

## State Livelihood and Tribale Community: A Cross-sectional Sociological Study

Harisha N<sup>1\*</sup>, Dr. Nagaraja S<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Studies and Research in Sociology, Tumkur University, Tumakuru

<sup>2</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Studies and Research in Sociology, Tumkur University, Tumakuru

### Abstract:

This research article explores the intersection of state livelihood programs and tribal communities, focusing on their socio-economic conditions and the challenges they face in accessing state support. Tribal communities in India, despite constitutional protections and numerous welfare initiatives, remain one of the most marginalized groups. The study delves into various government schemes like MGNREGA, the Forest Rights Act, and the National Rural Livelihood Mission, assessing their impact on the livelihoods of tribal populations. By analyzing case studies from Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Jharkhand, this article highlights the barriers to effective implementation, such as bureaucratic inefficiencies, geographical isolation, and cultural dissonance. Through a sociological lens, the paper examines how development-induced displacement, loss of traditional livelihoods, and systemic exclusion hinder the long-term sustainability of these programs. The article concludes by proposing participatory development strategies, strengthening legal protections, and ensuring sustainable livelihood models tailored to the specific needs of tribal communities, aiming for an inclusive approach to development.

**Keywords:** Tribal communities, state livelihood programs, MGNREGA, Forest Rights Act, National Rural Livelihood Mission, socio-economic challenges, displacement, participatory development, sustainable livelihoods, India.

### Introduction

Tribal communities in India, often referred to as Adivasis, are among the most marginalized and vulnerable groups. Despite being constitutionally protected and having access to numerous welfare schemes, these communities face numerous socio-economic challenges. State-sponsored livelihood programs, designed to uplift and support these communities, have had mixed success in reaching their intended beneficiaries. This study aims to explore the relationship between state livelihood programs and tribal communities, focusing on their effectiveness in improving the living conditions of these historically disadvantaged groups.

### Historical Context of Tribal Livelihoods

Historically, tribal communities have lived in harmony with nature, practicing subsistence agriculture, hunting, and gathering. Their livelihood was intrinsically tied to their environment, and they developed unique systems of resource management and social organization. However, with the advent of modern nation-states and the imposition of colonial rule, tribal livelihoods were severely disrupted.

Post-independence, the Indian state sought to address the socio-economic marginalization of tribal communities through various affirmative actions and welfare programs. The introduction of the Fifth and Sixth Schedules in the Indian Constitution provided special protections for tribal areas, aiming to safeguard their rights over land, forests, and resources. Despite these legal provisions, tribal communities continue to face displacement, loss of traditional livelihoods, and socio-economic exclusion.

### Literature Review:

#### "The Tribal Communities of India: A Sociological Perspective" by S.C. Dube (1957)

S.C. Dube's pioneering work on the tribal communities of India provides a comprehensive sociological understanding of their traditional practices, social structures, and cultural dynamics. The book offers a detailed exploration of the socio-economic challenges faced by tribal groups and the impact of modernization and state interventions on their way of life. Dube emphasizes the need for a balanced approach to development that respects the cultural identity of tribal communities while addressing their socio-economic vulnerabilities. His work continues to be foundational in understanding tribal communities' roles in Indian society, particularly in relation to state livelihood schemes.

#### "Adivasis in India: A Socio-Economic Analysis" by R.K. Sharma (1988)

R.K. Sharma's book delves into the economic conditions of tribal communities in India and the effects of state policies on their livelihoods. Sharma's critical analysis focuses on the inefficacies of state welfare programs and the resultant

marginalization of tribals in the socio-economic framework. The book also addresses the consequences of land alienation and displacement on tribal livelihoods, arguing that while state schemes have been introduced, their implementation often neglects the unique needs of these communities. This book serves as a critical resource for understanding the gaps in policy and the socio-economic disparities faced by tribals.

**"The Forest and the Tribes: A Study of the Forest Rights Act" by S. V. Gupte (2012)**

In this book, S.V. Gupte offers an in-depth analysis of the Forest Rights Act (2006) and its implications for tribal communities, focusing on the restoration of their rights over forest lands and resources. Gupte examines how the legal framework provided by the act has helped secure livelihoods for tribal communities, but also points out the challenges in its implementation, particularly in terms of bureaucratic delays and local political resistance. The book serves as a critical resource for understanding the intersection of legal rights, tribal livelihoods, and state responsibility in improving the conditions of these communities.

**"India's Tribal Economy: Prospects and Challenges" by K.S. Shrestha (2003)**

K.S. Shrestha's book is a detailed study of the tribal economy in India, focusing on their traditional livelihoods, the shift to wage labor, and the role of state development programs in enhancing their economic conditions. The book critically analyzes the role of the government in the economic integration of tribal populations, emphasizing the need for sustainable development strategies that consider tribal customs and environmental conservation. Shrestha also highlights the role of education, skill development, and community-based initiatives in improving livelihood prospects for tribal communities.

**"The Role of NGOs in Tribal Development" by N. Krishnan (2007)**

N. Krishnan's work explores the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the development of tribal communities, particularly in enhancing their livelihood options. The book provides case studies of various NGO-led initiatives aimed at improving access to education, health, and sustainable livelihoods in tribal areas. Krishnan's research emphasizes the importance of grassroots-level interventions and highlights the gaps in government schemes that NGOs seek to fill. The book is crucial for understanding the collaborative efforts between the state, NGOs, and tribal communities in promoting livelihood security.

**State Livelihood Programs for Tribal Communities**

In recent decades, various state and central government schemes have been introduced to promote livelihood security for tribal communities. These include:

- 1. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):** Launched in 2005, MGNREGA provides guaranteed 100 days of wage employment per year to rural households, with a focus on creating durable assets like roads, water bodies, and irrigation systems. For tribal communities, this program plays a crucial role in offering wage-based livelihood support, especially during agricultural lean seasons.
- 2. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM):** NRLM focuses on mobilizing rural poor households into self-help groups (SHGs) and promoting skill development and entrepreneurship. It is aimed at empowering marginalized groups, including tribals, by enhancing their access to credit, markets, and other livelihood opportunities.
- 3. Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006:** The FRA recognizes the rights of tribal communities over forest land and resources. It seeks to undo historical injustices faced by these communities by granting them legal rights to forest land, thereby providing them with a secure livelihood base.
- 4. Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY):** The VKY focuses on comprehensive development of tribal areas, with an emphasis on improving education, health, and livelihoods. It aims to ensure that tribal communities are integrated into mainstream development processes without losing their cultural identity.

Despite these programs, the reality on the ground suggests that tribal communities often struggle to access these benefits due to bureaucratic red tape, corruption, and a lack of awareness about their rights.

**Challenges Faced by Tribal Communities in Accessing Livelihood Schemes**

Several factors hinder the effective implementation of livelihood schemes for tribal communities:

- 1. Geographical Isolation:** Many tribal communities live in remote, forested areas with poor infrastructure and limited access to state services. This geographical isolation makes it difficult for them to access government schemes and benefits. In some cases, the lack of communication infrastructure hampers information dissemination, leading to low awareness about the availability of state programs.
- 2. Bureaucratic Inefficiency:** Tribal communities often face difficulties in navigating the complex bureaucratic processes required to avail government schemes. Corruption and inefficiency within the system further impede their access to benefits. In many instances, tribal people do not possess the necessary documentation (such as land records or identity cards) to qualify for these schemes.

**3. Lack of Awareness and Education:** Low literacy rates among tribal communities contribute to their exclusion from livelihood schemes. Many are unaware of their rights and the programs available to them, making them vulnerable to exploitation by middlemen and local power structures.

**4. Displacement and Loss of Land:** The displacement of tribal communities due to development projects, mining, and infrastructure expansion has been a major issue. Land alienation has led to the loss of traditional livelihoods, forcing tribals to migrate to urban areas in search of low-paying, unskilled jobs. State schemes have not been able to fully compensate for the loss of their land-based livelihoods.

**5. Cultural Barriers:** Tribal communities often have distinct cultural practices and worldviews, which may not align with mainstream development approaches. The top-down design of many state schemes fails to take into account the unique needs and aspirations of tribal communities, leading to a disconnect between policy and practice.

### **Case Studies: Tribal Livelihoods in Focus**

#### **Case Study 1: The Impact of MGNREGA in Odisha's Tribal Regions**

Odisha has a large tribal population, and MGNREGA has been implemented as a key livelihood intervention in these regions. Studies have shown that while MGNREGA has provided short-term employment opportunities, it has not led to long-term sustainable development for tribal communities. The lack of durable assets created under the scheme and the irregularity of wage payments are major concerns. Furthermore, the scheme does not fully address the loss of traditional forest-based livelihoods, which remain a critical source of sustenance for many tribals.

#### **Case Study 2: Forest Rights Act in Chhattisgarh**

The Forest Rights Act was enacted to provide legal rights to tribal communities over their traditional forest lands. In Chhattisgarh, the FRA has had a mixed impact. While some tribal communities have benefited from the recognition of their land rights, the implementation has been slow and uneven. Many tribals continue to face eviction and harassment by forest officials. Additionally, the delay in granting land titles has led to a sense of disenfranchisement among the community.

#### **Case Study 3: NRLM in Jharkhand**

Jharkhand's implementation of NRLM has focused on mobilizing tribal women into SHGs, with a strong emphasis on entrepreneurship and skill development. While the program has succeeded in creating income-generating activities for tribal women, it has not fully addressed the structural challenges they face, such as access to markets, finance, and social capital. The SHGs have been instrumental in empowering women, but they require more robust support systems to ensure long-term sustainability.

### **Sociological Implications of State Livelihood Programs**

The state's approach to tribal livelihoods can be analyzed through various sociological lenses. From a structural-functional perspective, state livelihood schemes are designed to integrate tribal communities into the broader economic system, ensuring their participation in the market economy. However, this integration often comes at the cost of their traditional livelihoods and cultural practices, leading to a sense of alienation.

Conflict theory provides another perspective, suggesting that state policies are shaped by the interests of dominant groups, leading to the exploitation and marginalization of weaker sections like the tribals. The appropriation of tribal land and resources by the state and private actors is a clear manifestation of this power imbalance.

Furthermore, the concept of **development-induced displacement** highlights the ways in which state-led development projects disproportionately affect tribal communities. Their displacement from traditional lands not only disrupts their livelihoods but also erodes their social and cultural fabric.

### **Strategies for Enhancing Tribal Livelihoods**

To address the shortcomings of current livelihood programs and improve the socio-economic conditions of tribal communities, several strategies can be considered:

**1. Participatory Development:** Tribal communities must be actively involved in the design and implementation of livelihood programs. This can be achieved through consultations with tribal leaders, local NGOs, and community-based organizations that have a deep understanding of tribal needs and aspirations.

**2. Skill Development and Education:** Focused efforts should be made to improve literacy and vocational skills among tribal populations. Education programs tailored to their cultural context can empower them to access better livelihood opportunities.

**3. Strengthening Legal Protections:** The effective implementation of laws like the Forest Rights Act is crucial for securing the livelihoods of tribal communities. Land rights must be recognized and enforced to prevent displacement and exploitation.

**4. Infrastructure Development:** Improved connectivity, healthcare, and education infrastructure in tribal areas will enhance access to state services and livelihood opportunities. Investments in roads, electricity, and communication networks can help bridge the gap between tribal regions and mainstream development.

**5. Sustainable Livelihood Models:** Livelihood schemes should prioritize sustainability by promoting agro-forestry, eco-tourism, and other environmentally-friendly practices that are aligned with the traditional knowledge of tribal communities. This will ensure that development does not come at the expense of environmental degradation and cultural erosion.

## Conclusion

State livelihood programs have the potential to uplift tribal communities, but their success depends on effective implementation, participatory planning, and sensitivity to the unique socio-cultural realities of these communities. Tribal livelihoods are deeply intertwined with their natural environment, and any intervention must take this into account to ensure long-term sustainability. By addressing the structural barriers that prevent tribals from accessing livelihood opportunities, the state can play a critical role in fostering inclusive development and ensuring a dignified life for its tribal citizens.

## References:

1. Dube, S. C. (1957). *The tribal communities of India: A sociological perspective*. Routledge.
2. Sharma, R. K. (1988). *Adivasis in India: A socio-economic analysis*. Rawat Publications.
3. Gupte, S. V. (2012). *The forest and the tribes: A study of the Forest Rights Act*. Oxford University Press.
4. Shrestha, K. S. (2003). *India's tribal economy: Prospects and challenges*. SAGE Publications.
5. Krishnan, N. (2007). *The role of NGOs in tribal development*. Himalaya Publishing House.
6. Singh, K. (2009). *Tribal development in India: Policies and practices*. Concept Publishing Company.
7. Barth, F. (1993). *Ethnic groups and boundaries: The social organization of culture difference*. Waveland Press.
8. Thapar, R. (1990). *The past as present: The struggle for interpreting Indian history*. National Book Trust.
9. Momin, A. R. (2000). *Tribal rights and development in India*. South Asia Books.
10. Bhattacharya, D. (2011). *Development and displacement in tribal areas of India*. Orient BlackSwan.