

TRIBAL WORLD AND ENVIRONMENT: A HARBINGER TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Tribals are the prime fabric of our Indian tradition. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, during her address to UN general Assembly in 1972 rightly said " How can we tell our tribal fabric the importance of our forests and environment when we are unable to fulfill their basic necessities". The word Environment is more close to Tribal population. We have to incorporate them with our development process without disturbing their connection to environment. A sustainable society meets the needs of the present without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

(The World Commission on Environment and Development)

Key Words : *sustainable, tribals, harbinger environment*

Introduction

Sustainability is achieved by considering the design, and implementation of development strategies whose main objective is to ensure the long-term and balanced improvement of the quality of life within the concerned population.

The term Sustainable development was first used by **World Conservation strategy** forum presented by International Union of nature and Natural Resources in 1980, and later the term got popularized by the world commission on the environment and development study in 1987. This is also called **Brundtland report**.

Objectives

Sustaining the Health, lifestyle and education, thereby promoting better opportunities for the given population for a clean environment and better future.

Easy access to the net economic, social as well as natural resources while maintaining their stock within a consumable and conservable range.

Increasing the efficiency of energy, water, material resources and land.

Reducing the release of harmful substances into the air, water and land

Reducing the adverse impacts on natural habitats and species a main concern of sustainability concept.

Developing the voluntary, incentive-based and performance-oriented systems to supplement traditional regulatory approaches of the concerned tribal societies.

Materials and Methods:

The present research work deals in studying the positive progress made towards the environmental or natural resource goals within the vicinity of a Tribal population. These remedial procedures provide environmental or natural resource benefit and is transferable among Tribal folks which will help them to sustain the resources for future also. The visit, observation and document innovative practices have been used as part of environmental and natural resource programs.

The Tribes selected for the study of sustainable development is based on the following criteria:

- i) Variety of Tribal size.
- ii) Tribal Locations distributed throughout the country.
- iii) Variety of program interest (e.g. solid waste management, air pollution control, habitat restoration, recycling, and forestry).
- iv) Willingness of Tribes to participate.

For Each Tribe we planned our visits and selected positive practices in their environmental and natural resource programs. During our visits, we discussed natural resource and

environmental practices, interviewed staff, gathered documentary evidence, inspected, observed, and photographed operations and analyzed examples of positive practices. Tribes also highlighted their success stories according to their individual needs and definitions of success.

Results

Sustainable development in tribals:

Subsistence agriculture, livestock rearing and trading of minor forest resources are the only means of economy for the tribal people. The Forest plays an important role in the life and economy of tribal poor. It also plays a crucial role in sustaining the life supporting systems of the country's deteriorating natural environment.

However, the process of liberalization, privatization, globalization and new market challenges has forced the governing state to divert the forest land for large corporations and industrial growth. Due to this policy the traditional lifestyle of tribal India has been eroded. Besides it has become a conspicuous threat to our ecological systems as well.

Since the time immemorial the tribal societies have developed their culture and life style according to the forests which have been fulfilling their basic needs from their existence on this earth. (Verma, 2007: 112). So, the

Tribal culture and forests have been the inseparable entities.

The life of tribals is has been dependent on the natural resources including the primitive methods of agriculture and collection of forest products (*Ibid*, 117). Their houses are built by available forest products.

They collect forest products like honey, wax, lac etc. And they earn wages as forest labour. They are dependent upon the forest for the medicine and collect medical herbs from them. (Verma, 2007).

Another equally important source is the land owned by the tribals themselves, half of which is more suitable for the tree plantation by virtue of topography, slope, undulation, etc. In most of the states each tribal household has land of its own and part of it is worth plantation activities. If this source which is owned by the tribals is well developed, it can improve their economy. The ecological aspects of the surroundings can also be improved by such practices. Here the government has to facilitate inputs such as the seedlings, organic manure and motivating farmers for this programme as better economic proposition, besides restoration of eco-system and environment as well.

The abundant, rich soil in this region has produced a myriad of crops all grown virtually chemical free, and the farm's owners make it a priority to

conserve and protect the health of the soil and water. The tribals have successfully protected the environment by using various methods—such as crop rotation, planting cover crops (that protect the soil during winter), harvesting crops (such as legumes) that produce nitrogen for the soil, using mechanical means of pest control in place of chemicals and regularly testing the soil.

The facilitation of organic manures by using tilled plantations after harvesting the crops, concept of compost farming and techniques of vermi-composting will lead their traditional farming practices towards new horizons of tech-agriculture.

Sustenance and Social Fabric of Tribals

The involvement of tribal world in the environmental issues thereby emphasize on their survival and struggle to better the lives of tribal girls, young folks and women.

Tribal women have been the backbone of the tribal society. They have been involved with the every aspect of their society namely food gathering, taming of animals milking, taking care of food produce, forest produce and their daily house chores as well. However the women have always lagged behind in term of training, education and main social framework of their society. Though their contribution towards their upliftment as well as

benefits of the tribal population has been beyond words yet their progress in both economic as well as social front has been negligible.

Poverty, low literacy, unsafe drinking water, poor environment, lack of sanitation, lack of basic health facilities as well as traditional beliefs and customs has impeded their all-round development

The need of the hour is now to work intensively on the tribal cause of concern ensuring quality education for the girl child, addressing malnourishment issues, preventing child marriages, creating the awareness and capacity inbuilt amongst pre-adolescent girls on health and sexuality issues. Empowering them with the vocational training and improving their nutritional financial and social status is the main concern of present time.

Sensitizing and educating the community against all above-said problems will help prevent child marriages and fight against child labour, occupational diseases and hygiene awareness as well.

Tribal Association with Environment

Tribal communities exist in many states. Tribes constitute at least 55.16% of the total displaced persons in the country (Mitra and Gupta, 2009)

The vocational education, skill development and technological involvement along with environment

management plans will enable the tribal children to progress to the mainstream schools as well contributing towards conservation of their culture and natural resources.

The tribal community is experiencing a new forms of encroachment on their customary rights by developmental interventions such as large dams, mining and conservation. Their natural resource base has been further eroded with increasing deforestation, privatization of the forest assets mining grounds and drying up of rivers through the stranglehold of powerful forces both Indian and foreign, who are exploiting them in an unsustainable way. The diversion of forest land for other purpose in the name of developmental project is posing major threat for the sustenance of tribal community. The sanction for the big projects on forest land was cleared by the government.

Tribal people suffer from physical displacement mainly because the laws that do not recognize communal customary rights of people to forest lands (Mathur, 2009).

Forest dwellers are the integral part to the forest ecology, and not encroachers (Chaudhuri, 2007). The eviction of millions of tribes from their natural habitat is not solution to the problem of deforestation and degradation. The focus should rather be

on devolving rights of forest dwellers, who are the only people who can become good stewards of forest resources.

Tribal Forest Management plan

Tribals have been recognized for their sustainable approach towards forest management. Forestry has been an important environmental and economic aspect for them. The tribe's forest management plan meet the ecological, economic and social sustainability requirements of their society.

Other than sustainable development, numerous initiatives are taking place across the country to address sustainability in economics, forestry, architecture, business, fisheries and agriculture. Implementing the strategies will facilitate and support the participation and will be instrumental to our success of putting the tribes on the track of sustainable development.

Sustainable Tourism

When we think about sustainability, the term tourism comes to our mind. The energy consumed by tourists is sizeable, however air and land travel over long distances require immense amounts of fossil fuel. In addition, coastal destinations usually are the first environments to experience the damaging effects of tourism. Through long-term planning and management, the negative effects on coastal environments

can be reduced, while still allowing for enjoyable tourist visits. In addition, the tourists themselves should note that they have to acknowledge and honour the tourist attraction's economic, environmental and social attributes.

Most of the tribal populations inhabit within the best visual scenic surroundings of this nature. So they have more probabilities to come across the tourists. They have been involved with them as guides or try to sell their gathered forest produce as a marginal rates. Besides, the more number of visitors pollute the surroundings.

A well planned tourist approach is needed which will benefit environment, tribal populations and the tourists will have close meeting with nature.

Discussion

Going back to our own history, Our own government and their fluctuating policies have further deprived these tribals of their inherent rights on the forests and forest products under the Forests Conservation Act. We in the development field in India sometime joke that the Forest Conservation Act has not succeeded in conserving the forests, but, it has succeeded in conserving and sustaining the Forest Department, which is the most powerful department in India, never influenced by the public opinion. It still acts as police

and law and order department. We lack the good policy routes as well as are well motivated and developed minds, but, unfortunately these minds for implementations are in minority.

Keeping my survey and studies in consideration, I strongly recommend that the tribals should be made partners in the development, conservation and management of the forests with due share of the tribals in this precious wealth, in which tribals have a great stake. The recent policy of the Joint Forest Management in India provides such an opportunity to make tribals the partners in the forest management, but, the Forest Departments are not that much planned and committed for such partnerships. These efforts are half heartedly and directionless, certainly not considering the tribals as equal partners, wherever and whenever such efforts are made. If healthy, open and equal partnership of the tribal community in the forest development is ensured and sustained, it will have singular effect on the revival of the forests and in turn on the improvement in the conditions of the tribals. By such rehabilitation measures more than half of the tribal population can pull out of the extreme poverty if these forest resources are capitalized in whole hearted partnership arrangements between the community and the Forest Department.

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