



Commercial Activities involving the Tribal areas in India

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Abstract

India has become the commercialized hub in every space and even the most delicate community, i.e., the tribes, are not left untouched. Tribes are defined under article 366(25) of the Indian constitution as those which are declared in the public notice by the President of India or through subsequent amending act of the parliament¹. There are over 700 Scheduled tribes mentioned under article 342, extending over different states and Union territories of the country. Commercialization has pursued some tribes to the mainstream light and made their way forward in urbanization process while some still remain untouched or least affected in the same. In a way, it has brought both the positive and the negative events in public view ranging from stories like building world's first elephant-friendly tea farm to 24.1% of tribal population still being below poverty line.

Introduction

Tribe is defined as “a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader” by Oxford Languages, meaning tribe is an inextricable part of humans, how urbanise we become. Modernism denotes larger and more heterogeneity and the larger and more heterogenous modern societies become, the more people are inclined to recreate the tribe² and even complex interdependence. As the rock of modernism and urbanisation hits the earth every life existing on it gets affected, so does the tribal areas of India. Though they are every much present in spots and holds little to zero connection with each other, still they resonate same kind of congeniality towards such programmes or scheme eventually brought before them through different governmental or nor governmental sources. 'Mechanism for marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and development of Value Chain for MFP', is a centrally sponsored scheme introduced in the year 2013-14 as a measure of social safety for MFP gatherers, who are primarily members of Scheduled Tribes³. The develops a process to determine primary processing, packing, fair monetary returns for their efforts in collection, etc. The program cogitates fixation and announcement of minimum support price for few designated Minor Forest products. Workshops were organised on the topic of “minimum support price” for MINOR FOREST SCHEME in collaboration with TRIFED in different states like Kerala, Goa, Tripura, Assam,

¹ ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21, <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> [(Last visited June 6, 2021)]

² Mallick, Md. Ayub, *Development Programs Involving the Tribes*, vol. 70 no.4, The Indian Journal of Political Science, 1053, 1053 (2009), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42744020?seq=1>

³ ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21, <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> [(Last visited June 6,2021)]



Arunachal Pradesh etc. Through video call Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India or TRIFED under ministry of Tribal Affairs is multi state cooperative body, holdings majorly 6 commercial plans under it. It provides Marketing Support for tribal produce.

What is Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED)?

It is a multi-state cooperative society formed in 1987 by Multi State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002. TRIFED'S MSP for MFP and VanDhan program is synched to the "The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Forest Rights act,2006)", act which was passed for protecting and securing protection and livelihood of the backward and poor tribals and related concerns with the rights of forest dwelling communities to land and other natural resources.⁴It acts in two-way as market developer and service provider for tribal products. It also provides training programs to tribal artisans and minor forest produce gatherers. The authorized share capital of TRIFED is Rs.300.00 Crore. The paid-up share capital of TRIFED as on 31.03.2020 was Rs.100.56 Crore. TRIFED has 31 members (shareholders) as on 17.11.2020. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has invested Rs.99.75 Crore in the equity share capital and is the largest shareholder of TRIFED⁵.

TRIFED is majorly governed by two schemes:

*"Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products/ Produce"⁶.

*"Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP."⁷

Ministry of tribal affairs helps to back TRIFED for execution of these above-mentioned schemes.

A Grant-in-aid of Rs. 118.50 Crore was authorised in 2019-20 and the budget allocation for the year 2020-21 is 120.00 Crore for TRIFED under the scheme "Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products/ Product. Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP."⁸

Grant-in-aid of Rs.147.43 Crore sanctioned during the year 2019-20 and the budget allocation for 2020-21 is Rs.112.51 Crore (BE) for TRIFED under the scheme "Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP."⁹

Programs under TRIFED

⁴ MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/> (Last visited June 4,2021)

⁵ ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21, <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> [(Last visited June 6, 2021)]

⁶ ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21, <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> [(Last visited June 6, 2021)]

⁷ ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21, <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> [(Last visited June 6, 2021)]

⁸ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21, <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> [(Last visited June 6, 2021)]

⁹ ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21, <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> [(Last visited June 6, 2021)]



Primarily TRIFED has 6 programs namely:

- Non-Timber Forest Produces
- Retail Marketing
- PMVDY (Pradhan Mantri VanDhan Yojana)
- Corporate Affairs Division
- Research and Development
- TRIFOOD

NON-TIMBER FOREST PRODUCES (NTFPs)

NTFPs are those services or products which are other than timber produced in forest.¹⁰ This involves vegetables, resins, a range of bark, fibres (bamboo, rattan), fish, nuts, fruits, essence, and a host of other palm and grasses. These products play a major role in developing market and economic structure for the tribals residing in that area as well as for the govt and non-governmental organisations to develop a scope of improvement.

NTFPs as a whole is a very complex structure as it may vary from location to location and tribe to tribe and even may vary on the consumption of the product. If, in parts 'Z', product 'A' is used in abundance it might be a subsistence in part 'Y' that changes the definition of NTFPs from area to area.

NTFPs associates itself with value chain and includes similar process i.e., collection, transportation, direct sales and sales through intermediaries¹¹. Trade statistics suggests that Indian NTFPs have a high demand in global market. An examination of the trade statistics on NTFPs reveals that the major component of export earnings are edible products, which accounts for about 50 per cent of total exports of NTFPs in recent years.¹² But with market comes exploitation and instances that lead to even more complex unfolding.

RETAIL MARKETING

It is program where focus is given development of tribal areas through marketing and sustainable upgradation of skills and products. This program aims at the holistic development of the situation of the Vanwasis including their societal dogma.

The creativity, craftsmanship and the hard work of the tribal people is brought to the outside world through Tribes India - a shop of tribal artefacts in India espousing tribal cause.¹³

¹⁰ Forest and Non-Timber Forest Products,

[https://www.cifor.org/Publications/Corporate/FactSheet/ntfp.htm#:~:text=Non%2Dtimber%20forest%20products%20\(NTFPs,of%20other%20palms%20and%20grasses.](https://www.cifor.org/Publications/Corporate/FactSheet/ntfp.htm#:~:text=Non%2Dtimber%20forest%20products%20(NTFPs,of%20other%20palms%20and%20grasses.) (Last visited June 5,2021)

¹¹ Mahonya Sophie, Shackleton M. Charlie, Schreckenber Kate, *Non-timber Forest Product Use and Market Chains Along a Deforestation Gradient in Southwest Malawi*, *Frontier in Forest and Global Change*, (November 8,2019, 21:15) <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/ffgc.2019.00071/full#B39>

¹² Ignafa.gov.in, <https://www.ignfa.gov.in/document/biodiversity-cell-ntfp-related-issues8.pdf> (last visited June 5,2021)

¹³ MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/division/retail-marketing> (last visited June 6,2021)

It works on to provide the dynamics to the process of development for poorest of poor through marketing of their goods and products on strategic basis and providing bigger market and exhibition to their art and craft in both national and international market.

It has around 15 offices in regions of states which are formed primarily for the very cause of identifying and source tribal goods to the market through its retail marketing network of tribals India outlets. *The fig. below shows the retail marketing centre in parts of India.*



Source: <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/division/retail-marketing>

TRIFED has wide spread of network with undertakes the tribal products like handlooms, handicraft and natural and food products by means of suppliers who are generally comprises of individual tribal men be it artisans, SHGs, or organizations', agencies or NGOs working with or for tribal benefits in this field.

VanDhan VIKAS YOJANA

The Van Dhan Yojana or Van Dhan Scheme, a component of the Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) & Development of Value Chain for MFP' was launched on 14th April 2018.¹⁴ It is stretched over 27 states and 307 districts with additional facility of MFPs and huge forest dwelling populations of tribe. Collection and sale of forest products results into 45-65% of annual earnings made by tribal

¹⁴ . MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/pmvdv> (Last Visited June 6, 2021)

population and value addition elongates this profitable share by tripling or quadrupling their earnings. The program also enlists major concerns faced by tribal population related to possession of land, exploitation of their natural habitat and displacement from their original land etc.

How the process works: -

Its an initiative to transform tribal livelihood generation into entrepreneurs. The idea is to set-up tribal community-owned Van Dhan Vikas Kendra Clusters (VDVKCs) in predominantly forested tribal districts.¹⁵

A cluster shall have 15tribal SHGs/VanDhan Kendra, having Up to 20 Vanwasi gatherers or craftsmen amounting to 300 recipients per cluster.

TRIFED in collaboration with central govt facilitates 100% funds providing 15lakh to each 300 members of the cluster.



source: <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/pmvdv>

CORPORATE AFFAIRS DIVISION

¹⁵ MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/pmvdv> (last visited June 6,2021)



This division observes the monitoring and handholding the VanDhan Vikas Kendra as they need constant mobility and observation.

Source: <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/corporate-affairs-division-0>

TRIFED also formed a new division known as CORPORATE AFFAIR DIVISION, to address the increasing needs and growth of the VanDhan program. It strengthens the clusters functioning under the Kendra and proceeds on to formulate Tribal Producers companies.

TRIFOOD

TRIFOOD is a scheme formed between the collaboration of 3 parties- Ministry of food processing industry, Ministry of tribal affairs and TRIFED. Under this scheme a tertiary value addition center will be set up in Jagdalpur in Chhattisgarh and Raigad in Maharashtra at a cost of approximately Rs.11 crores¹⁶. TRIFOOD scheme branches out as part of VanDhan Yojana with idea of promoting Value Addition to MFP. The units are administered and operated by notable food processing companies who facilitates the overall administration to maintain the quality and processing of the products to mold it in the frame professionally according to market objective. This process often creates a balance between protecting tribal culture and land and placing commercial arena into picture. It provides employment to local people who understand the area and the process and bridges the gap between or opposite universe.

REALITY IS HARSH AND OFTEN UNEXPLORED

“It has been estimated that 50 per cent of protected areas worldwide have been established on lands traditionally occupied and used by tribal people,” said [Victoria Tauli-Corpus](#), UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. “For over a century, conservation has resulted in cultural destruction and large-scale displacements of tribal people from their ancestral lands.”¹⁷ In 2019 Judgement by SC, it laid down that eviction of more than 10lakh forest dwellers, in case their application has been rejected under Forest Rights Act,2006 was criticised by many human and tribal rights activist. Due to heavy criticism the court had to stay its decision as people argued and questioned to re-investigate the cases that are been rejected and help the applicants to safeguard their genuine rights. This is a classic case where tribal communities struggle to assert the ownership of their lands let alone the cultivation or progress on it. Under the national and international schemes for promoting commercial activities in Tribal areas have often led to an open exploitation and misuse of their resources including minerals by giant companies or domestic caretakers and often intermediaries. But the resistance by affected communities across the world has also grown and is reflected, over the years, in the establishment of an international framework through ILO and U.N.¹⁸ conventions and organisations promoting and withstanding with concept of tribal ownership argues that Vanwasis should be made either individually or as community owner to the land they acquire and should manage, control and govern the resources originating from them and also should

¹⁶ MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, <https://trifed.tribal.gov.in/trifood> (last visited June 6,2021)

¹⁷ Mohanty Abhijit, *Tribal communities suffer when evicted in the name of conservation*, DOWNTOEARTH (June 6, 2021, 4:46 PM), <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/blog/forests/tribal-communities-suffer-when-evicted-in-the-name-of-conservation-64376>

¹⁸ Karat Brinda, *of mines, minerals and tribal rights*, THE HINDU (august 04,2016, 01:57 IST), <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/of-mines-minerals-and-tribal-rights/article3419034.ace>



hold the vested interest of right to a decisive role in decision making for development in their areas along with right to have prior, free and informed consent to the forthcoming projects related to or administered towards them.

According to Annual report 2020-21 by Ministry of Tribal affairs, the literacy rate of STs with compared to All is decreased by 14% in years from 1991, 2001 & 2011.

Literacy Rates among STs and ALL

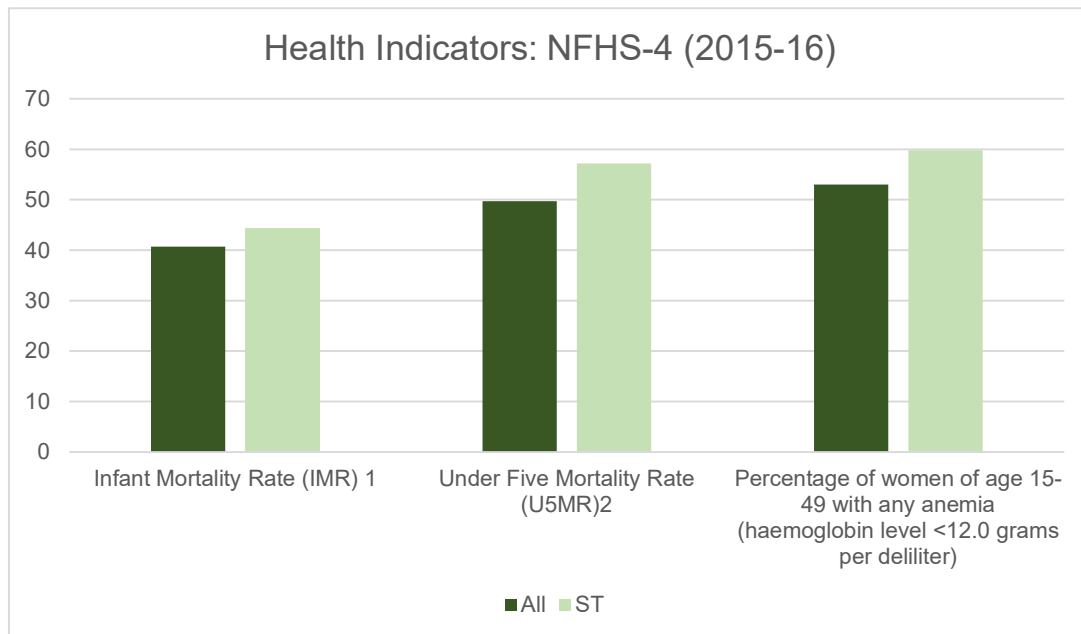
YEAR	ALL			SCHEDULED TRIBES		
	Persons	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females
1961	28.30	40.40	15.35	8.53	13.83	3.16
1971	34.45	45.96	21.97	11.30	17.63	4.85
1981	43.57	56.38	29.76	16.35	24.52	8.04
1991	52.21	64.13	39.29	29.60	40.65	18.19
2001	64.84	75.26	53.67	47.10	59.17	34.76
2011	73.00	80.90	64.60	59.00	68.50	49.40

Source: Census, Office of the Registrar General, India

The world is advancing and the major aspect in this advancement is literacy but as seen through above figures that there is a constant decrease in the literacy rate of the tribal population in the country with respect to overall population. This shadows an image on the overall prospectus of tribal welfare as it deduces the opportunity on the further program. It impacts their upliftment process because literacy plays a great role in society. It also puts the tribal perspective and picture through educational and literary value as it advances their thinking capacity and changes the course of their representation. Literacy breaks down the technicalities and walls of parity between state and the tribals, which often leaves hanging between these.

Health Indicator

As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS-4) Conducted by Ministry of Health & Family Welfare during 2015-16, status of Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Anemia in Women for STs as well as All Categories are shown under.



Source: <https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf>

Infant Mortality Rate		Under Five Mortality Rate		Percentage of women of age 15-49 with any anemia (hemoglobin level <12.0 grams per deliliter)	
All	STs	All	STs	All	STs
40.7	44.4	49.7	57.2	53	59.8

With constant urbanization, liberalization and globalization, the country has stretched open itself to world class facilities and health care but still the depleting health care and a clear disparity between others and STs have pointed out on the canvas that the opportunities have yet not reached sufficiently to this area of the country. With the clear difference between All and STs show that although the significant schemes and policies of the govt. are being made it still not reachable to the tribal people. Due to high rate of infant mortality and under 5 mortality rates. There is stark difference between range of percentage of women of age 15-49 with any anemia specifically hemoglobin level under 12.0 gram per deliliter. All these data point out at one specific point that tribal communities remain a large member of society with huge portion of population but very poor health care even after 70 years of independence.

The parts which are underdeveloped in the country often posts same picture for ST population as well like in the percentage having their source of lighting as electricity shows that states like Bihar at lowest as 16.4% of all households followed by Odisha having 15.6% against 43% all households as compared to Lakshadweep having 99.7% households light up followed by Daman and Diu having 96.6%. This shows not only center but state govt also have a very



different approach towards matter of basic concern like electricity. This often adds up to poor and irresponsible structuring of policies on ground level.¹⁹

CONCLUSION

There is a huge difference between the idealistic approach of the policies versus their implementation. The policies might seem best on ground with are actually driven by the policies of consumerism, commercialization and a thought of privatization ton the big giants. The struggle of tribal people is actually does not lie for development but of holding and safeguarding what actually belongs to them, their forests, their culture and their traditions. The complexity of Tribal cultures lies in their Genuity and attachment towards their long surviving heritage and their adamant nature to protect it at any cost. The policies are more consumers driven instead of those who are actually providing them which often leads to exploitation at ground level by intermediaries and officers. Lack of direct help and constant dynamics of the schemes often becomes confusing for the tribes to comprehend.

Laws often play a tricky jam with normal people, so it is plausible that there is no way around for tribal communities. They often are tricked or trapped on judicial ground due to lack of awareness among them. This possesses a great threat as they scum to major chunk of population and often contribute to its development. All they want is protection and upliftment in harmony which still the govt is not able to provide due to its profit driven, consumer serving schemes. Development of tribal areas does go through the route of commercialization, but it should completely ignore the process of exploitation because all they (tribals) want is to safeguard is their HOME AND CULTURE.

¹⁹ *Data source:* MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS,
<https://tribal.nic.in/downloads/statistics/AnnualReport/AREnglish2021.pdf> (Last visited June 6,2021)