

**The role of NGO's in Tribal Education in India**

**\*DR.G.Sundharavadivel**

\*Associate Professor, Dept. of Adult and Continuing Education, School of Social Science,  
University of Madras, Chennai-600005

**Introduction**

The non-governmental or the voluntary organisations have been playing a crucial role in all the socio-economic spheres, including that of the tribal peoples, in India. At one level, they can be termed as the 'means' by which the nation makes optimum use of its human resources. However, the mushrooming of voluntary organisations working in the field of rural development in recent years has generated widespread debate about their role, structure, programmes and performance.

A unique feature of voluntary organisations is that they stimulate voluntary action among the target community and involve the progressive elements of that community. In the present context of human resource development, voluntary organisations, in their functioning, have demonstrated the freedom and flexibility of working with a personal touch, a capacity for initiative and experimentation with novel programmes. Thus, voluntary organisations exercise full freedom in selecting localities for programme implementation and are free of bureaucratic hassles. In the Indian context, the attributes of a tribe are that they live in relative isolation of hills and covered forests, and often in geographical areas inaccessible to the mainstream population. Tribes generally are groups without a written letter or script. Their sense of history is shallow or mixed with mythology, and in terms of their cultural ethos, language, customs, institutions and beliefs, they stand out from other sections of society.

In India, tribes have different names such as vanyajati, vanavasi, pahariya, adimajati, janajati, anusuchit jati and scheduled tribes -- all of which mean the 'aboriginal'. India stands second in terms of tribal population after Africa in the world. According to the 2001 Census, the total population of the tribal's is 84.2 million, and accounts for 8.2% of the country's population. There are about 689 scheduled tribes speaking about 105 languages and 225 subsidiary languages. They have traditionally lived in about 15% of the nation's geographical area, mainly forests, hills and the undulating inaccessible terrain in plateau areas that are rich in natural resources. They have lived mostly as isolated entities for centuries together and this explains their politico-socio-economic backwardness.

However, we have to acknowledge that even before the freedom struggle a few voluntary organisations were active in the sphere of tribal welfare. They also played a significant role in the field of rural development and nation building and continued to do so. Many great personalities took initiatives to form such organisations, which at present, are performing a key role at the grassroots level in implementing various developmental works. Until such time that a genuinely democratic machinery of governance evolves, there will remain a strong urge for voluntary organisations to play a mediating role between the State and the people.

As early as 1871, the Bhil Seva Mandal came up in Gujarat. At that time, A.V. Thakkar was the moving spirit behind voluntary organisations committed to tribal development. By the time India got independence, he could establish more than 20 voluntary institutions in different parts of the country. Some other leaders in the Indian National Congress were also involved in tribal development activities. Dr. Rajendra Prasad's Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh helped a lot in shaping the tribal policy when the Indian Constitution at the drafting stage. Various approaches have been evolved in the country in the domain of tribal affairs; prominent among them are the voluntary agency approach, the political approach and the anthropological approach. These three approaches find support in three important policies:

1. Policy of Isolation
2. Policy of Assimilation and
3. Policy of Integration.

After Independence, the policy of integration was found to be the most suitable one. Also, Nehru's concept of tribal integration was reflected in the successive five-year plans. The policy of integration is the outcome of serious research activities undertaken by many social anthropologists in India. Its main objective is 'social integration and cultural assimilation'. It was in the fifth five-year plan that the tribal sub-plan (TSP) approach was adopted. In order to fulfill the sub-plan objectives nearly 198 ITDAs and 257 MADA pocket, 78 clusters and 75 micro projects for primitive tribal groups (PTGs) were set up all over the country. Consequently, various strategies came into being. With the passage of time, it has widely been noted that the programmes and activities related to tribal development cannot be implemented by the governments alone. Thus, the significance of participation of the community and the role of voluntary organisations/NGOs was realized in this all-important sphere.

**Objectives:**

- To study the role of NGO's / voluntary organizations in tribal development.
- To study the budgetary allocations for tribal welfare.
- To analyze the amount spent for various developmental programs like vocational training centres and literacy programs.
- To study the tribal participation in the NGO sector.

**Methodology:**

The present study used the literature available in different tribal welfare departments, government of India source on tribal welfare, its budgetary allocation and their analysis. A detailed analysis was made using budgetary allocations and their expenditure on the literacy rate improvement, vocational training and other welfare activities. An interpretation was made from the financial year 2001-02 to 2006-07 on the different developmental programs.

**Voluntary organisations are necessary:**

A voluntary organization can easily adapt itself to the needs of the people. A sensitive worker can assess each specific situation with sympathy and personal care. Thus, the gulf that arises between what should be done and what is being done as a result of somewhat inflexible operation of the administrative apparatus, can be bridged.

**Objectives of NGOs / voluntary organisations**

Whatever the nature of NGOs/voluntary organisations, they play a key role in the upliftment of the weaker sections of society. The objectives of voluntary or non-governmental agencies include some or all of the following:

- To create an awareness regarding participation in socio-economic development
- To create an able and efficient local leadership
- To assist in the planned efforts to create socio-economic infrastructural facilities
- To facilitate the process of expanding employment opportunities
- To induce appropriate persons to set up small scale productions and
- To make the tribal's give up the pre-agricultural technology and seek better education.

### ***Role of NGOs / voluntary organisations***

NGOs/voluntary organisations have a long history of active involvement in the promotion of human welfare and development. They come up with a mission to serve a human cause, spontaneously-voluntarily and without any compulsion or control, to fulfill certain needs of specific groups of people. These organisations are flexible and possess the virtue of humanitarian service with concern. Voluntary action is the soul of social action as this medium secures active involvement of the people from policy making to implementation of programmes. Their activities cover a diverse range of functions in the welfare sector. The programmes of voluntary organisations are strictly service-oriented, professional in nature and specialized in functions. The essential feature of voluntary action is that it fixes the problem. It starts to not only to solve a problem but also to prevent the occurrence of it. Voluntary action, thus, ultimately aims at creating a situation conducive to the development of potentialities in individuals, groups and communities so they can find solutions to their problems and realise their ultimate goals.

Regarding the role and nature of voluntary organisations, there appears to be two different views. Some are happy with the functioning of such organisations and plead for their increasing role. According to them, these organisations should be given ample scope to serve people. For, the government agencies, crippled as they are with bureaucratic complications and rigidity, have failed to work satisfactorily. Others hold that it is undesirable to give undue importance and authority to voluntary agencies as there is a great possibility of institutionalizing the chances.

In this context, the suggestion is that the voluntary organisations should be given ample scope to work in collaboration and co-operation with the government agencies and subject to strict government scrutiny and monitoring. The need for involving the NGOs in rural development was highlighted and acknowledged by various official committees set up by the Government of India. One of these was the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) which in its report emphasized that during the implementation of community development schemes more and more emphasis should be laid on NGO's /VOs. The Dhebar Commission in its report on the scheduled areas and Scheduled Tribes opined that the principle of active and purposeful participation of people at all levels could best be served by assigning an important role to non-official organisations. It is necessary in any democratic framework to take up some of the nation-building activities under non-official auspices.

The report of the committee on Panchayat Raj Institutions (1973) appreciated the role of voluntary organisations in the development of rural and interior areas. The committee reiterated that these organisations could be particularly involved in conceiving projects and schemes. They can be of great help in creating strong public opinion in support of measures of social change. The Sivaraman Committee set up by the Government of India also recommended involvement of voluntary organisations in planning and implementation of the integrated rural development programmes. Thus, there exists a widespread agreement among all the concerned that voluntary organisations have an important role to play in the overall development of the rural areas.

### ***Grant-in-Aid to voluntary organisations for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes***

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the key governmental agency with respect to the welfare and development of the tribal peoples all over the country. It is the responsibility of the ministry to reach the target groups, particularly the tribals living in remote and inaccessible areas. The objective is to bring them into the mainstream of development by assisting them to overcome their social, psychological and educational backwardness. Capacity building is the key factor here. Such training would equip them to employ their capabilities to their fullest potential

thereby reducing their reliance on others and achieving self-sustenance to the maximum extent possible – which is the ultimate goal of the government.

The NGOs supplement the efforts of the State in ensuring that the benefits reach the maximum number of people. In certain cases, voluntary organisations are in a better position to implement the governmental schemes in a more efficient manner than the administrative machinery. This is primarily attributable to the highly committed and dedicated human resources that are available with the voluntary organisations. The role of NGOs was in the reckoning since the first five-year plan. Many organisations have done commendable job in tribal areas and are still active. Since the last two decades, there has been an exponential growth in the number of NGO/VOs approaching the ministry of tribal affairs for financial assistance.

It has been felt that along with few very dedicated and committed voluntary organisations / non-governmental organisations a large number of other organisations have also come up that want to grab public funds for their narrow and selfish interests. The ministry would take all the possible steps to curb the entry of such voluntary organisations/non-governmental organisations in the field of tribal welfare. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs feels that some organisations solely depend on aid from the government. This situation has to change. The voluntary organisations should aim to expand their effort on the support from the government and thereafter establish other support systems that could free them from financial constraints.

It should be the intention of the organisations to obtain support of other sources for their work. This can happen after they establish themselves with the support of the government and prove their usefulness to society, at large. If the impression that NGOs can support themselves financially gains ground, then the support of corporate houses and even the community would follow as a natural consequence. Contribution, both in kind and cash, would come easily once their credentials are firmly established. Additional resources, if necessary, could also be mobilised. Voluntary organisations should make all possible efforts to involve the community in their work. Community participation helps in building confidence among the people and in providing feedback for further improvement and reorientation of the programmes. Thus, the long-term interests of the tribal communities can be served. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs endeavors to provide full advantage of all schemes to the non-governmental organisations/voluntary organisations that have absolute credentials in the field of tribal welfare. It also wants to promote new groups with brilliant ideas and new strategies for the speedy development of the targeted people.

It has been the constant endeavor of the ministry to identify the voluntary organisations/non-governmental organisations which have an all India character and known for their selfless service and facilitate them with some preferential treatment with regard to sanction of new proposals and relaxation of certain norms and conditions relating to release of annual grants. In this direction, the ministry has identified a few such organisations and categorized them as "Established Voluntaries Agencies (EVAs)"

The following organisations have been identified as the EVAs by the ministry:

- Ram Krishna Mission and its affiliated organisations
- Akhil Bharatiya Banavasi Kalyan Ashram
- Bharat Sevashram Sangh and its affiliates
- Bharatiya Adim Jati Sevak Sangh
- Seva Bharati & its affiliated organisations
- Vidya Bharati and its affiliated organisations

- Swami Vivekanand Youth Movement

### ***Schemes in the voluntary sector***

There are three on-going schemes with the ministry, which are open to participation of the voluntary and non-governmental organisations. The schemes are:

- Grant-in-aid to voluntary organisations working for welfare of scheduled tribes (GVWST).
- Educational complex in low literacy pockets for the development of women's literacy in tribal areas (ECLP)
- Vocational training centers (VTC)

In addition to the said schemes, the ministry has an exclusive programme for non-governmental organisations with regard to the development of primitive tribal groups (PTGs)

### ***Scheme of grant-in-aid to voluntary organisations working for the welfare of the scheduled tribes (GVWST)***

**Objective:** The prime objective of the scheme is to provide for an overall improvement and development of the target group i.e., the scheduled tribes through voluntary efforts in the fields of education, health & sanitation, environment, drinking water and legal services as well as the need-based socio-economic upliftment efforts. It also supports other relevant activity deemed appropriate and having a direct impact on the target group. The scheme is under implementation since 1953-54.

**Salient features:** The grants are provided to the non-governmental organisations on their application in prescribed formats, in the form of supporting projects that meet the objectives of the scheme. The NGO's are required to maintain separate accounts in respect of the grants released to them, which are open for inspection by all appropriate officers/agencies of the government. The NGO is also required to maintain separate accounts of Grant-in-Aid audited by the Government Auditor or a Registered Chartered Accountant and submit complete set of copies of Audited Statement of Accounts as prescribed by the Ministry. The grants are generally made in two installments every year subject to satisfactory performance of the NGO. Activities of the NGOs are monitored as per the established provisions of the Financial Rules besides field inspection by the Ministry or the State Government officials or by any other agency designated by the Ministry.

**Funding Pattern:** Funds are granted – to the extent of 100 per cent – directly to the Non-Governmental Organizations working in the Scheduled Areas based on the recommendations of the State Governments and the Union Territories. The non-governmental organizations are supported to the extent of 90 percent of the project cost for projects in areas other than Scheduled Areas. However, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has the discretion to assist even up to hundred percent.

### ***Schemes of Educational Complex in Low Literacy Pockets***

The Scheme was introduced in 1993-94 in 136 districts with less than 10 per cent literacy rate among tribal women. It is being implemented through:

- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Institutions set up by the Government as Autonomous Bodies and
- Registered Co-operative Societies.

**Objectives:** The primary objective of the scheme is the promotion of education among tribal girls in the targeted districts of the country. The secondary objective is to improve the socio-economic status of the economically backwards and the illiterate tribal masses.

**Coverage:** The scheme covers 136 districts with less than 10 percent literacy among ST women spread over 14 States namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chattisgarh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal and West Bengal.

***Procedure for Release of Grant-in-aid and Funding Pattern***

- The extent of assistance under the scheme would be 100% in all cases.
- In the event of the Ministry of Welfare itself executing any element of the programme i.e. engagement of consultants, for project formulation, monitoring and evaluation, as well as expenses towards cost of training of NGO functionaries, etc, full cost shall be borne from the budgetary provision of the scheme.
- Under the programme, while predefined cost heads are stipulated at the project formulation stage, each implementing agency shall submit a detailed project proposal clearly bringing out the programme modalities and individual expenditure heads. Ministry of Welfare while approving the project shall indicate the extent of support to the project as a whole as well as to each component of the project against which re-appropriation to the extent 20% of the total grant shall be permissible.

**Salient Feature:** Educational complexes can be set up in rural areas in the notified districts and can have classes up to V with provision for up-gradation up to Class XII provided they have sufficient accommodation for classrooms, hostels, kitchen, and garden and for sporting facilities. These educational complexes impart not only formal education to tribal girls but also train students in agriculture, animal husbandry and other vocations and crafts as to make them skilled for leading a better life. The teaching from classes I to III is imparted in tribal dialects of the area and women with proficiency in tribal dialect are engaged as teachers. The strength of students for each class is fixed at 30, however a maximum of 10 more students, if available, in the locality are admitted as day scholars.

***Establishment of Ashram schools***

The Ashram schools have played an important role in raising the literacy levels of the scheduled Tribes. They provide the necessary environment conducive to learning. The schedule is in operation since 1990-91.

***Construction of Girls Hostel for scheduled Tribes***

The main objective of the scheme is to ensure adequate enrolment of scheduled Tribes girls in educational institutions, particularly at the school stage. The scheme of girls' hostels for scheduled tribes has been in operation since the Third Five Year Plan.

***Construction of Boys Hostel for Schedule Tribes***

The main objective of the scheme is to ensure adequate enrolment of Scheduled Tribes boys in educational institutions, particularly, at the high school level. The scheme of Boys Hostel for Scheduled Tribes has been in operation since 1989-90 under the Centrally-sponsored scheme of Establishment of Boy's Hostel in Tribal Sub-Plan areas.

***Schemes for Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs)***

**Objective:** There are certain tribal communities that are having low levels of literacy, declining or stagnant population, and pre-agriculture level of technology and are economically backward. There are 75 such groups in 15 States/UTs that have been identified and categorized as the Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). Each of these groups is small in number, differentially developed with respect to one another, of remote habitat with poor administrative and infrastructure back up. Therefore, they are in urgent need of support from the government as well as the non-government agencies. Their protection and development at par with other tribal groups has to be accorded utmost priority.

**Scope:** Such provisions/activities should not be identified only at the central level as they may differ from State to State and within a State from project to project (ITDA). However, funds under the scheme could be used for helping the beneficiaries of the project to cope with extremely adverse situations that threaten their very survival and protect them against various forms of exploitation thereby bringing them to a stage from where they can demand and receive specific assets and services. The activities under the scheme may include measures such as awareness generation and confidence-building, training for skill development of tribal youth, self help groups and provision of services/ inputs not covered by any existing scheme. In terms of beneficiaries, the scheme can cover maximum number of the PTGs.

**Implementing agency:** The scheme will be implemented through integrated tribal development projects (ITDP) / Integrated Tribal Development agencies (ITDAs), tribal research institutes (TRI) and nongovernmental organisations having requisite skills and determination. The State government concerned will be responsible for proper execution, implementation, supervision and coordination of the scheme, including selection of NGOs.

### **Vocational Training Centers**

**Objectives:** There is a great need for vocational training centers in tribal areas where the Left wing extremism is on the rise. Large-scale unemployment has been stoking rebellious tendencies among the tribal youth in such areas. The extremism is manifestation of frustration and lack of faith in the present pattern of development. It is necessary that both the State and Central governments should make efforts to wean away the tribal youth from disruptive activities. Establishing vocational training institutes and creating a wide range of employment opportunities can be the way forward.

### **Non-governmental organisations shall meet the following requirements:**

- It is a registered body under an appropriate Act so that it gets a corporate status. A legal personality and a group liability have to be established for its activities.
- It has an appropriate administrative structure and a duly constituted managing/executive committee
- The aims and objects of the organisations and programmes in fulfillment of those aims and objects are preciously laid down and
- The organisation is initiated and governed by its own members on democratic principles without any external control.

### **Conclusion**

In India, we have a pluralistic society as opposed to a monolithic culture. The voluntary organisations cater to the needs of our cultural plurality. If we would like to avoid concentration of power in the hands of a few, we must retain this multi-ethnic character of a free society and make full use of it. Voluntary organisations can serve as 'power breakers'. Efforts should be made to prepare people for a new kind of society through voluntary work. When the State's resources are limited, voluntary action would bring forth additional resources and cover the areas hitherto uncovered by the State. In view of their flexibility in operation, ability at experimentation and innovation, pioneering spirit and other such qualities, voluntary organisations can continue to work for better standards, better methods and better forms of organisation. There is an argument that at the empirical-existential level voluntary agencies are nothing but the stooges of the ruling elite and the corporate sector, mainly of the capital finance variety. In this new role, voluntary organisations have created a crisis that begs a comprehensive solution.

However, given the circumstances in terms of administrative or governmental reach, especially in the implementation of welfare schemes for the tribal peoples, we for once cannot deny the positive role of the non-governmental organisations. There are many areas yet to blink the

state's radar. They are either very remote or inaccessible. In such a situation, the concerned and committed civil society groups have no other alternative but voluntary approach. The role of NGOs in the fields of education, health, sanitation, housing and particularly agriculture has not been a wide ranging one. We shall hope they would expand their area of action.

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