special problems, namely, malnutrition, adult literacy and rehabilitation of shifting cultivators. Tribal administration vastly improved after these institutions were created; However, it has not managed to address the crucial issues of basic human and fundamental rights of the tribal people. The Tribes Advisory Council (TAC) was formed, consisting of political representatives and administrators, in order to advise and guide the policies of the state on tribal matters.

The ITDAs are in operation in eight districts, viz., Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Khammam, Warangal and Adilabad. Apart from this, there are two ITDAs, one exclusively for the Chenchus at Srisailem and the other for the Yanadis at Nellore. Outside the sub-plan area (ITDA areas), there are 41 pockets of tribal concentration covering 11 districts where MADA programs are being implemented; besides there are 17 identified clusters.

The Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) Ltd., established in 1956 by the Government of Andhra Pradesh to achieve socio-economic upliftment of the tribals is actively engaged in the following major activities: (a) Procurement of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) and Agricultural Produce (AP) from the tribals and marketing of the same to the best advantage of the tribals; (b) Supply of essential commodities under Public Distribution System (PDS) and other Domestic Requirements (DRs) to the tribals at fair and reasonable prices; and (c) Provision of credit to the tribals for seasonal agricultural operations. In order to facilitate distribution of domestic requirements (DRs) including essential commodities such as rice, kerosene oil, palm oil, wheat and sugar, to the tribals, the GCC has been operating 839 DR depots as of now. Efforts are made to place all items by the 14<sup>th</sup> of every month. In addition to this, the GCC also supplies food provisions to all Tribal Welfare hostels. The following initiatives are taken to improve the sale of various commodities in the tribal areas: (a) Decentralisation of purchases; (b) Opening of mini super bazaars; and (c) Mobile sale counters.

The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Cooperative Finance Corporation Limited, Hyderabad (TRICOR), established in October, 1976, is coordinating various economic support schemes for the economic development of the STs in the state. Among the various steps taken by government to accelerate the pace of economic development of the STs, establishment of the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Cooperative Finance Corporation is a major landmark. The need for the creation of an agency to tap institutional finance was keenly felt with a major shift in the policy for amelioration of the STs, i.e., from mere provision of social services in the past to the present effect of improving the tribal economy. The corporation assists in mobilization of institutional finance by providing margin money so as to ensure the economic development of the tribals. The corporation coordinates implementation of SGSY (ST component), Special Central Assistance, CMEY, PMRY, NSTFDC etc., by providing margin money and identification to the beneficiaries. The National Scheduled Tribes Finance Development Corporation (NSTFDC) is a Government of India undertaking under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs providing finances for promoting the economic activities of the STs. It channels finances for income-generating activities through the state level channelising agencies such as TRICOR in Andhra Pradesh.

Primary health care is another area of emphasis by the government. A total of 244 Primary Health Centres (PHCs), 1042 sub-centres, 26 government hospitals, 12 community health centres, 6 area hospitals, 24 mobile units and 20 dispensaries are functioning in the tribal areas. The PHCs are being strengthened by posting 325 medical officers and providing jeep-cum-ambulances. As part of tribal welfare initiatives in the state, the GOAP has engaged 8,500 community health workers who, with adequate

education on first aid and minimum health care, work as barefoot doctors in the remote and interior tribal habitations. This initiative supplements the network of PHCs and hospitals administered by the ITDAs. All efforts are being made to ensure that all the tribal habitations are provided with safe drinking water in the next two years, i.e., by the end of 2008. Even, though the state has many basic medical institutions and facilities in the tribal areas, the health situation in the ITDAs are relatively grim in terms of providing physical access, complementary facilities, and the quality of health care. All ITDAs are known for endemic water and vector borne diseases as well as TB, malaria, acute respiratory infections, diarrhea and gastroenteritis. Unhygienic living conditions, absolute lack of concern for health and sanitation, malnutrition and poverty, coupled with poor network of health care are the primary reasons for such unhealthy conditions. In general, the health condition among the STs in the state is found to be poor. This is reflected in terms of higher mortality rate of infants (under 5 years-children) and their mothers among STs, than others in the state. Basically, lack of quantity and quality of drugs, human resource and poor infrastructure are the main causes for poor public health service delivery in the tribal areas.

UNDP-assisted South Asia Poverty Alleviation Project - SAPAP (1996-2000) implemented in 20 mandals of 3 districts has shown that the poor have tremendous potential to help themselves and that this potential can be harnessed by organizing them. The poor have demonstrated that when adequate skills and inputs in community organization, management and action are provided, they can shape their destinies. The successful institution building model of SAPAP is being emulated in the District Poverty Initiatives Project launched by Government of Andhra Pradesh (GOAP).

In order to keep up with the development commitment of the state and as boldly envisaged in Swarnandhra Pradesh "Vision 2020" policy document, the Andhra Pradesh Government has initiated the "Rural Poverty Elimination Programme" under the project "*Velugu*" (literally means "light"), and the Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP) is an independent, autonomous society registered under the Societies Act to implement this project. The Andhra Pradesh District Poverty Initiatives Project (APDPIP) is being implemented by SERP in 180 backward mandals in the six districts of Adilabad, Mahbubnagar, Anantapur, Chittoor, Srikakulam and Vizianagaram in the state. The APDPIP is a Rs.600 crore World Bank-supported 5 year (2000-2005) poverty elimination project, with the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh as its chairperson. At the state level, SERP directly coordinates with the Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Ministry. After 2004, the project is extended to all the rural mandals of the state in 22 rural districts and the programme is re-christened as "*Indira Kranti Patham*".



**Indira Kranthi Patham (IKP) in Tribal Sub Plan Areas:** In order to give greater focus and achieve convergence between the *Indira Kranti Patham* and the Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) in the project districts, under the overall framework, the government has developed a tribal development strategy with exclusive implementation arrangements. The following implementation arrangements are ordered in the TSP areas.

In the TSP areas, the Project Officer, ITDA, has the responsibility of implementing the Project. A separate Tribal Project Management Unit (TPMU) is being set up to work under the administrative control of Project Officer, ITDA. The TPMU's mandate is social mobilization and empowerment of tribal communities in the TSP areas. The TPMU shall be provided with necessary support staff and functional specialists by the SERP. The TPMU's day-to-day functioning shall be the responsibility of Additional Project Director who works under the Project Officer, ITDA, and under technical control of Project Director, *Indira Kranthi Patham*.

At the state level, there shall be a State Tribal Management Unit (STMU) as part of State Project Management Unit of SERP for effective implementation of Tribal Development Plan. The STMU shall function under close guidance and coordination of Commissioner, Tribal Welfare.

**IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development):** Government of Andhra Pradesh has started IFAD-assisted programme for the comprehensive development of tribals in the interior agency areas of the state. The first phase of the IFAD programme for the coastal districts like Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam and East Godavari was started in 1991 and was completed in 1999, with a total expenditure of Rs.165 crores. The second phase of the IFAD programme for the tribal areas of Adilabad, Warangal, Khammam, West Godavari and Srisailam was started in 1995 and continued up to 2003. The programme was being implemented at a cost of Rs. 183 crores. Under the IFAD programme, apart from taking up schemes like irrigation, horticulture, land development, health and education; a lot of emphasis is being given for beneficiary participation.

**Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana:** Upliftment of tribal women has been a prime focus of the NSTFDC. It is felt that tribal women can contribute significantly to the process of economic development of the STs. With this object in view, NSTFDC introduced an exclusive concessional scheme for the economic development of eligible ST women titled "*Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana*".

Due to the efforts put in by TPMUs, 40,842 Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have been mobilized in tribal area with about 5.22 lakh ST women as members. So far, 2995 Village Organisations have been formed and they have federated into 77 *Mandal Samakhya*s in tribal areas. So far 18,129 Self-Help Groups have been provided with an amount of Rs.68.38 crores under Community Investment Fund for taking up micro-projects for gainful employment, thereby, benefiting 1,97,546 ST women.

For the first time in India and in AP, a land mark decision was taken by the government to implement and monitor all the economic support schemes through Women Self-Help Groups in coordination with *Indira Kranthi Patham*. The groups not only ground the assets but also monitor the scheme and recovery of the amount sanctioned. The SHGs will prepare a micro-credit plan and submit to *Mandal Samakhya* and it will be submitted to Project Officer/District Tribal Welfare Officer for sanctions. The releases will be made directly to *Mandal Samakhya* and thereon to Village Organizations. This will simplify the procedure of grounding the schemes. They are empowered to decide their economic-enhancement activities, including land purchase schemes.

**AP Tribal Power Company Limited:** The State Government established the AP Tribal Power Company Ltd. (AP TRIPCO) under the Companies Act 1956 (July 2002) with a view to explore the feasibility of harnessing the hydro-power available in the tribal areas and improve the conditions of living in those areas by establishing mini hydro power projects (1–3 MW) in Scheduled Areas by utilizing the natural streams and waterfalls. These mini hydel power projects are to be established in partnership with the local tribal women organizations. The entire profits from such projects will accrue to the local tribals and to be used for developing the local tribal areas.

**Janashri Bhima Yojana:** The Government of India has introduced a new scheme called “*Janashri Bhima Yojana*” during 2004-05. It is a group insurance scheme to provide life insurance protection to the rural and urban poor persons below poverty and marginally above poverty line, such as workers engaged in forest products and leaf collectors in forest. Persons between the age of 18 years and 60 years are eligible under this scheme. Sum assured is Rs.20,000. The annual premium payable for securing the assurance is Rs.200/- out of which Rs.100/- has to be contributed by the nodal agency/member of the group/State Government and the remaining amount of Rs.100/- will be subsidized from Social Security Fund of Central Government. During 2004-05, the Government of India released an amount of Rs.60 lakh for providing insurance coverage to 12,000 families of PTGs for five years starting from 2004-05 under the *Janashri Bhima Yojana* Scheme of LIC of India. This grant is towards beneficiary contribution, and the subsidy part of amount will be obtained by LIC of India from Social Security Scheme of GOI.

During 2005-06, Government of India released an amount of Rs.120 lakh to cover (24,000) ST families under this scheme.

**Janshala:** *Janshala* was launched in this state in 1999. The programme covers 28 mandals (blocks) in three districts – East Godavari, West Godavari and Krishna, and 136 slums in four mandals of Hyderabad City. It is being implemented through a state-level society which also implements the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA). In convergence with *Janshala*, the ITDA established alternative schools in habitations where there were no schools. These schools are known as *Girijana Vidya Vikas Kendras* (GVVKs). Usually, GVVKs only had class I and II, after which children either went to a nearby primary or middle school, or were sent to residential schools (*Ashramsshalas*) run by the Tribal Welfare Department. However, it was found that many GVVK children dropped out after class II due to the distance of the nearest primary school and also due to reluctance of some parents to send their children to hostels. To address this problem, ITDA and *Janshala* have expanded some of the GVVKs up to class IV.

**Jawahar Gram Samrudhi Yojana (JGSY):** This scheme launched in 1999 aims to enable the village community to strengthen the village infrastructure through creation of durable assets as per the local needs. The works taken up provide gainful employment to the rural poor. The gram sabha while according approval to conform to the felt needs of schemes given to SC/ST families living below poverty line and physically handicapped persons, gives preference to works in the area inhabited by the SC/STs in selection of the works. Further, 22.5 percent of the State Budget is marked exclusively for the benefit of SCs/STs.

**Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS):** This scheme seeks to provide additional wage employment opportunities in the form of manual work to the rural poor living below the poverty line. In the process, the effort is to create durable community assets. Minimum wages are paid under the scheme. While providing employment, preference is given to SC/ST and parents of child labour withdrawn from hazardous occupation, and who are below the poverty line.

**Swarnjayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY):** Under this scheme, assistance is provided to the poor families living below the poverty line in rural areas for taking up self-employment activities, either individually or in groups called the Self-Help Groups. SGSY is a credit-cum-subsidy programme. Subsidy is given so as to make it easy for the poor to start their own self-employment activities. An individual is given loan up to Rs.50,000 and SHGs up to 3 lakh without any collateral security. Subsidy is given at the rate of 30% of the project cost with a limit of Rs.10,000 for SC/ST.

**Sectoral Programs:** In addition to the above special programs focused on tribals there are a number of other development schemes which are being implemented under different sectors including agriculture, animal husbandry, horticulture, fisheries, and health and education. In tribal areas, majority of beneficiaries under these programs are from tribal groups.

**Coffee Project:** A project on coffee plantation in an area of 60,000 acres has been taken up in the 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan in the agency area of ITDA, Paderu with financial assistance from the Government of India, Coffee Board and NSTFDC. The total outlay of the project for 7 years is Rs.144 crores out of which 50% is beneficiary contribution in the form of labour. Of the remaining 50%, the Government of India assistance is Rs.36 crores (25%), State Government's share is Rs.12 crores (8.33%) and NSTFDC's share is Rs.24 crores (16.67%).

Information on the coverage of tribal areas and population under various tribal development and welfare programs of the government during the last two decades (1981- 2001) can be seen from Table 3.

**Joint Forest Management (JFM):** During 1990s, the Government of India (GOI) issued a circular enabling community participation in Forest Protection and Management. The Government of Andhra Pradesh (GOAP) adopted this in 1992. From then onwards there has been a major shift in Forest Management. The local village communities that depend on the forests for meeting their needs were made partners in Forest Management through the concept of Joint Forest Management (JFM). The experience of JFM in AP has proven to be a success. The forest cover has increased and there is a perceptible improvement in the forestry sector. However, the investments made and initiatives taken need further consolidation for sustaining the impact. With the experience gained from JFM, in order to institutionalize the process, to ensure greater decentralization and devolution of managerial responsibilities and to ensure steady flow of benefits to the communities, during 2002, the Government of Andhra Pradesh launched Community Forest Management (CFM) as an improvement over JFM. While JFM was a partnership between the forest dependent communities and the GOAP, CFM is a democratic process through delegation of the decision-making process. It aims at decentralizing the entire process of planning and implementation with Andhra Pradesh Forest Department (APFD) and GOAP acting as facilitators and providers of technical and infrastructure support. This Community Forest Management approach is a radical shift from traditional estate approach to forestry.

Joint Forest Management and Community Forest Management primarily focus on

treating forests as a common property resource and managing it for common use. Community Forest Management in Andhra Pradesh is being practiced only in the state-owned forest areas. *Vana Samrakshana Samitis* (VSSs) or Village Forest Protection Committees are formed in the forest-dependent villages comprising of willing forest-dependent families. Forests in the vicinity of such villages are then allotted to these VSSs for protection and management. The VSSs are entitled for complete ownership of usufruct and are required to set apart 50% of net proceeds from sale of timber and bamboos towards future forest management expenses.

**Table 4: Tribal Welfare during 1981-2001**

Scheme/Sector	Unit	in 1981	in 2001
<i>Agriculture</i>			
Area covered by soil conservation	ha	145000	195344
Area under HYV of paddy	ha	54600	331439
Horticultural development	ha	13388	527120
D.R, depots	No.	350	53
Electrification of tribal villages	No.	733	5831
All weather roads	km.	4477	5315
Drinking water sources	No.	9181	10024
<i>Education</i>			
Enrolment in primary Schools	No.	239079	497042
Enrolment of boarders	No.	61238	209156
Post-metric scholarships	No.	4000	50000
Construction of buildings for educational institutions	No.	197	788
<i>Health</i>			
PHCs	No.	32	120
Sub-centres	No.	91	1110
Upgraded PHCs	(30 beds) Nos.	2	18
ICDS project	No.	7	29
M.M. units	No.	24	29
Dispensaries	No.	31	24
Hospitals	No.	16	9
<i>Anganwadi</i> centers	No.	300	6365

(Source: Andhra Pradesh Community Forest Management Project tribal development strategy and action plan, 2007)

In recent times, the type of plantations which are replacing the natural forest through programmes of Joint Forest Management causes concern. In regions where JFM is introduced, forest areas have been cleared to plant teak, eucalyptus, cashew, and citrus fruits. The local tribals, who were supposed to get a fair share in the sale proceeds of JFM products, are not receiving it.

Under JFM/CFM programmes, nearly Rs.10,000 million are being spent but its results are not commensurate with the money spent. The VSSs, which are the main instruments for taking the programme forward, are not working properly. They have become casual and are not following the norms. Some NGOs complained that the authorities are not cooperating with the VSSs. Some seizures have taken place with the help of the VSSs who are supposed to be rewarded half of the value of the seized material. But they rarely get any incentive.

This project was heavily criticised by Adivasi and support organisations for causing compulsory evictions of Adivasi families, who lost their shifting cultivation fields (known locally as *podu*) to the Forest Department and suffered severe restrictions on their use of the forest. According to the FD, by 1994, over 3,27,742 hectares of forestland was under illicit cultivation and encroachment. Newspapers reported FD figures of encroached land in the districts of Adilabad (94,000 ha), Khammam (75000 ha), Visakhapatnam (33,000 ha), Warangal (13,500) and East Godavari (7200 ha). Out of the estimated 46,725 families which might have encroached the forestland assigned to VSS, the Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) under the CFM project provides for rehabilitation grant and livelihood opportunities to an estimated 11,680 families (Madhusudhan, 2003). Worse still, these affected *Adivasi* families received little or no compensation whatsoever for the loss of their livelihood and cultural resources.

The government's attempts to motivate the people to forest conservation did not succeed sufficiently. The people have remained outsiders to the forests and their management, in spite of JFM and other programmes to involve the people. The alienation that started in the colonial period has continued. Additionally, periodic efforts to evict the people from the forestland inhabited and cultivated by them (what the government called encroachment) have further soured the relationship between the government and the people in some cases, and in consequence, forests have suffered. The FRA emerged due to the underlying extreme injustice in the deprivation of forest rights to forest-using communities.

#### 15. FRA Act 2006 and Rules

In 2006 the Forest Rights Act was finally approved by the Parliament. It at last recognises that "historical injustice" has been committed in relation to the deprivation of forest

people's rights, and provides legislative basis to redress it. This should have major implications across AP, both in providing more secure basis for forest people's livelihoods and also giving the legal provisions necessary to defend them in the future. The main provisions of this legislature are as follows:

- Tribal people who had been using land within the forest as of December 2005 will get the land up to four hectares a family. Land may have been occupied for home, agriculture or any other purpose.
- The non-tribals occupying or using forestland at the time of the enactment of the legislator have to prove that they are using the land for three generations (75 years) to be entitled to the land.
- The communities using forest for community purposes such as grazing the cattle or collection of materials such as fuel wood and leaves will be allowed to do so as a matter of right.
- The above provision of rights will however have some restrictions. For example, the right-holders will not be able to sell the land to others or pass on their rights excepting to their successors.
- The right-holders also will have the right to protect their land, trees and other vegetation in it and biodiversity of the area.
- In order to claim their rights, individual right claimants and the community will have to make applications in the prescribed forms for consideration by a forest rights committee selected for the purpose by the Gram Panchayat. The committee will endorse it and pass it on to the next higher committee (Sub-Divisional Committee which will forward it to Zilla Committee with the comments). Once approved by the Zilla Committee the claimant will get the necessary papers of the rights. There are other provisions but the above are the major ones.

### *15.1 Implementing the FRA-2006 in the State of Andhra Pradesh*

Andhra Pradesh is one of the first few states to implement the FRA, 2006, that came into force on December 31, 2007. The Government of AP prepared a road map in January 2008 for the implementation of FRA, fixing dates for commencement and completion of grant of title deeds by 31-7-2008. As per the road map, the grant to forest rights title deeds was to be issued to all the beneficiaries by October 30, 2008, but the Chief Minister desired that a major portion of the title deeds be distributed on or around August 15, 2008. The Gram Sabhas were to be convened and the FRCs formed before the 29<sup>th</sup> of February 2008. The claims were to be received up to 31 May 2008. The aim was to finalise claims by October 31<sup>st</sup> 2008.

The State Government issued almost simultaneous orders in March, first through the backward classes department such as the Department of Tribal Welfare, Commissioner Social Welfare, ITDA, and then through the Revenue Department, Panchayat and the Rural Department. District Magistrates in all districts with recorded forest cover were ordered to initiate proceedings for the formation of Forest Rights Committees at Gram Sabha Level. Forest Rights Committees were constituted mainly at the panchayat level in February and March of 2008. In several areas the ITDA undertook surveys with GPS systems to assist in mapping. One “social mobiliser” was appointed in every village under the existing World Bank-sponsored *Indira Kranthi Patham* Scheme (formerly known as the *Velugu* scheme), and these mobilisers have been instructed to help with claims. However, the government focused entirely on individual claims. ITDAs are sending surveyors for surveying the lands for which only individual claims have been made. The verification forms for these have illegal additional pages that require sanction from beat officers and revenue officials. Many claims were illegally rejected by forest guards during the initial phase of verification by the FRCs. In Adilabad, many claims were initially rejected but the people have re-filed them. In addition, GPS surveys have been abused and people have found smaller areas of land being recorded than those that they claimed, leading to demands for resurveys in many areas.

Initially, no claim forms were issued for community rights, and when they were subsequently issued, people were informed to simply tick those that they wished to claim - which clearly led to their rejection. Following mobilisation by movements and grass-root groups, and providing villagers training in mapping their community forest resources, claims for community forest resource rights have now been filed by several hundred villages. This has incidentally also led to rediscovery of many community lands that had been illegally seized by the Forest Department, and in some areas (as in the case of Orient Cement in a village in Adilabad), also contributed to helping people resist handovers of their common lands to private companies. Community claims are now being sent directly to the SDLCs. Although District Collectors and ITDA Officers have now agreed to accept claims for community rights, no facilitation for these is being provided by the government. Out of an estimated 5,000 tribal villages in the state, organisations have been able to mobilise only 700 to 800 villages. In protected areas too the process of claiming rights has taken place only to a limited extent.

The actual process of FRA implementation on the ground was as undemocratic and non-participatory as possible. In all the sample villages, the officials have informed villagers two days before (sometimes on the same day) conducting Gram Sabha meetings for forming FRCs. The Government Officials, viz., MRO, FRO, MDO, IKP Project Director, moved in to form FRCs. People had no idea about what was happening,



except that the Government Officials have entered their villages, telling them that they would get *pattas* only when they form the FRCs according to the government prescription. Gram Sabhas are held at panchayat level but not at habitation or habitations level which was prescribed under the FRA. This process undermines the democratic rights of the members of Gram Sabha on one hand and on the other it has become impractical for many members of the Gram Sabha to attend and participate in the decision-making process. Particularly in the Scheduled Areas, the tribal habitations are situated at far-flung distances. A press release was circulated which says that the government received 3.23 lakh individual claims for an extent of 9.62 lakh acres and 5,971 community claims for an extent of 1.65 lakh acres. So far, a survey of 3.11 lakh claims has been completed for an extent of 11.27 lakh acres. After making all the exercises, the District Level Committees approved 1.28 lakh claims for an extent of 4.44 lakh acres. Still some claims are pending at the Sub-Divisional and District Level Committees, and they are directed to complete the scrutiny of all these claims and complete the process by the end of June 09.

This act recognizes and confers forest-related rights to Scheduled Tribes as well as to other communities who have traditionally been living in forests for generations. The act aims to address the historical injustice done to those communities whose forest rights have so far not been legally recorded. Our paper showed clearly that FRA implementation process is beset with a number of operational lacunae. Many claims were illegally rejected by forest officials during the survey at the initial stage even prior to placing of them before Gram Sabhas for resolution. The act requires hamlet level Gram Sabhas in Scheduled Areas and revenue village Gram Sabhas else where. However the government is considering Gram Panchayat which includes multiple revenue villages and multiple hamlets as a unit for implementation of the FRA. No survey has been done in revenue forest areas stating that the forest areas are revenue forests and not covered by FRA. The government is reluctant to go ahead with implementation of FRA in the Polavaram Project submergence areas to avoid future legal entitlement conflicts and payment of compensation to the forestland occupants. Because of the lack of direction in the implementation of the FRA, it is feared that desirable outcome may not be achieved. The lack of transparency at various levels, the continued dominant role of Revenue and FD prohibit democratic FRA implementation. People's institutions such as Gram Sabhas and FRC are reduced to a secondary position. People's genuine claims have not been sufficiently heard. Although this act has good potential as pro-poor measure, the effective and transparent implementation is the key. Certainly as an institutional reform FRA is a laudable achievement, to undo the historical injustice to the forest-dwelling communities. The spirit with which FRA is brought will be lost if genuine implementation, taking cognizance of the reality, does not take place. It is here

that civil society, political parties and academia need to put pressure on policy makers and the concerned ruling governments.

Lastly, the changes that have been brought by the present government by implementing FRA are appreciable and noteworthy. Definitely, implementation of the FRA will impact the forest-dependent people in terms of livelihood security. The transparent and honest implementation giving scope for few errors and mistakes is the need of the day.

In the state, the existing administrative set up is more or less the same as per the central guidelines. However, the system of decentralised planning, implementation and monitoring is not always adhered to as per guidelines in most of the cases. It is found that though access to primary schools is good, most of the schools lack infrastructure, teaching staff and quality education. In most of the places in the states, the medical facilities available are not up to the mark. The position is very bad due to non-availability of infrastructure facilities, drugs, complementary facilities, sufficient staff and absence of doctors. Land alienation is still a serious problem, though in a number of cases, land had been restored. Land acquisition for development projects and mortgaging for credit from private sources are widely prevalent.

## **16. Conclusion**

During Pre-British period, the tribal communities in India remained either fully or partially isolated from the country, and they remained backward. The British policy of isolation increased the misery of the tribal communities. The founders of Indian Constitution seriously considered the miserable conditions of the tribals who were segregated from the national mainstream and provided for special measures.

Since independence, the government has initiated several Five Year Plans, programmes, policies and laws and has made efforts for gradual socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes, but they still remain the weakest sections of the society. During these various Five Year Plans, there has been a considerable increase in the fund allocation for the tribal areas. But most of the tribals were not able to draw benefits from the facilities provided by government because of large-scale corruption among officials and improper implementation of tribal development schemes. Therefore, the majority of the hill tribes in Andhra Pradesh suffer from the absence of proper infrastructure and communication facilities. Improper management of schemes and inefficient implementation of suitable programmes in the tribal region create a major problem. The majority of the tribal people are not even aware of the development schemes implemented by government agencies. Without creating awareness among the tribal people, it is difficult to achieve better results.

In spite of all such efforts discussed above, the problem of tribal development continues to be a major concern. There are various factors responsible for slow development of tribals and tribal areas. Some of the important problems are briefly discussed below:

Agriculture is mostly primitive and there is very little irrigation facility. In many hilly areas, shifting cultivation is still in practice. Subsistence farming provides food for a few months and for rest the year; the majority of the tribals have to depend on collection of forest produce and wages for which many migrate to distant places. The overall situation prevailing in AP today is one where the alienated land cannot be restored because of legal loopholes, non-retrospective land regulations, powerful outsiders and a continuing lack of political commitment to protecting tribal rights. Most non-tribals manage to hold on to their land by obtaining stay orders or producing false documents. Added to this is rampant rent-seeking among officials. Development projects are emerging as new sources of land alienation. Land alienation due to displacement of tribals for various development projects, and encroachment/possession of tribals' lands by the non-tribals has rendered a considerable number of tribal families landless and this has further added to their poverty. In Andhra Pradesh, the tribal areas are used to attract private capital for exploiting mineral resources; the tribals are forced to pay a far higher price in the case of irrigation projects as the lion's share of expected benefits would accrue to non-tribals. The track record of governments with respect to the resettlement and rehabilitation programmes is a classic case of too late and too little.

In spite of various efforts, as already stated earlier, to promote education among tribals, they continue to be lagging behind in literacy. The better off sections of the tribal communities have only been able to derive maximum benefit of education and reservation policy, while the majority of the common tribals, especially in the rural areas, are least benefited from those provisions. Though there are many safeguards to protect tribals from outsiders and non-tribals, their exploitation continues unabated.

The government machinery posted in tribal areas is rarely found in place of posting and the result is that there is no governance and hence, also the developmental works in tribal areas suffer. There is also not adequate monitoring of development programmes going on in tribal areas and therefore, most of them are poorly implemented. This situation is, to a considerable extent, responsible for naxalite activities being concentrated in tribal areas, which adversely affect development of both the tribal areas and the people.

For majority of the tribals, forest resources are the main source of livelihood. However, the forest laws restrict their dependence on the forest. Added to this, many forests were declared as Protected Forests or Sanctuaries, and threatened their eviction from their

natural habitat. Even where the evicted tribals are rehabilitated, they are not provided additional means of livelihood, except small piece of land for cultivation. The tribal areas by and large are remote, inaccessible and continue to remain isolated due to poor connectivity and other basic infrastructure.

The review reports of various committees, working groups and research reports on the status of socio-economic variables of literacy, enrolment, educational status, health indicators, per capita income, employment opportunities, access to basic amenities like drinking water, housing, drainage facility, electricity, etc., have shown a little improvement, but wide gaps between the STs and the general population are still seen. The various reviews and reports also brought out the tardy implementation of the development programmes by the state and various departments, lacunae in policy implementation, allocation and utilization of funds, structural inadequacies at the, state, district, block and village levels.

### **Suggestions**

There is a need for periodical status reviews and evaluation of the impact of the schemes and programmes. The ITDP project officers should be assigned a key role in planning, administration and implementation of tribal development programmes and empowered with magisterial powers as recommended. As regards the execution of tribal development schemes, the officers of the line Department should report to the ITDA Officers. Since the socio-economic profiles of the tribals vary across districts, each district must make an assessment of the deprivation of tribals in all the areas of social concern, and adopt an appropriate principle for allocation of TSP funds across various sectors. In order to improve access to public education and medical facilities, the quality of social infrastructure needs drastic improvement. The schools need quality teachers, teaching materials, and health centres should comprise a number of doctors, para-medical staff and other facilities. Sufficient TSP funds need to be allocated for this purpose in almost all the ITDAs. Active participation from the tribals is very essential for the implementation of the tribal development programme effectively. The tribal land problem in AP has assumed new dimensions in relation to the traditional rights over "*podu*" in particular and access to natural resources in general. The debate about shifting cultivation has been revived in the context of externally-funded participatory forest management programmes such as JFM and CFM. Traditional rights and livelihood patterns of the forest-dependent tribals need to be respected while designing and implementing forest management programmes. The Forest Department should not evict people practicing shifting cultivation without creating real alternatives for them. Some criteria regarding the staff strength at the ITDA level need to be evolved keeping in view their key role in the plan, implementation and monitoring. Before the implementation of any act, policy,

programmes, and schemes, more time should be spent on creation of awareness so that they reach very remote areas. It is imperative that dedicated officers who are fully trained should be posted in ITDA areas. Moreover, special incentives need to be given to encourage them for working in these areas.

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