



CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA'S INTERVENTION IN POVERTY REDUCTION OF INDIAN TRIBAL'S: A FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

Civil society refers to the totality of voluntary civic and social organizations and institutions that form the basis of a functioning society as opposed to the force backed structures of a state (Wikipedia). It plays an important role in the success of democracy. A stronger civil society can ensure appropriate state policy. It can make the development a true participatory effort.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Civil society comprises of various interest groups. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) are important civil society institutions. These institutions are important not only because they can reach where the government cannot reach, but also because they can influence the perceptions, including that of the state for better development (Webster, 1995). There is enough evidence to show the influence of these institutions in influencing the policies of the state at various levels and counterbalancing the interests and actions of the state (Rajashekar, 1998; Arya, 1997). Civil society institutions include not only NGOs, but also other religious groups, informal associations and women groups. There is a growing importance of these institutions in the formation of social capital (Putnam, 1993). According to Putnam, “even non-political organizations in civil society are vital for democracy”

Here only the NGOs are considered as civil society institutions. These institutions are a distinct institutional category with distinct motivations and structures. They are principally motivated by the desire to articulate and actualize a particular social vision and operate in the realm of civil society through the shared normative values of their patrons, members and clients (Najam, 2000).

These institutions emerge and work independently and share a relationship with the state. While some of these institutions implement welfare programmes, some of them play an important role in concretization process for increasing the capabilities of target groups.

Nature of these interventions depends on several factors, though the ideology of the institution plays an important role. There is also a growing feeling that nature of these interventions is increasingly supply-forced which means that they are influenced by funding agencies (Indira, 2002; Rajashekar, 1998). In this context, present paper analyzes the complementarities between the interventions of the state and the civil society institutions in enhancing the capabilities of tribal communities of India.

Though NGOs have exist in India much before the independence, Government's recognition and decision to involve them in its efforts towards development started with the 7th five year plan (1985-90). The development NGOs were asked to supplement the Government's micro level poverty alleviation and basic needs programmes. A separate subsection on "Involvement of Voluntary Agencies" was included in the 7th Plan document under the chapter on Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation Programmes and Rs.1.0 – 1.5 billion of plan expenditure was earmarked for use in active collaboration with NGOs (Planning Commission, 1985).

1.2 AREAS OF INTERVENTION BY NGOS

- Consumer interests and civil liberties
- Environment and sustainable development
- Rural empowerment/development
- Services to the physically challenged
- Services to the socially challenged
- Tribal welfare and their rights

According to conventional poverty indicators, there is a strong correlation between being indigenous or tribal and being poor or extremely poor. Indigenous and tribal peoples are more likely to have lower incomes, poorer physical living conditions, less access to health care, education, and a range of other services, worse access to labour, land and capital markets and worse returns to work as well as weaker political representation.

1.2.1 INCREASING ROLE OF NGOS IN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Introduction of SAP in India during early 1990's shifted the ideology towards reducing the role of the state. This created more space for the Third Sector to intervene. Government is encouraging NGOs to collaborate with them in the implementation of the development programmes. As a first step towards this, the Planning Commission convened a meeting with

representatives of 100 NGOs from different parts of the country for examining the issues relevant for a collaborative relationship. The role envisaged by the Government is:

- Providing “delivery services” by the implementation of various development projects
- Mobilisation and organisation of the poor with a view to empower them, breaking the culture of silence and dependence.

The ideological shift has increased the space for NGOs, especially those engaged in poverty alleviation and other development issues. This has led to an increase in the number, size and activities of NGOs and funding from Government and bilateral/ multilateral agencies. The role of NGOs is viewed as promoters of “people’s participation” in implementation of predetermined local projects like non- formal education, rural health, micro credit etc.

1.3 LINKAGE BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND CULTURE

Human development requires more than health, education, a decent standard of living and political freedom. People’s cultural identities must be recognized and accommodated by the state, and people must be free to express these identities without being discriminated against in other aspects of their lives. In short: cultural liberty is a human right and an important aspect of human development—and thus worthy of state action and attention.

1.3.1 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS FOR TRIBALS AND DEPRIVED GROUPS:

The conceptualization of poverty free welfare state in India has been accomplished in two phases - i) the period of national movement for freedom from foreign rule, and ii) the making of Indian Constitution through a constituent assembly. The concept of welfare state became the lodestar of the Constituent Assembly of India. It made its impact on the thinking of the leading lights of the Assembly who wanted to secure ‘justice – social, economic and political’ for all citizens of the Republic. They were clear that without social and economic democracy, political democracy had no meaning in a poor country like India. The Preamble, Fundamental Rights (Articles 12 to 35), Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 36 to 51), and the special provisions for Scheduled Castes and Tribes and Backward Classes (Articles 330 to 342) are significant dimensions of the Indian constitution from this perspective. They have created the imperatives for progress from political democracy to social and economic democracy which means “working for a certain measure of well-being for all”.

The values embedded in the Preamble are elaborated in the Fundamental Rights and the Directive Principles. The Fundamental Rights have covered all the traditional civil and political rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Directive Principles of State Policy are basically inspired by the concept of a welfare state.

Poverty and the poor are always associated with (a) resourcelessness, (b) choicelessness, (c) insecurity and (d) deprivation, which create incapacities in the pursuit of dignified life in a given society for a person, household, group or community. Furthermore, those suffering chronic poverty also suffer several simultaneous disadvantages including gender, age, caste, ethnicity, location, etc.

1.4 TRIBAL DIMENSION AND POVERTY

The Tribal dimension of chronic poverty is most pronounced in the context of conflicts and movements. They constitute 8 per cent of the population. 83 per cent of them live in the area between West - Bengal and Gujarat, 12 per cent in the Northeastern region, 4 per cent in Nilgiri Hills and 1 per cent in J&K and Himachal Pradesh. It is believed that confrontation has been the quintessence of the situation in the tribal areas after the rise of 'state' as a formal system of political and administrative authority. The ever-increasing exploitation of the tribals and elimination of their lands led to revolts and rebellion in many parts of India. 'Leave them alone' (or 'exclusion') as in the hills of North-East and 'light' administration (or 'partial exclusion') elsewhere was the response of the Imperial Regime in the face of determined resistance to their advancement and consolidation. The dawn of independence ushered in a new era of high hopes and soaring aspirations with an ebullient nation committed to the ideals of democracy, equity and social justice. The cause of weaker sections, particularly the tribal people, was accepted as a national task with clear premises and constitutional commitments. But the hopes were belied. The tribal people in fact faced regression as the personalized administration gave way to an amorphous faceless system. Influx of immigrants, alienation of their lands and underdevelopment are three major problems of the Tribal communities.

According to the Report of MPs and Experts (**Bhuria Committee Report, 1995**), "Notwithstanding the rhetoric of the past four decades, on account of absence of effective democratic decentralization at even district levels, demands and agitations for separate states in the country have taken root in Jharkhand, Bodoland, Uttarakhand, etc.

Iniquitous policies and actions and economic imbalance have led to resentment among the deprived regions. Assertions on the basis of region, ethnicity, languages, etc. have been made. They have come to feel that without the political power of a state, they are not able to claim their rightful due". Vast areas of tribal lands have been acquired under the **Land Acquisition Act** and still are being acquired for industrial and infrastructural development. Out of the total 213 lakh displaced persons (1951– 1990), 85.4 lakhs are Scheduled Tribes. They constitute about 40 per cent of the total number of displaced persons. From the total 83.8 lakh-rehabilitated persons, 21.2 lakhs i.e. 39.4 per cent belong to STs. Dams (41 lakhs), mining (6.5 lakhs) and industries (3.8 lakhs) are the major causes of tribal displacements. A landmark judgment of Supreme Court in the case of *Samatha vs. The State of Andhra Pradesh and others* (11th July, 1997) has placed a check on this. The Supreme Court has ordered that government lands, forestlands and tribal lands in the Scheduled Areas cannot be leased out to non-tribals or to private companies for mining and industrial operations.

Social insecurity among the Scheduled Tribes, particularly the ST women, is also a cause of concern. Out of nearly 4000 cases of atrocities committed against Scheduled Tribes in 2000, there were 391 cases (9.8 per cent) of rape. The incidents of atrocities on Scheduled Tribes were highest in Madhya Pradesh (1756), followed by Rajasthan (1221), Gujarat (367), Orissa (335), Andhra Pradesh (178), Maharashtra (171), Tamil Nadu (105) and Kerala (81). At the same time, it may be concluded that the extreme forms of exploitation and violation of civil rights that exist in areas such as Chattishgarh and Jharkhand have turned them into places of long standing insurgency. Another reason for the rising violence in forest areas is encroachment by migrants

who are taking over the land of the local people. This causes conflict over resource use. Such a profile of tribal India makes it obvious that the tribals are the worst sufferers of resourcelessness and choicelessness as well as the most disenfranchised section of the Indian population in post-colonial India. They are leading components in a variety of mobilizations in the last two decades including movements for environmental protection (Narmada Bachao), states reorganization (Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, and Chattisgarh), political separation (the separatist movements of the North-Eastern Tribals), and resistance to globalization (Kashipur).

1.5 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY AND GOVERNMENT: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The GO-NGO relationship has been analyzed by several researchers (Cernea, 1988; Clark, 1991; Tandon, 1989; Haque, 2004; Arya, 1997). In recent times, there are several attempts to characterize the relationship (Young, 1988, 1999; Najam, 2000). The model of Young characterizes the relationship as supplementary, complementary or adversarial. According to him, the nature of the relationship is a function of decisions made by government as well as NGOs. Based on the existing case literature and on the conceptual construction process of the non-governmental sector, Najam (2000) proposed a framework. According to him, depending on the articulation of the goals, their actualization and strategy adopted, there may be a similarity between government and non-government interventions. This model essentially boils down to a question of ends and means. "Each Institutional actor both governmental and non-governmental peruses certain ends (goals) and each has a preference for certain means (strategies)". He arrives at four possible combinations.

- Seeking similar goals with similar strategy
- Seeking dissimilar goals with similar strategy
- Seeking similar goals but preferring dissimilar strategy
- Seeking dissimilar goals with dissimilar strategy

These combinations will lead to the following four types of relationships between GOs and NGOs

- Cooperation
- Cooptation
- Complementarity
- Confrontation

1.6 SIMILARITY OF GOALS: INCREASING THE CAPABILITIES

Indian context is moving more towards what Najam calls as complementarity. In the recent times there is a convergence in the goals of government and non - governmental organizations. Important among them are

- Concentration on empowering people to improve their capabilities
- Strengthening the democratic institutions
- Participatory development involving all the stakeholders
- Improving access to basic social services like health and education

However there is a divergence in the strategy adopted. Government institutions believe in uniform and structured procedure/process with bureaucratic hierarchy whereas the strategy adopted by the NGOs is more flexible to the local needs and due to this there may not be uniformity. Several studies have shown the advantages of involving the NGOs in developmental work in the Indian context (Rajashekar, 2000; Kothai, 1994). However these studies have looked into the impact from institutional point of view in reaching their objectives and increase in income.

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