

Chapter-3: Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP)

PESA & TSP connection: The Section 4(m-vii) of PESA Act 1996 enjoined upon the concerned State legislatures to endow the Panchayats and Grama Sabha in the Scheduled Areas with specific powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government, and specifically with “the power to control over local plans and resources for such plans including **tribal sub-plans**”. Thus, it was expected that following the enactment of PESA Act the Tribal Sub Plan which was designed and getting implemented since Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79) would receive a new deal in terms of self-governance by Gram Sabha and Panchayats. But as of now, this expectation has been squarely belied, the prominent cause being the casual approach, lack of sincerity in implementation and absence of involvement of tribal people.

First of all, let us take a quick look at how the TSP evolved over the years, but got ultimately atrophied in its grand mission. As mentioned, in exercise of the powers conferred under Paragraph 6 of the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution, the President, after having consultation with the concerned State governments, declared through a series of orders issued by him, certain areas in different States as the Scheduled Areas. During the Fifth Five-Year Plan (1974-79), while reviewing the past efforts at tribal development, it was realized that some areas besides the Scheduled Areas, were also having preponderance of tribal population, and the protective legislation and special development programmes as are available to the Scheduled Areas, if extended to these non-scheduled areas having tribal concentration, would lift the latter along the development ladder. Therefore, in August 1976 it was decided to make the boundaries of the Scheduled Areas co-terminus with the Tribal Sub-Plan areas. Accordingly, Clause (2) of the paragraph 6 of the Fifth Schedule was amended vide the Constitution (Amendment) Act, 1976 to empower the President to increase the area of any Scheduled Areas in any State. Pursuant to above the President issued from time to time several Orders specifying Scheduled Areas afresh in relation to the States of Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. The tribal areas in Himachal Pradesh were scheduled in 1975, keeping in view the principle of making the Sub Plan and the Fifth Schedule areas coterminous. Thus, broadly speaking, the Tribal Sub-Plan areas (Integrated Tribal Development Projects/Integrated Tribal Development Agency areas only) are coterminous with Scheduled Areas in various States. The strategy of Tribal Sub-Plan is being implemented in 21 States and 2 Union Territories, covering all the States/UTs where Scheduled Tribes have been specified except tribal majority States and UTs.

The essential features of TSP: The TSP at the time of its emergence had envisaged the following broad objectives:

- (i) Recognise that there is no uniform solution to the variety of problems facing tribal regions and tribal communities; therefore, accept the uniqueness and formulate policies, programmes and schemes to suit each individual situation and especially for vulnerable sections like Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs), bonded labourers, shifting cultivators, forest villagers, displaced persons, etc.
- (ii) Evolve appropriate frame for development with emphasis on tribal people at the national and State level through Sub-Plan exercise, ensuring adequate quantification from State and Central Plan funds, with budgetary mechanisms (Separate Demand / Major Budget Heads etc.) to ensure accountability, non-divertability and full utilisation.
- (iii) Accord highest priority to protective measures for elimination of exploitation of tribal people.
- (iv) Restructure the administrative and institutional set up to suit the local needs and aspirations.
- (v) Supplement the State efforts substantially by the Union Government through Special Central Assistance (SCA).

From Tribal Development to Tribal Sub Plan: It is interesting to track down the route through which incipient, ad hoc and variegated efforts at tribal welfare right since the 1st Five Year Plan of independent India led to the emergence of TSP during the Fifth Five Year Plan as a durable strategy for tribal development covering the whole country. **The First Five-Year Plan (1951-56)** launched in 1951 recognised that communities which suffered handicaps and disabilities needed special attention. A specific sector -‘Backward Classes’ was included to cater to the needs of the Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC) and other Backward Classes (BC). The Plan Document explained: “It is essential that the general development programmes should be so designed as to cater adequately to the BC and the special provisions....should be used...for securing additional and more intensified development”. Unfortunately, this was not adhered to. The Shilu Ao Study Team (Report 1969) observed: ‘Although the attention of the State Governments has been repeatedly drawn to the fact that the special provision...is not in lieu of the provision in the general development programmes but is intended to supplement it, reasonable share of the benefits from the general development programmes has not been flowing. The Public Sector outlay in the First Plan was Rs. 1960 crores; Rs 39 crore was for BC Sector, of which nearly Rs. 25 crore for the STs. The Dhebar Commission (Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission – Report 1960-61) observed: “the claim that the effort made was anything in the nature of an attack on the problem would be wrong. The effort has to be considered in the light of the possibilities then before the country,...the limitations of the institutional arrangements ... and the burden that such a set-up could carry. This was a beginning which can justifiably be regarded as fairly and symbolic of what was to come”.

The Second Five Year Plan (1956-61) declared: “the benefits of economic development must accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society and there should be a progressive reduction of the concentration of incomes, wealth and economic power.” As for the ST, “welfare programmes...have to be based on respect and understanding of their culture and traditions and an appreciation of the (special) problems with which they are faced”. This was in tune with the “Five Principles of Tribal Development” (Panchsheel) enunciated by the first Prime Minister Pt. Nehru. The Public sector outlay in the Second Plan was Rs. 4672 crores of which 91 crores was for the BC Sector, out of which Rs. 43 crores meant for ST. An important landmark was the opening of 43 Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks (SMPTB) later called Tribal Development Blocks (TDB). Each was planned for about 25,000 people as against 65,000 in a normal block. An amount of Rs 15 lakh per SMPTB was contributed by the Central Government in addition to Rs 12 lakh for a “normal” Block. The Committee on SMPTB (Chairman: Verrier Elwin, May 1959) studied the working of these Blocks and found that they were proving useful. However, according to Dhebar Commission, the net result “was that the development plans have...left a mixed impression on the minds of the people. They cannot forget their loss of land, their heavy indebtedness, the usury of money-lenders, contractors, traders and the various forms of the obnoxious system of bonded labour and curtailment of forest rights and privileges”.

In the **Third Five Year Plan (1961-66)**, the public sector outlay was Rs. 8600 crore, with Rs. 51 crore for ST. The Plan Document observed: “it is essential that the general development programmes should be so designed as to cater adequately the backward classes and on the other, the special provisions in the Plan (BC sector) should be used as far as possible for securing additional and more intensified development”. But the Shilu Ao Study Team, appraising the programmes especially during the Third Plan period remarked: “... If progress is to be judged by what remains to be done to bring the tribals on par with the rest of the population, the leeway...is still considerable”.

There was a three year interregnum before the **Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-74)** was launched in 1969-70. In the “**Annual Plans**” which intervened, schemes and programmes as at the end of the Third Plan were continued. Significantly, the outlay for ST in 1969-70 constituted only about 0.50 per cent of the total. The outlay of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1970-75) was Rs. 15902 crore of which Rs 80 crore was meant for ST. The programmes then approved could be broadly categorised as Centrally Sponsored Schemes and State Plan Schemes: An important step taken during the period was the setting up in 1971-72 of six pilot projects one in Andhra Pradesh (Srikakulam), one in Bihar (Chaibasa), two in Madhya Pradesh (Dantewara and Konta) and two in Orissa (Gunupur and Baliguda) as a Central sector scheme with the primary objective of combating agrarian unrest and left wing extremism in certain tribal areas of Central India. A separate Tribal Development Agency was established for each project. The Fourth Plan outlay for each was Rs. 1.50 crore for core programmes of economic development and Rs.0.50 crore for arterial roads. Towards the end of the Fourth Plan, two more agencies, not strictly as per original criteria, were set up in Orissa (Kaptipada and Keonjhar). These agencies were later merged with the Integrated Tribal Development Projects under the TSP during the Fifth Plan. The Fourth Plan Document proclaimed that “the benefits... should accrue more and more to the relatively less privileged classes of society and in particular, the SC, ST...”. The Document continued: “The problem of ST living in compact areas is essentially that of economic development of their areas and of integrating their economy with that of the rest of the country. The individual welfare approach or that of a schematic block is inappropriate in the case. Development Plans must be formulated to suit the specific potentialities and levels of development of separate regions of areas”. This was the forerunner for evolving the Tribal Sub-Plan Strategy during the Fifth plan period.

It was during the **Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79)** period that the concept of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) was implemented. On the eve of this Plan, the tribal situation had been evaluated by an Expert Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. S.C.Dube and by a Task Force on Tribal Areas under Prof. L.P. Vidyarthi. The former had opined: “individual welfare approach and schematic block development approach are inappropriate for these areas. An integrated development approach should cover the entire tribal areas”. The Task Force held that “in spite of investments for tribal development in the special sector.... in the successive plans, specific problems of the tribals as primitive methods of agriculture, land alienation, indebtedness, adverse effects of industrialization, low rates of literacy, poor health and nutrition, etc., have not been solved the development of ST and tribal areas has been looked upon as a problem of ‘welfare’ as distinguished from development. The welfare of ST has continued to depend on small outlays under the special sector Plan programmes formulated so far have largely failed to take into account actual needs of tribal people who are at varying socio-economic levels in different parts of the country Further there has been a tendency to rely on schematic patterns ... in place of adopting a flexible strategy suiting the needs of each Tribal Development Block area. The elite among tribals tend to take away all the benefits and backward sections among tribes have been denied the benefits of plan programmes ... the administrative structure in tribal areas has continued to lack simplicity defying comprehension and has failed to evoke any response from them Integrated development for tribal areas may be emphasised”.

The **Sixth Five Year Plan (1980-85)** was sought to ensure a higher degree of devolution of funds so that at least 50 per cent of tribal families were provided assistance to cross the poverty line. Emphasis was on family-oriented economic activities rather than infrastructure development schemes. A "Modified Area Development Approach" (MADA) was devised for pockets of tribal concentration with population of 10,000, at least half of them being STs, and 245 MADA pockets were delineated. Also, 20 more tribal communities were identified as "primitive", raising the total to 72.

In the **Seventh Five Year Plan (1985-90)**, there was substantial increase in the flow of funds for the development of STs, resulting in the expansion of infrastructural facilities and enlargement of coverage. Emphasis was laid on the educational development of STs. For the economic development of SCs and STs, two national level institutions were set up viz., (i) Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation (TRIFED) in 1987 as an apex body for State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations; and (ii) National Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) in 1989. The former was envisaged to provide remunerative price for the Forest and Agriculture Produce of tribals while the latter was intended to provide credit support for employment generation.

In the **Eighth Five Year Plan (1992-97)**, efforts were intensified to bridge the gap between the levels of development of the STs and those of other sections of the society so that by the turn of the century, these disadvantaged sections of the population could be brought on par with the rest of the society. The Plan not only emphasised elimination of exploitation but also paid attention to the special problems of suppression of rights, land alienation, non-payment of minimum wages and restrictions on right to collect minor forest produce etc. Attention, on priority basis, continued to be paid for the socio-economic upliftment of STs. A review of tribal development in early Nineties revealed that 'Though the TSP Strategy has yielded results, yet were not in a position commensurate with the efforts put in and investments made'. However, the allocation for development of STs was increased during this plan period also.

Planning Commission's vision on TSP: TSP was implemented from 1974-75, the first year of the Fifth Plan. The Planning Commission guidelines on formulation of TSP suggested that "... attention has to be focussed on the specific problems of each identifiable group and area ... Broadly speaking, for the regions of tribal concentration, area development approach has to be adopted, keeping focus on the problems of the tribal people. A sub-plan should be drawn up for these areas which may present an integrated view of their problems, the broad objectives and strategy, an outline of the various programmes, physical inputs, financial outlays, legislative and administrative frame. All activities of government and semi-government organizations, financing and credit institutions, and special sectoral programmes may be fully integrated in the sub-plan ... certain extremely backward isolated smaller groups facing problems of their very survival will have to be treated as special category both within the area of tribal concentration and outside and special group-oriented programmes ... formulated for them." To begin with TSP was formulated in 17 States/UTs in the Fifth Plan. Later the sub-plan approach was extended to Sikkim and Jammu & Kashmir. At the end of the Ninth Plan, TSP was in operation in 23 States/UTs of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Orissa, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, West Bengal, A & N Islands and Daman and Diu..

Administrative Arrangements for TSP: The TSP is being implemented through following administrative arrangements:

a) Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) are generally contiguous large areas of the size of one or more Development blocks in which the ST population is 50% or more of the total population.

b) Modified Area Development Approach (MADA): These are identified pockets with a concentration of 50% tribals or more ST population within a total population of a minimum of 10,000 persons and above.

c) Clusters: These are identified pockets of tribal concentration containing 50 % or more ST population within a total population of about 5000 or more.

d) Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs): Identified isolated communities among the STs characterised by a low rate of population, a pre-agricultural level of technology and extremely low levels of literacy. (so far 75 PTGs have been identified.).

e) Dispersed Tribal Population: Outside (a), (b), (c), and (d) of the above.

The **Financial Institutions** that are functioning at both at Centre and State levels for the economic development of Tribals include - i) National SCs and STs Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC); ii) National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC); iii) National Cooperatives Development Corporation

(NCDC); iv) State Tribal Development Corporations (STDCs); and v) Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED).

TSP Guidelines - It is worth recapitulating the long term objectives which the Planning Commission in its **TSP Guidelines** issued in December 1973 to the State Governments had suggested in respect of preparation of sub-plans for tribal regions within the State Plan-

- (i) to narrow the gap between the levels of development of tribal and other areas; and
- (ii) to improve the quality of life of the tribal communities.

As per the said guidelines, the immediate objectives of TSP were elimination of exploitation in all forms, speeding up the processes for social and economic development, building up inner strength of the people and improving their organizational capabilities. A general strategy to achieve these objectives was to keep in view the special problems of the tribal region in each State. Entire legal, administrative and institutional frame as also inter-sectoral and intra-sectoral priorities may need to be reviewed keeping the primary focus on the welfare and development of the people. All sectors including the financing institutions and autonomous organizations would have to give a higher priority for programmes of these areas. The resources for the sub-plan would comprise—

- (a) State Plan outlays;
- (b) Sectoral outlays in the Central Ministries for tribal areas;
- (c) Special central sector allocation for tribal areas; and
- (d) Institutional finance.

It was envisaged that as the sub-plan preparation was being done for the first time, there might appear some initial difficulties in obtaining certain data particularly at the block level. However, much of the information was available at the Tehsil level which would generally comprise a tribal development project area at the meso level.

These guidelines were followed by a note of the Ministry of Home Affairs on the preparation of Integrated Tribal Development Project Reports (ITDP). This note also provided a format for ITDP reports. A look at the format reveals the meticulous manner in which the reports were envisaged to be prepared. It suggested contents for each Chapter covering the areas of Project resume; problems and earlier attempts at the solution; potential for development; resources and perspective for development; project in outline; protective measures including legal frame and time-bound programmes; agriculture and allied sectors; forestry and forest based programmes; credit and marketing; irrigation and power; communications; education; health services and rural water supply; handicrafts and house hold industries; industries and mining; special groups: (i) isolated groups; (ii) tribals affected by major industrial projects; (iii) tribals affected by irrigation projects, personnel policies and administrative structure. Also, supporting maps to facilitate easy identification for location of services were to be included in the ITPD reports.

TSP Derailed: However, it is a sad commentary on the subsequent course of developments that the instructions and parameters laid down in the guidelines issued by the Planning Commission at the beginning of the Fifth Five Year Plan for formulation of Tribal Sub-Plan were not followed in letter and spirit. The implementation of TSP was not monitored and suffered therefore from a plethora of deficiencies. The lofty mission of TSP has come to such a sorry pass that the present sub-plan exercise is merely a listing of schemes with no objective assessment of earlier efforts and a bunch of routine clerical statements of financial provisions devoid of any pertinent narrations relevant to tribal development. There is no conscious effort to delineate factors responsible for prevalence of acute poverty among STs, nor any innovative intervention to tackle chronic poverty in a meaningful manner. After about 35 years, when we try to make an assessment of tribal development efforts consequent to the TSP strategy, we are disappointed with the realization that yet another opportunity to assist the deserving tribal people to develop according to their needs has again been lost and the story continues to be that of “lost opportunities”.

The excellent Fifth Plan strategy of Tribal Sub-Plan, involving area development with focus on tribal family, special schemes for numerically small and economically and socially vulnerable groups like Primitive Tribes, shifting cultivators, forest villagers, displaced persons, bonded labourers etc, could not make much headway. While, the tribal deserved the best they often got the worst. It is alleged that the actual share that the majority of the tribal people received from developmental funding seems to be anything insignificant to negligible. While it is conceded that in certain areas like education, infrastructure development and job opportunities some improvement has taken place, yet the drop out rate is alarming, diseases have become more widespread and unemployment and poverty stalk the tribal populations. Some critics often complain that substantial allocation for tribal development have gone down the drain and even now hunger and malnutrition exist across many tribal belts. There is also a strong perception that the TSP implementation lacked in an integrated approach notwithstanding the proclaimed goal of ITDP, and went astray mostly because it was in untrained and insensitive hands.

The mid-term appraisal of Ninth Five Year Plan (1997-2002) of the Planning Commission noted: From the viewpoint of policy, it is important to understand that tribal communities are vulnerable not only because they are poor, assetless and illiterate compared to the general population; often the distinct vulnerability arises from their inability to negotiate and cope with the consequences of their forced integration with the mainstream economy, society, cultural and political system, from all of which they were historically protected by their relative isolation. Post independence, the requirements of planned development brought with them dams, mines, industries and roads - all located on tribal lands. With these came the concomitant processes of displacement, literal and metaphorical. Tribal institutions and practices were forced into uneasy existence with or gave way to market or formal state institutions, tribals found themselves at a profound disadvantage in the face of an influx of better-equipped outsiders into tribal areas. The repercussions for the already fragile socio-economic livelihood base of the tribals were devastating- ranging from loss of livelihoods and land alienation to hereditary bondage.

In May 2003 the Ministry of Tribal Affairs issued fresh guidelines for release and utilization of Special Central Assistance (SCA) for Tribal Sub-Plan. The prominent features of the new guidelines are:

- The tribal population living below poverty line should alone be covered under SCA-financed activities, with a special emphasis on raising their socio-economic status to that of the rest of the population in the Blocks/District/State.
- Adherence to the provisions of the Panchayati Raj Act of 1992 and the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act of 1996 in planning and implementation of TSP, including the SCA funds, should be ensured in letter and spirit.
- Before sanctioning the SCA to TSP, it is a pre-requisite to formulate specific schemes/ programmes that have a direct bearing on the economic development of tribals as suitable to their social, economic and ecological situation. The schemes/programmes thus formulated should be sent in advance as proposals to the Ministry for examination/ discussion and approval.

Primitive Tribal Groups: In course of the review undertaken at the time of launching the Tribal Sub-Plan during the Fifth Plan period, it was recognized that special programmes for the extremely backward tribal groups, such as primitive groups, should be taken up on the basis of proper identification. As a preliminary step, a workshop on primitive tribal communities was held in the Ministry of Home Affairs in January 1975. Later, the subject was discussed at the conference of Tribal Commissioners and State Chief Ministers held in October, 1976. In the guidelines issued by the Planning Commission on the preparation of first Tribal sub Plans, it was specifically indicated that special attention should be given to areas and groups facing special problems including primitive tribal groups in backward pockets. The Ministry of Home Affairs issued detailed guidelines for identification of primitive tribal groups and preparation of project reports for their development. The guidelines, inter alia, stressed that these groups have to be distinguished from impoverished groups and that a primitive group need not necessarily be poor. It was clarified that in some cases the very concept of poverty may not be known to them, deprivation is a different phenomenon for which programmes can be taken up as a part of the general developmental effort of the area. It was emphasized that the distinguishing feature of "primitive" group programmes is that each family is considered as a distinct entity for the programme. For want of a suitable alternative word the word "primitive", though not a very apt one in its description, may continue to be used. In the identification of primitive groups, States should generally follow such norms: (i) pre-agriculture level of technology (ii) low level of literacy and (iii) stagnant or diminishing population, and (iv) general backwardness. On the basis of these criteria, 52 communities were identified as 'primitive' till the end of 1979-80. Later, more and more communities were added to the list.

The programmes for them are being financed by the Central Government out of special Central Assistance. In assessing the impact of governmental measures in raising the status of PTGs it is worthwhile to quote what the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour and Welfare stated in their 28th Report submitted to Parliament in December 2002. It expressed displeasure over the efforts made by the Government for the uplift of the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) and said that the progress made in relation to development of these groups "is negligible".

The committee noted with concern that the Ministry of Tribal Affairs had till date got no authentic data of the PTG population in the country and desired a tribe-wise benchmark survey of PTGs within a time frame so that plans and programmes could be formulated for their overall development during the Tenth Plan. Since the Tribal Affairs Ministry has requested the State and the Union Territory Governments to conduct a baseline survey, the Committee said that no time frame had been stipulated for the purpose and insisted that information, including their social status be gathered in a time-bound manner. The Committee was surprised that despite the Government's continued efforts for the development of the PTGs from the start of the Fifth Plan, no State had proposed to delete any group from the list of PTGs. Further, no basic statistics were available in the Ministry to ascertain the number of PTGs brought on a par with other tribal communities during the Eighth and Ninth Plans.

The Ministry conveyed to the Committee that no action plan had been formulated by them for rehabilitation of PTGs in their own habitation. This reflected the lackadaisical attitude of the Ministry and lack of commitment to fulfill its objective of bringing the PTGs into the mainstream of the tribal society. Calling upon the Ministry to make concerted efforts to bring maximum number of PTGs on par with other tribal communities during the Tenth Plan, it recommended formulation of a specific action plan with the help of Tribal Research Institutes and other expert bodies and by pooling the resources from Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan, grants under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution and funds from Centrally-sponsored, Central sector and State Plan schemes. In the assessment of the Committee the situation pointed out poor results of the government efforts in the matter of rehabilitation of PTGs.

Pointing out that the tribals are still being deprived of their land resources despite enactment of laws to check their alienation, the Committee suggested provision of enough safeguards to prevent it and effectively deal with the abominable practice of bonded labour. The Committee exhorted that while the Ministry should take enough interest in protection of the rights of the original inhabitants of forests in litigations involving them, it said that the Tribal Affairs Ministry, as the nodal Ministry, should impress upon the Rural Development Ministry to move a comprehensive Bill in Parliament for rehabilitation of tribals affected by development projects without any further delay. Each of these groups is small in number, have attained various social and economic levels and generally live in remote habitat, with poor administrative and infrastructure back up. Their problems and needs are quite different from other scheduled tribes. Since primitive tribal groups constitute the most vulnerable section, States/UTs need to allocate adequate funds from central sector/centrally sponsored and state plan schemes for their socio-economic development.

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The Primitive Tribal Groups (could be renamed as Primary Tribal Groups or any other expression avoiding the word primitive) are leading an extremely precarious existence and some of them are on the verge of extinction. Ongoing development programmes have not been able to improve their condition. Action Plan incorporating total food security, health cover, education facilities, in tune with their socio-cultural conditions should be prepared by the State/Central Government on a time bound basis. It is feared that hundred per cent Central funding may also not yield results without genuine involvement of State Government and local population. Therefore, the proposed Action Plans should have in-built flexibility to cater to the specific needs suited to the environment of each such tribe. Effective protection against neighbouring social groups should be ensured. Committed and responsible government functionaries, dedicated social workers and renowned social scientists should be associated with these programmes. But the primary agency for formulating and implementing the Action Plan should be the PTGs themselves.

TSP - An Overall Assessment- In the implementation of the TSP strategy, necessary attention has not been paid to the provisions in Part IX of the Constitution regarding Panchayats and the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996 (PESA). It may be recalled that the rationale behind the Extension Act was to empower Gram Sabha to approve and sanction all matters pertaining to tribal society and economy. The role of Panchayats at different levels was to execute decisions taken by the Gram Sabha. Some experts have hailed these provisions as revolutionary heralding an era of "self-rule" (Gram Swaraj) in the Scheduled Areas. All the States having Scheduled Areas have amended their Panchayat Acts endowing the Gram Sabha/Panchayat with appropriate powers - in varying degrees and manner - to promote the interests of the tribal people. But, these have not been largely operationalised. Follow up action in the shape of rules and regulations and executive orders for transfer of funds, functionaries and functions have either not been framed or not enforced.

According to the PESA Act, the State legislation shall endeavour to follow the pattern of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution while designing the administrative arrangement for the Panchayat at district level. Adoption of Sixth Schedule Areas arrangement is very important for making panchayats, in real sense, institutions of self-government because under the Sixth Schedule, District Councils perform legislative, judicial and administrative functions in their jurisdiction. It also implies that the administrative machinery dealing with social and non-social sectoral programmes would be put under the control of Panchayats. This will enable the Gram Sabha to effectively deal with TSP and other issues for the good of the tribal people. The State governments have not paid any attention for adopting the Sixth Schedule Area arrangement for administrative structure and has ignored this provision

completely while amending their Panchayat Acts. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs and also the Planning Commission have not shown necessary enthusiasm in operationalising tribal sub plan programmes through Panchayats.

According to Article 243-ZC of the Constitution, the 74th Amendment was not instantly applied to urban centres in Scheduled Areas, and it was left to Parliament to enact a law like PESA Act 1996, for the purpose of applying its provisions to such urban areas with necessary modifications and exceptions as required in the interest of the Scheduled Tribes and other communities living in the Municipal boundaries in Scheduled Areas. After about two decades since the 74th Amendment came into force, we find the above Article remaining ineffectual. In absence of a separate law as envisaged for governance of Municipal bodies, the cities big or small in Scheduled Areas have emerged as safe havens for the exploiters and oppressors of tribal and other vulnerable communities. Whatever benefits might have accrued to the tribes and other communities in Panchayat areas thanks to PESA or TSP, were inaccessible to such tribes and communities living in Municipal areas. The absence of a separate law for Municipal bodies in Scheduled Areas nullifies the impact and implications of PESA Act if any for rural areas.

It is generally agreed that of the many tribal problems the most urgent one is poverty. Ordinarily, in earlier days, tribal people did not face starvation because of plenty of resources available in the vicinity of their habitation, foremost among them being the forests. Today, with depletion of forests and too many restrictions on the movement of the tribal people into the forests, they are bereft of such resources. Going by the government's own assessment, majority of the tribal households are below poverty line. Much publicized poverty alleviation programmes have all largely bypassed the majority of poor tribals. It has been found that the ability to access the benefits of these development programmes is a privileged skill which is beyond the reach of the ordinary, simple, unsuspecting tribals. The remedy for the tribal backwardness doesn't therefore lie in more financial investments or more legislative support or policy statements or institution building, but in the real empowerment of the tribals. The enactment of PESA promised this, but it remained largely ignored, let alone redeemed by the powers-that-be.

The plight of tribal people in our country should have been reckoned in the context of liberalization, privatisation and globalization following the onset of New Economic Policy 1991. The scope for state intervention in respect of social security, food security and protection measures along with gainful employment for unskilled labour proved negligible in the era of economic reforms as the trend indicated. Consequently, the apprehension that the Constitutional provisions would remain largely unimplemented has been borne out by the course of events. Except the provision for filling up of seats in Parliament, State legislatures and to a limited extent in Panchayat bodies and Government services, no tangible step has been taken in the direction of ensuring self governance in Scheduled Areas. In a formal sense, an elaborate apparatus is available to implement the TSP at the grassroots level and tackle the scourges of hunger, diseases, illiteracy, and unemployment etc. But none of these persistent problems has shown any sign of solution. Because, everybody forgot that the route to tribal development lies through operationalisation of Fifth Schedule of the Constitution and PESA Act 1996.

Another factor responsible for the discomfiture of the TSP, which is of course least talked about in both official and non-official discourses, is the utter neglect shown to Article 243ZD (1) of the Constitution (74th Amendment). This Article, which is in consonance with the spirit of PESA, provided for the constitution of District Planning Committee to consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and Municipalities and to prepare the draft development plan for the district as a whole. In absence of its materialization, the development plans for Panchayats and Municipalities are being orchestrated above and thrust on the local bodies including Gram Panchayats below.

The approach to tribal affairs prescribed in the Constitution was the first attempt to bring this exceptionally talented but suppressed and exploited community within the fold of the vast Indian family, with adequate safeguards for smooth transition. The popular Governments were made responsible for the task. The Constitution arranged for the provision of resources and provided the required institutional apparatus. But its basic framework certainly cannot be considered inadequate. Some of the safeguards for the tribals were originally meant only for ten years. In fixing this period, the Constitution had envisaged an effective follow-up programme, which would have obviated the need for their continuance. This hope did not materialize and the period has been extended. This has not been due to any deficiency in the Constitutional provisions as such, but due to the failure of the Constitutional machinery as a whole.

The report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, 1961 had then forewarned that the tribal problem cannot be studied in isolation and we should simultaneously examine the attitude of non-tribals towards the tribes. In a welfare state committed to social justice, the role and the approach of the Government is decisive. Thus, we find that the tribal and the non-tribal problems are both parts of the same phenomenon, whether the non-tribal is a Government official, politician, landlord, money-lender, forest contractor, administrator, anthropologist or social worker.

We stand at the threshold of a new era. The tribal people have made an entry into that era with other members of the society. Their only expectation is that the changes should not overwhelm and destroy the harmony of their life, and that their contact with externalities should not result in suppressing their distinctive personality. And this is precisely where the nation failed to deliver the promised good.

TABLE SHOWING REVENUE DIVISION/ DISTRICT/ I.T.D.A. & BLOCKS COVERED UNDER TRIBAL SUB-PLAN AREA

Revenue Division	District	Integrated Tribal Development Agency (I.T.D.A)	Blocks covered under I.T.D.A	
1	2	3	4	
Central	1. Balasore 2. Mayurbhanj	1. Nilagiri	1. Nilagiri	
		2. Baripada	2. Baripada	
			3. Badasahi	3. Badasahi
			4. Samakhunta	4. Samakhunta
			5. Betanati	5. Betanati
			6. Rasgovindpur	6. Rasgovindpur
			7. Morda	7. Morda
			8. Bangiriposi	8. Bangiriposi
			9. Saraskana	9. Saraskana
			10. Kuliana	10. Kuliana
		11. Suliapada	11. Suliapada	
		3. Kaptipada	12. Khunta	
			13. Khunta-II (Gopabandhunagar)	
			14. Kaptipada	
			15. Udala	
		4. Karanjia	16. Karanjia	
			17. Raruan	
			18. Joshipur	
			19. Thakurmunda	
			20. Sukruli	
		5. Rairangpur	21. Bisoi	
			22. Bijatola	
			23. Kusumi	
			24. Rairangpur	
			25. Tiring	
			26. Bahalda	
			27. Jamda	
Northern	3. Keonjhar	6. Champua	28. Joda	
			29. Champua	
			7. Keonjhar	30. Jhumpura
				31. Patna
				32. Ghatgaon
				33. Keonjhar
				34. Saharpada
				35. Harichandanpur
				36. Telkoi
				37. Bansapal
	4. Sambalpur	8. Kuchinda	38. Kuchinda	

	5. Sundargarh	9. Bonai	39. Govindpur
			40. Jamankira
			41. Bonaigarh
			42. Lahinipada
			43. Gurundia
			44. Koira
		10. Panposh	45. Kuanmunda
			46. Bisra
			47. Nuagaon
			48. Lathikata
		11. Sundargarh	49. Sundargarh
			50. Subdega
			51. Ballisankara
			52. Lephripada
			53. Badagaon
			54. Tangarpalli
			55. Hemagiri
			56. Kutra
			57. Rajgangpur
Southern	6. Gajapati	12. Parlakhemundi	58. Guma
			59. Rayagada
			60. Mohana
			61. R.Udayagiri
			62. Nuagada
	7. Kalahandi	13. Th. Rampur	63. Th. Rampur
			64. Lanjigarh
	8. Rayagada	14. Gunupur	65. Gunupur
			66. Gudari
			67. Padmapur
			68. Ramanguda
			69. Bissam-Cuttack
			70. Muniguda
			71. Chandrapur
		15. Rayagada	72. Rayagada
			73. Kolnara
			74. Kashipur
			75. Kalyansingpur
	9. Koraput	16. Jeypore	76. Jeypore
			77. Boriguma
			78. Kotpad
			79. Boipariguda
			80. Kundra
		17. Koraput	81. Koraput

10. Malkangiri 18. Malkangiri

11. Nowrangpur 19. Nowrangpur

12. Phulbani 20. Balliguda

21. Phulbani

82. Similiguda
83. Pottangi
84. Nandapur
85. Dasmanthpur
86. Lamtaput
87. Narayanpatna
88. Laxmipur
89. Bandhugaon
90. Malkangiri
91. Korkunda
92. Kalimela
93. Podia
94. Khairput
95. Kudumuluguma
96. Mathili
97. Nowrangpur
98. Tentulikhunti
99. Papadahandi
100. Nandahandi
101. Kosagumuda
102. Raighar
103. Umerkote
104. Chandahandi
105. Jharigaon
106. Dabugaon
107. Balliguda
108. Nuagaon
109. Daringibadi
110. Tumudibandh
111. Kotagarh
112. Tikabali
113. G. Udayagiri
114. Raikia
115. Chakapada
116. Phulbani
117. Phiringia
118. Khajuripada