

The Purpose of this Seminar

The proposed seminar would be a forum to discuss and debate the theoretical, conceptual and empirical issues about the tribals of India. It will facilitate to collaborate with different stakeholders in promoting an understanding of tribal society through different kinds of theoretical approaches and strategies. It is expected that the discussion during the seminar would provide new insights into the tribal society in general and tribal social structure in particular. It is incongruous to lump together all the 700 odd tribal communities into a common box and design a common strategy for any intervention. We need to understand the tribal society first before we intervene in their lives. Thus, the deliberations in the proposed seminar are expected to bring out multi-dimensional outcomes and prospects for further academic explorations in tribal society in India.

Outcome of the seminar

The seminar proceedings will be published in a book form by a reputed publisher, and it will be useful to the scholars, academicians and policy makers as a source of information. The seminar outcome or resolutions will be submitted to Govt. of India for policy and programme frame work for the tribals.

Time Line

Last date for abstract submission: 30-01-2025

Acceptance of abstracts: 5-02-2025

Full paper must be submitted on or before: 25-02-2025

The abstracts must be submitted to the seminar director. His email ID is given below.

Accommodation and Transportation

Accommodation will be provided to all the participants on a first come first serve basis. Travel Allowance will be provided to participants (first author only) based on the availability of the financial funds.

For enquiry:

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Sponsored by ICSSR, New Delhi National Seminar on Programmes and Policies for the Development of Tribals: Issues and Challenges

3rd & 4th March, 2025

Venue: Seminar Hall, CMDR, Dharwad

Dr. B R Ambedkar Nagar, Near Yalakki Shettar Colony, Dharwad - 580004
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Concept Note

Primitiveness, geographical isolation, social, education & economic backwardness are some of the qualities that distinguish between Scheduled Tribes and rest of the communities. As per 2011 census, they constitute around 8.6% of the total population that is, 10.43 crores. Within this, 90% of the tribals/Adivasis settled in rural areas and only 10% are visible in urban areas. There are 698 schedule tribes spread all over the country. Orissa has the largest number of schedule tribes i.e., 68 tribal groups. Out of the total tribal communities, 75 are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). They practise variety of economic activities ranging from gathering minor forest produce (MFP) to hunting and gathering, shifting cultivation to manufacturing and selling of handicrafts. Though they involved in divergent economic activities and still their economy remains a subsistence economy, their role in the modern industrial activity is found to be minimal. This indicates that they wish to confine themselves to self-created enclosures. They resist development in which they cannot accommodate themselves and have identity at the same time.

The post - colonial discourse on the tribals mainly viewed Nehruvian perspective which was heavily influenced by Elwin's seminal work. Elwin's idea was to preserve the pristine cultural traits and integrating them into mainstream society. Under this policy perspective, many programmes were launched to improve their lot; the impacts, however, were very slow. This may be observed in the following criteria such as literacy rate, health indicators, and poverty conditions. The literacy rates among tribes stands at 59% in 2011 whereas the national average literacy stands at 73% in 2011. Among other states, Andhra Pradesh stands with lowest tribal literacy rate with 48.8% whereas Mizoram stands with highest literacy rate of 91.5%.

To improve their literacy level, Ekalavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS) under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs were introduced in 1997. Currently 401 EMRS have been functioning throughout the country though the sanctioned number is 690. However, the data presents different picture on their education. According to the Tribal Development Report 2022 published by the Bharat Rural Livelihood Foundation, 48.2% tribal children left schools before completing Class 8, and this number jumped to 62.4% by the time they reach Class 10. The experts opine that the programmes and policies never match with their culture, and therefore, it failed to generate their enthusiasm on education. This resulted for poor performance in them on education also.

Another point for multiple exclusion of tribal is noticed in health indicators. In many health indicators, the performance remains poor. For example, in the National Family Health Survey 4 (NFHS-4) (2015-2016), the under-5 mortality among the tribal population was 57.2 per 1000 live births compared to 38.5 among others, and the infant mortality rate (IMR) 44.4 per 1000 live births compared to others 32.1. A child born to a ST family in India has 19 per cent higher risk of dying in the neonatal period and 45 per cent greater risk of dying in the post-neonatal period compared with other social classes. Available evidence indicates that the prevalence of tuberculosis (TB) is significantly higher among tribal population; 703 per 100,000 compared to the national average (256 per 100,000). The affirmative action policies could help a few tribal groups only. In 2011, there were 40.6% tribals under below the poverty line. However, the general population was only 20.5%.

Globalization has helped the economy to revitalize itself but did little good to the tribals in terms of enabling them to participate in the economy due to their geographic and social exclusion. They hardly get any opportunity to contribute to the liberalized economy that have expanded phenomenally due to their low skills, lack of adequate training and confidence accumulated over centuries. The establishment of power plants, construction of mega irrigation projects, and acquisition of lands—all ostensibly in the name of boosting the economy—have adversely impacted their ownership of their resource base. Globalisation even forced the governments to withdraw certain welfare programmes which are necessary for the needy. This again affected the life and livelihoods of tribal adversely, especially to the primitive vulnerable groups (PVG). All these developmental activities in the tribal areas have systematically displaced the Adivasis and their traditional habitats and livelihoods, with little or no rehabilitation.

According to Government of India, the study estimated that nearly 85 lakhs Adivasis got displaced till 1990, of whom 65% are yet to be rehabilitated (Government of India, 2008). Others put the figures of Adivasis displacement close to 2 crores (Mander, 2002). As a result, large sections of Adivasi population have been pushed to wage-earners.

Considering the urgency and importance, the seminar will also discuss the other aspects like the PESA Act of 1996, Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 is a key piece of forest legislation passed in India on 18th December 2006.

In this backdrop, the seminar proposes to have the following objectives:

- ❖ To analyse the problems of the tribals in the context of changed economic scenario,
- ❖ To discuss and highlight the rich cultural heritage of tribal communities and also identify the strategies and programmes that can safeguard their culture and livelihoods,
- ❖ To assess the efficacy of programmes meant for empowering the tribals and the programmes formulated for them,
- ❖ To study and review all the aspects mentioned in the concept note and suggest best policy perspective to mainstream them in the society.

Sub-Themes of the seminar:

The seminar intent discusses the following sub-themes in detailed:

- ❖ The over-all development of the scheduled tribes like poverty and strategies, Programmes to reduce the same,
- ❖ The education status of the scheduled tribes like literacy rate like Gross Enrolment Ratio, drop-out rate and retention,
- ❖ Health indicators like Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR), Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), malnutrition, under-child nourishment,
- ❖ Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Telangana,
- ❖ Panchayats Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996,
- ❖ Land alienation in schedule areas,
- ❖ Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006