

Review Paper

Alleviating Poverty for Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in India: Issues and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses poverty alleviation for the Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in India. Poor education, health, and poverty are grave challenges for their development. The various policies and programmes of the governments towards reducing poverty have not resulted satisfactorily. Currently, tribal people continue to be poor, and malnourished in India. Hence this study is attempted. This paper is based on secondary sources like volumes, articles, journals, and e- sources. The study reveals that the poverty ratio of STs is narrowing down in both rural and urban areas, but as compared it to the general population there is a widening gap. Hence to minimize this gap, Government should implement effective Poverty Alleviation Schemes at the grassroots and the NGOs should come forward to create awareness about Poverty Alleviation and employment creation schemes for the Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in India.

HIGHLIGHTS

- ① Ensuring effective implementation of poverty alleviation and employment generation programmes at the grassroots level is the foremost attaining inclusive empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in the future India.
- ② The purpose of the study is to analyze the policies of the government more effective towards empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in the country.

Keywords: Alleviating poverty, Empowerment, Issues and Challenges, Scheduled Tribes

Poverty alleviation is the primary goal of any government's planned development and policies. The most important issues in development in India are how SC and STs both in urban and rural areas are engulfed in poverty (Chandra, S. 2018). The Central and State Governments have undertaken several programs, and policies to tackle poverty (Singh, 2018). Further, the United Nation's agenda for sustainable development goals 2030 emphasized no poverty, ending hunger, good health, well-being, and quality education as the foremost priority for poverty reduction (Economic Survey of Karnataka 2020-21). Poverty is defined as a lack of basic amenities such as food, clothing, shelter, health,

education, sanitation, and protection (Bradshaw, T.K. 2006).

Eradication of poverty and hunger is the main objective of every planned development policy of the Government. In this regard, the government of India has implemented ample poverty eradication schemes from the inception of independence (Gang, I.N., Sen, K. and Yun, M.S. 2002). Further, the government's policy towards faster, broad-based, and inclusive growth is achieved only by minimizing

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poverty and unemployment. Hence alleviation of poverty and unemployment has gained more importance in the development paradigm during the post-independence period in India. (Biradar R.R. 2012). The Scheduled Tribes are a deprived segment of Indian society. They registered about 8.6 per cent of the entire population as per the census of 2011. The majority of them are concentrated in isolated and geographically hilly regions and forest areas. Poverty is the major problem of STs in the country; about 47 per cent live below the poverty line in rural areas and 30 per cent in urban areas (UNDP Project. 2016). The government's efforts toward eradication have not resulted fruitfully at a faster rate; STs are still today facing the problems of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition. Hence from the above backdrop, the intended study attempt at Alleviating Poverty for Empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in India – Issues and Challenges is considered highly justified.

Review of Literature

Some of the earlier studies have been made to identify the research gap and to get insight into the topics as follows:

A Technical Report on Poverty in India since 1974 found that poverty in India declined at a small-rate till the in-between period from the 1980s and 1990s; it declined substantially (Technical Report on Poverty in India, 1974).

Another report on Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project Tribal Development Plan found that the majority of the SCs and STs had landless. Low-level education, and poor health status, the study emphasized that minimizing poverty among the rural poor belonging to SCs and STs is necessary for empowerment (Tamil Nadu Empowerment and Poverty Reduction Project. 2004. Livelihood Assessment Report) A survey report on Promoting the Empowerment of People in achieving poverty eradication stated that Poverty eradication is the best way the empowerment of families, empowering people tries to minimize poverty. Further Das, M. B., Kapoor, S., Gillette, and Nikitin, D. *et al.* (2015) Analyzed the poverty among STs in both rural and urban areas declined from 63.9 per cent to 44.7 per cent and 55.3 per cent to 34.3 per cent during the period from 1983 to 2004-05 in India. Solanki, D.J. (2018) observed that, despite the several policies and programs during the five-year

plans, poverty alleviation programmes have not brought the poor to the target rate. Another study made by Singh, P. (2018) proved that, antipoverty programmes of the Governments have improved the socio-economic conditions of below-poverty-line families in society.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the rural and urban poverty among Scheduled Tribes and other social groups in India.
2. To analyze the issues and challenges of Scheduled Tribes for their Empowerment.

Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive and analytical in nature, based on secondary sources of data, such as books, journal articles, periodicals; census reports annual reports, and e-sources.

Concept of poverty

Poverty is a social phenomenon in which a section of the society is not capable to fulfill even its essential requirements of life. World Bank defines extreme poverty is those who as living on less than \$1.90 per day, on the basis of calculated in 2011 purchasing power parity prices.

Poor in India

It is evident that one-third of the global poor live in India and a vast majority of the poor only lives in India than in the entire of Sub-Saharan Africa. According to official estimates of the Government of India reveals that, each of the four Indians is registered as poor, According to World Bank Report on Poverty and Shared Prosperity Report 2022 based on Sinha Roy and van der Weide (2022) reveals that poverty at the less than US\$ 1.90 per day poverty line was 13.6 percent in 2017. The number of extreme poverty increased by 11 per cent in 2020. An increased from 648 million to 719 million people subsisted on less than \$2.15 per day by the end of 2020 (World Bank Report 2022, Poverty and Shared Prosperity).

The data proved that, of the total three children, two children are fairly undernourished. India is largely a rural economy most of the poverty is found in rural areas due to the majority proportion of the labourers

being landless and casual workers belongs to SCs and STs, women and female dominant families, their economic conditions are worsening and face more deprivation than others.

Measurement of Poverty

Poverty in India officially is not measured by income criteria in terms of dollars- per day it measures in terms of monthly current income per-capita expenditure of ₹ 49 in rural areas and in urban areas it was ₹ 57 at 1973-74 all-India prices, those who are below this expenditure is considered poor. Further, this expenditure was required to attain particular levels of calorie intake, planning commission identified poor based on calorie intake accordingly 2400 calories per day consumption in rural areas and 2100 per day calories of consumption in urban. Based on 1999-2000 prices the new poverty line different from one State to another, it was from ₹ 350 to ₹ 450 per month per capita, even though it is fairly likely that people can shift their consumption to non-food items from food items, and thus consuming is lesser than expected calories, although classified above the poverty line.

Concept of Empowerment

Empowerment is the process that allows an individual to gain the knowledge, skills, and attitude needed to cope with the changing world and circumstances. In addition, Empowerment is also defined as increasing literacy levels, access to quality education, better health care, enhanced standards of living, self-reliance, self-confidence and equal ownership of productive resources, risen participation in both economic and business sectors, awareness of rights and responsibilities. The Constitutions of India urges together Central and State Governments to bring every one socially and economically disadvantaged section of the society on par with advantaged sections by way of fair improvement and empowerment. The empowerment of entire social groups has to be achieved by effective formulation and ensuring equal rights, equal opportunities, access to services, and gain from the fruits of the development process of the government to facilitate them to develop their potential and capacities as agents of social change for their increasing socio-economic mobility.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Poverty alleviation and empowerment

Attainment of empowerment is only possible when poverty is alleviated at a faster rate, without minimizing poverty the word empowerment is not meaningful, poverty is an obstacle to achieving empowerment. Empowerment contributes significantly to building capabilities and providing opportunities for better choices; on the other hand, disempowerment is similar to deprivation and signifies people's incapability to a better choice of socioeconomic and political rights. The concept of empowerment is an indicator of alleviating poverty as well as means to minimize poverty. It is also a significant contribution to the growth and human development of a country. In this respect, empowerment means the process of those who cannot make better choices acquiring such a capability. Poverty and disempowerment are intimately related to deprivation of accessing the basic needs and control of one's ability to make better life choices. The choices of poor people are enormously inadequate due to their lack of assets and power to consult on fair terms with both conservative and abrupt institutions. Empowerment implies the livelihoods of the people through the expansion of assets and abilities of poor people to actively participate, discuss with, pressure influence, power, and grasp responsible of the institutions. Providing power and skills to someone who does not have power in the formerly, the poverty alleviation programmes have failed to tackle the integration, vulnerability, and disparities. On the other hand, empowerment provides opportunities to make pro-poor growth by expanding human capabilities and enhancing the distribution of resources. Further, it provides the necessary circumstances for the deprived to obtain the better benefit from poverty and decrease opportunities, by intensification of their socio-economic, cultural, and political ability.

Trends in incidence of rural and urban poverty in India

The trends in the incidence of poverty in India during the period from 1973-74 to 2011-12 show the percentage of poor declined to 25.7 per cent from 56.44 per cent and the number of poor declined to

216.7 million from 261.29 million in rural areas. In the case of Urban, it was about 13.7 per cent from 49.01 per cent and 53.1 million poor from 60.04 million respectively. In aggregate, total both rural and urban percentages of poor declined to 21.9 per cent from 54.88 per cent and 269.8 million poor from 321.33 million poor in the same period. It is observed from the interpretation the percentage of poverty and millions of poor declining trend during the above period. Due to the effective implementation of poverty alleviation programmes in India.

Rural and urban poverty of Scheduled Tribes in India

According to the Institute of Human Development, an analysis of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in India based on official data from the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) and the Planning Commission of the Government of India has proved that poverty among the general population had been reduced during the period from 1993-94 and 1999-2000, but there had been a small variation in poverty levels among indigenous peoples. In terms of declined poverty, SCs and the general population have been better than Scheduled Tribes. The poverty Gap between Scheduled Castes and other social groups is narrowing down but the Status of poverty between the Scheduled Tribes and other groups has a huge gap, and expanded. It is evident that about 50 per cent of the STs below the poverty line are higher than that of SCs (41.5%) and the general population (23%) respectively.

State-wise Rural and Urban Poverty of STs in India

According to the Planning Commission estimation, a survey was conducted by National Sample Survey Office (NSSO). Proved that, rural poverty declined from 47.4 per cent to 45.3 per cent during the period from 2009-10 to 2011-12. It was 30.4 per cent to 24.1 per cent of STs living below the poverty line in urban areas in the above said period. In the case of the general population, it was about 25.7 per cent and 13.7 per cent respectively. According to 2011-12 data reveals that Odisha state has registered the highest STs rural poverty with 63.5 per cent followed by Maharashtra at 61.5 per cent, Bihar at 59.3 per cent, and Madhya Pradesh at 55.3 per cent,

and Chhattisgarh about 52.6 per cent. In respect of urban areas West Bengal registered the highest poverty with 44.5 per cent followed by Odisha at 39.7 per cent, Chhattisgarh at 35.2 per cent, Karnataka at 33.7 per cent, and Madhya Pradesh at 32.3 per cent of STs registered poverty in India. It is observed that urban poverty declined higher than rural poverty among STs in the country.

Issues and Challenges of Empowerment among Scheduled Tribes:

Despite the various developmental programmes/ Schemes of the Governments even today Scheduled Tribes are facing several issues and challenges in their empowerment, such challenges and problems are discussed below:

- 1. Education:** The educational status of STs is poor in India. Poor education and higher illiteracy are the main impediments to overcoming poverty. It is evident from the statistical data the literacy rate of Scheduled Tribes has not increased at a faster rate despite the various policies of the government. Even today most STs are ignorant and illiterate. Hence government should formulate effective educational schemes at bottom of the pyramid to eliminate ignorance and illiteracy for their empowerment.
- 2. Poverty Trends and Distribution of Wealth:** Poverty is another serious challenge for the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes. India has proven to decline poverty at a faster rate significantly in two decades to 27 percent from 46 per cent during the period from 1983 to 2004-05. In the case of STs, the poverty rates were significantly higher than that of all other social groups in 1983. Huge proportion i.e., 63 per cent of the STs consumption level is below the official poverty line in the same period. It is significantly higher than SCs (58 per cent) and the general population (43 per cent) respectively. The poverty rate of STs is declining at a slower rate than SCs and the general population.
- 3. Poor Access to Health Care:** Poor access to health care facilities is a severe challenge for the empowerment of STs in the country. Scheduled Tribes have lack of awareness

about nutritional and calorie food intake, and the women in tribal communities are weak and anemic and they are not aware of health-borne diseases, and they suffer from various diseases.

4. **Indebtedness:** The majority of the STs are facing the problem of Indebtedness in the country. It is not only an indicator of poverty but also enlarging economic deprivation like deprivation of education, minimum purchasing power, and scarcity of resources for active participation in gainful employment to fulfill their necessities. Hence, Government should enact effective regulation/laws to access the land and effective implementation of food security act to access quality food for the betterment of STs in the country.
5. **Lack of Assets** Equal access to assets and employment opportunities are pre-requisite for the empowerment of STs. But the assets and lack of employment opportunities hamper the empowerment of tribals. Hence Government should create employment generation and asset creation for reducing poverty and empowerment.

Findings

Based on the study, it is found that, a huge proportion of STs is below the poverty line in comparison with SCs and the general population. The Anti-poverty programmes of the Governments have not resulted in a satisfactory level, the poverty ratio gradually declined over the periods but when we compared to SCs and General Population there is a high level of poverty among STs in the country. Further, the study also found that policies of the Government toward the empowerment of STs succeeded to improve the socio-economic well-being of the country, but the ratio of reducing poverty is concerned it is not at a satisfactory level. It is evident from the study that huge proportions of the STs are below the poverty line than the other social groups.

Suggestions

Some useful suggestions have been made for the effective reduction of poverty aimed at the empowerment of the STs in India:

The Government should undertake watershed development projects in a large number of poor tribal concentrated forests, hilly and rain-fed agricultural areas and land reforms programmes should be implemented effectively. Further, incentives for agricultural development in the higher poor tribal concentrates states special attention should be given. In addition to enhancing better wages and augmenting the number of working hours under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme for the improvements of livelihood of STs. Besides, Government should promote incentives for non-farm activities to enhance income and well-being and also provide free skill development programmes in the poor concentrated Tribal areas and create awareness towards emerging sectors such as information technology, and other employment to absorb necessary skills. Investment should be made in rural infrastructure and agriculture development to actively participate in disadvantaged groups by enhancing farm production. The poverty alleviation programmes should be implementing effectively in the more concentrated tribal areas in India.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the policies of the government towards mitigating poverty since independence, are very helpful in decreasing poverty and helping disadvantaged groups to access better employment opportunities, and income, and improving the well-being of the country. But the study proved that there is increasing poverty among Scheduled Tribes than SCs and the general population. Hence to minimize the gaps between STs and the general population there is an urgent need for effective implementation of poverty eradication and employment generation schemes in the more concentrated tribal areas for alleviating rural and urban poverty for the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in near future India.

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