

REPORT OF COMMITTEE
ON
ORIENTATION OF FOREST EDUCATION
IN INDIA



सत्यमेव जयते

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS
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P R E F A C E

Tribals are a distinct social group who are usually confined in definite areas, speak a common dialect, have cultural homogeneity and a unifying social organisation. They form a sizeable percentage of total population in certain regions of India, such as the North-Eastern region, portion of Bihar, Orissa, M.P., A.P., Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Irrespective of their location, they are people with abundant self-respect, who are conscious to preserve their social and cultural identity. On account of various pressures exerted on them they retreated into forests and hill tracts, over the centuries. They are simple as they are fascinating, as sincere as they are innocent, as colourful as they are hospitable and as lively as they are lovely. Majority of them are poor and lead a hard life but not a discontented one. They are physically tough and suit the rugged terrain, which they inhabit. Civilisation has not spoilt them, sophistication has not polluted them, violence has not encroached upon the peaceful pursuits to which they are dedicated. Their wants are primarily basic needs of life like food, shelter and clothing.

(ii) Forest have been their well-loved home through generations. It is abode of their mother deity and represents whole way of life, a home, culture, worship, food and wherewithal, employment and income. The tribal communities could subsist for thousands of years with reasonable standards of health, and abode mainly because forests provided them food, water, shelter, clothes, medicine and employment.

(iii) The overwhelming majority of the population living in forests are tribal communities. They have evolved a way of life, which, on the one hand, is woven around forest ecology and forest resources and on the other, ensure that forest is protected against depredation by man and nature. Thus, the local tribal communities have a symbiotic relationship with forests and the existence of both is mutually beneficial.

(iv) However, with the passage of time their own untrammelled peaceful world has been disturbed. The balance between these forest dwellers and nature has tilted due to extraneous pressure of burgeoning population and entry of outsiders in their otherwise peaceful home.

In the past this disturbed situation has resulted into discontentment and at times even in minor revolts. While the forest department, with its limited resources has shown concern for tribals, the instances like opposition of plantations of Teak by Hos, Oraons and Mundas of Santhal-Parganas and that of tropical Pines by the Gonds of Bastar area are recent examples which call for developing a better understanding and communication between forest development and tribal welfare activities. Problem of settlement of displaced persons from National Parks like Gir, Bharatpur and Corbett Park etc., bonded labourers, exploitation of tribals by forest contractors, forest villages etc. has to be tackled with sympathy and respectful considerations of social and cultural milieu of tribals. While the legislators, planners, administrators and people at large have to be educated and enlightened regarding tribal ways of life, the forest officials have to be trained with a special orientation to develop proper understanding of social customs, taboos, beliefs, myths, laws, justice and code of conduct in day-to-day life of these forest dwellers.

(v) The education regarding the intricate ways of tribal life outside the forest department can be imparted through schools, colleges and universities by making suitable additions in the syllabi. The education and training of forest personnel is the responsibility of the Central Government and the Directorate of Forest Education (F.R.I. & Colleges) maintains the uniform standards of training at all the Forest Colleges. Forestry and Tribal Development is desirable to be included as a subject at all levels of training of professional foresters. The suitable amendments in the syllabi can be made to incorporate it as a subject for the training in the Forest Colleges run by the State Governments and the others run by the Centre. The number of lectures allotted to each subjects can be reviewed and by nationalisation it is possible subject within the existing duration of training.

(vi) Before independence, the Britishers followed a policy of isolation of tribals from the main-stream of national life. This was the direct offshoot of the exploitations of tribal communities by non-tribals resulting in tremendous tribal discontent and agitations all over the central India tribal belt.

(vii) The spread of Christianity was due to help which tribals got from the missionaries in fighting their land-alienation cases and in matters of education and health.

(viii) However, the tribals could not be contained and the change was perceptible in the form of Tanabagats of Bihar, who under the influence of Mahatma Gandhi became total prohibitionists and several voluntary organisations led by devoted people like Thakkar-Bapa etc

(ix) Since Independence, the problem of development of the tribal regions and amelioration of the condition of the tribal population has received the active consideration of the Government of India. The Constitution of India provides several protective measures in the fifth and sixth schedules to safe-guard the interest of tribals. However, for the first time Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then Prime Minister, enunciated the five fundamental principles of tribal development known as *Tribal Panchsheel* and his approach can be quoted in following words--

“Our people should know more about this problem and should develop affection and respect for these fine people. There should be no attempt to impose other ways of life on them in a hurry. Let the changes come gradually and be worked out by the tribals themselves”.

“We should avoid over-administering these areas and in particular, sending too many outsiders into tribal territory. The over-tones of development should be pursued within broad frame-work of *Five Fundamental Principles*—

- (i) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own tradition and culture;
- (ii) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected;
- (iii) We should try to train and build-up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders in tribal territory;

We should not over-administer these areas or *overwhelm* them with multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions; and

- (v) We should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

(x) This approach has been endorsed through all these years of planned development of the tribal areas. However, it was little unfortunate that certain important considerations like developing them along their own lines of genius, optimum utilisation of available natural resources in the form of land and forests was not given due consideration. Consequently, the investment could not generate a chain of self-sustainable goods and services and thus, majority of the tribals could not be brought above the poverty line. Till late, the emphasis was more on giving monetary help rather than using their traditional skills and available natural resources. From the sixth five year plan onwards, this realisation has dawned, the emphasis has rightly shifted to these two important ingredients of development in tribal areas. Considering this aspect, the forests and the tribal skills in use of forest resources in various ways have tremendous potentiality in formulating and implementing forest and tribal development plans which can be successfully interlinked to serve both. The best protective device for the existing forests and creating of new forests is to foster an interest of the local community in the adjoining forest wealth. In other words, the tribal community should be accepted as partners in the local forest development in each area.

(xi) Some of the tribals are totally dependent on forests. The Andamanese, Onges, Jarwas, Shompens and Sentinelese depend on fruits, seeds, leaves, tubers and bark etc. of forest trees and a few like Birhors have specialised in rope-making and charcoal manufacture, Khairwais in Katha manufacture etc. Similarly, the shifting cultivation is practised by over 2.6 million tribals (Dhebar Commission report, 1961) in almost all the North-Eastern States and parts of Assam. The traditional graziers, like Todas, Baigas etc. and nomads like Gujars and Gaddies etc. are directly dependent on forests to a great extent for their fuel-wood and fodder as well as for the timber of agricultural implements. The Hari Singh Committee stated that about sixty percent tribals live inside the forests and thirty percent are on the fringes and they also depend on forests to a great extent.

(xii) The forest area of India is 74.74 million hectares, which is 22.7% of the total land area. According to the National Forest Policy of 1952, it is prescribed to be 33%. The average per capita holding of forests is 0.109 ha. as against 1.0 ha. of the world. The total growing stock of the country's forests is 1997 million m³ (r) of wood with recorded annual production of 27.72 million m³ (r) during 1977-78 as against a demand of 60.3 m³ (r). The rising demands for goods and services due to rapidly increasing human and live-stock population, growing competition of land for agricultural and urban use coupled with low productivity has caused India to be classified on the world's map of forest resources as belonging to a “*Forest deficit zone*”.

(xiii) At the global, national and local levels, the forests have to serve three sets of needs, (a) ecological security, (b) fuel fodder, food, fibre and building material and (c) needs of cottage, smallscale, medium scale and large scale industries. The rural poor will continue to look to forests to provide much of their basic requirements. It will be a major challenge to development to meet the constantly effective demand

of rural communities for forest products. The most hopeful strategy in assuring supply lies in social forestry, community forestry, forest farming in which forests are managed by and for the local people. It is a gigantic task which needs strengthening forestry by rationalising the operations, larger investments and use of new technologies and, last but not the least, the people's motivation and investments with forestry programmes.

(xiv) The forest departments manage 1/5th of the land areas of the country by handful of people-where-as 4/5 of the country land is managed by around 70% of its population (around 500 million people). There is no nodal department to see and coordinate, that about 13.6% of the land area i.e. 43.6 million ha. land should be available for plantation in the form of degraded forests, ravines, alkaline soils, roadside plantations, canal banks, farm-roads, village ponds, community lands, water logged areas and wastelands etc.

(xv) In terms of capital assets and future potentialities of expansion and development, forestry is the biggest public sector which is largely labour intensive and has tremendous potentialities of generating a self-sustained economic system for the rural masses. In order to harness this vast potential the people have to be considered as potential allies in the battle for reforestation and afforestation and they have to be fully equipped to combat it. Thus, it is imperative that forestry and its education must reach the masses. To accomplish this objective, forest education in schools, colleges and universities brooks no delay. The forestry profession will have to enlarge its vision to the growing of trees in collaboration with local people. Suitable technology and production can bring the tribal masses above grinding poverty lines. To meet the needs of the farmers, suitable policy, technology and service package forestry extension may be ensured to make the country green, besides meeting demands of forest products. Forestry development should be treated as an essential ingredient of tribal development plans and should ensure socio-economic development of under-privileged communities for which nation has shown so much concern. Like all developmental activities of electricity, road, irrigation and education etc. forestry development should also be treated as a basic infra-structural requirement for the tribal community.

(xvi) It is a very fortuitous coincidence that practically wherever there are concentration of tribal population, there happens to be sufficient forest area nearby. It is not, therefore, difficult to comprehend that if the forest resources are managed with a view to benefit the local tribal people, forest-dwellers and the poor people within the reasonable reach of the forest areas, all such people who are at the moment below the poverty line can be raised above it. Schemes like extension of Tusal-rearing, Collection of Sal seed for oil extraction, Collection and processing of bidi-leaves from Tendu leaves, Collection and processing of medicinal herbs, Collection and processing of various gums, resins and barks etc. for commercial uses etc. can be prepared for individual families or for a group of families or even for a village as a whole. But this will be possible when both the foresters and the tribals have full sympathies for each other. It is really a tragedy that while the average tribal and forest dweller is immensely interested in preserving the forest wealth because he realises that his entire source of living depends on the forest and yet, there are instances that the forest wealth is being destroyed by people with impunity, leading to all round deterioration not only in the environment but ultimately to his own source of living. The foresters are also equally interested in preserving the forest wealth and managing it scientifically on the principle of sustained yield basis in perpetuity. Thus, both the tribal people and the foresters have ultimately the same common aim of preserving and augmenting the forest wealth. How strange is then, that in many places, the foresters and the tribal people do not see eye-to-eye with each other and occasionally come into a conflict. Such a situation is definitely due to lack of communication between the foresters, on the one hand, and the tribal and the forest dwellers, on the other hand. In some places the tribal people think that the forest, does not belong to them but to the State and, therefore, it is not their property and so they can indulge in its destruction without any damage to themselves. The foresters probably think that the forests are not necessarily meant only for the tribal people but also for making available raw-materials to far-off places to meet requirement of the society through the wood-based industries. If, some-how, they understand that they are the real partners in the management of the forests, very likely the antagonistic feeling from their minds will disappear. This is only possible when there is close communication between the foresters and the tribal people and the forest-dwellers. It is true that in the past, particularly during the British administration, there used to be considerable gap between the ruler and the ruled but now after Independence, under democratic system, the ruler is basically the servant of the people. If this idea is inculcated fully by those who are responsible for the administration of the forests, I am sure, the tribal people and other forest dwellers will become sympathetic to the cause of forest preservation. But this can not be achieved by mere rhetoric. It has to be translated into action, and the best way to achieve it, will be to earmark sufficient areas of forests through the scientific management of which enough income could be generated for the tribal people living in a particular area. We may go to the extent that even if such forest produce has been utilised in some industry, a part of the profit of the industry should be made available to the tribal village/society for their general development. The management of the forests must be for the satisfaction of the day-to-day needs of the tribals and the forest dwellers in respect of firewood, leaf-fodder, small timber, edible fruits, leaves, gums, resins etc. Where there are no such forests, the Forest Department should raise plantations of suitable species to meet the day-to-day demands of the tribal people. If there are suitable blank areas, then plantations of Arjun trees may be taken up for tusal development. If there are other

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suitable areas, where mulberry can be grown, silk industry could be started by the tribal people. There can be several other small rural cottage industries based on the local forest produce that can be established for the tribal people. Once such an approach is adopted by the Forest Department, there is no reason why the tribals and the forest-dwellers do not become a friend of the forests and the foresters. In fact, we would like to train our foresters in a way that they may consider their primary duty to initiate programmes of forestry development in such a way that no tribal may remain below the poverty line in a given period of time.

(xvii) Here, I would like to remind the foresters of what Gandhiji said that "while taking decisions of public interest, one must remember the face of the "Daridranarayan". If our foresters inculcate this motto in their day-to-day practice, in their decisions regarding the management of the forests in the vicinity of the tribal people, I am sure, the economy of the tribal people is bound to be improved through judicious decisions for the management of forests. In fact, I believe that the time has come to incorporate in the forest policy that the 23% of the land area under forests shall be dedicated for the people living below the poverty line. If such a policy is implemented in the States, the battle of poverty in respect of people living below the poverty line will have been won to a great extent.

(xviii) However, to achieve the above goal, it will be possible only when we impart a course of education especially tailored to bring home the above objectives, amongst not only the foresters but also the policy makers, legislators, administrators, the tribal people and all other people of the country. It is, therefore, imperative that suitable course of instructions should be devised for different categories of the persons mentioned above. The committee has been precisely ceased of this problem.

(xix) Extension training in forestry should be imparted to the tribals, farmers and village headmen also to enable them to appreciate the multi-faced aspects of forests in their day-to-day life. All officers and subordinates of forest department should be imparted training about tribal life, their economy and the various modes of their dependence on forest. Similarly, the tribals and people at large must be educated to bring about a harmonious synthesis between the forests, the forest-dwellers and the managers of forests.

(xx) Fortunately, our Prime Minister, the Ministers of Home Affairs, Agriculture and Education have shown personal interest in expanding the scope of forestry, so that it encompasses various spheres of tribal, rural and every citizen's life. In fact, it is the only panacea for the perpetual solution to the present day malady of crumbling village economy and forestry has to be a concern of the masses; education of the people regarding its various roles and training of forest officials to meet their demands calls for drawing out suitable syllabi for all levels urgently.

(xxi) In pursuance of decision of the Conference of Tribal Members of Parliament held on 30-10-81, the Government of India, constituted a committee under the Chairmanship of President, Forest Research Institute and Colleges as per Annexure 16.

(xxii) The syllabi in "Forestry and Tribal Welfare" have been drawn out for schools, colleges and universities. Similarly, a course content has also been prescribed for the proper orientation of legislators, administrators, engineers, bank-personnel, village headmen and other district level officials. For the officials of forest department detailed syllabi have been framed to cover the various levels of trainings meant for forest guards, foresters, rangers, State Forest Service and the Indian Forest Service Officers.

(xxiii) This committee had many deliberations on this issue and the report has been possible due to the high expertise and keen interest of various members of the committee and sub-committees. The untiring zeal of Shri D.N. Tewari, I.F.S., the Member-Secretary was always spontaneous and deserves a special mention.

(xxiv) The recommendations of this Committee are likely to generate a conducive atmosphere for creating and using the forest resources for tribal development. It is expected that the Ministry of Home Affairs, Agriculture and Cooperation and Ministry of Education, will kindly agree to the recommendations and take suitable measures to introduce these syllabi at various levels.

(K.M. TIWARI)

President

F. R. I. and Colleges



A tribal girl engaged in planting a teak seedling



Tribal women engaged in afforestation activities