



## THE ROLE OF MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN EMPOWERMENT OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN DEMOCRACY

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### **Abstract**

*This article will critically examine various welfare policies of Ministry of Tribal Welfare, Government of India for the empowerment of Tribal society in contemporary Indian Democracy. Further, It will also critically analyze the role of the Indian Constitution to create an egalitarian tribal society in India, which is based in equality, liberty, justice and fraternity. The Constitution of India provides and guarantees justice, social, economic and political rights for all citizens. The constitutions makers realized that the inequitable forces have been deeply involved in the socio, economic and political system of the society. Finally, it has been resulted in the deprivation and disadvantage of the marginalized, deprived and the weaker sections of the society. In this connection, it is very much indispensable to provide constitutional safeguards in the Constitution for the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes. The constitutional safeguards have to eliminate various socio, economic, political inequalities in society and they have to ensure socio, economic and political justice for the holistic development of the Scheduled Tribes in contemporary Indian democracy. The Ministry of Tribal affairs has been implementing various schemes for the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes in India i.e, Forest Rights Act, Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana, Direct Benefit transfer scheme (DBT) for Post Matric Scholarship & Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for students of STs, Central Sector Schemes under which 100% Grant is given to States and UTs, Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), National Overseas Scholarship Scheme, Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of value Chain for MFP NET, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) and World Bank Project-Improving Development Programmes in the Tribal Areas. Fifth and Sixth Schedules of Constitution of India have been playing pivotal role in the protection of democratic ethos and development of tribal areas in India. The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes is safeguarding the socio, economic and political interests of Scheduled Tribes for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in India. The above mentioned schemes have been implemented in tribal inhabited areas in order to empower the Scheduled Tribes and establish an egalitarian society.*

### **Introduction**

Article 366 (25) of the Constitution of India refers to Scheduled Tribes as those communities, who are scheduled in accordance with Article 342 of the Constitution. The Constitution of India guarantees equality before the Law for all (Article 14), but also has created special provisions of affirmative discrimination for the empowerment and development of the deprived, marginalized sections of the society (Article 15(4)). It also empowers the State to make provisions for reservation in appointments or posts in favor of any backward class citizens if the State feels that such deprived, backward and marginalized sections inadequately represented in the services under the State (Article 16(4)). Further, it gives an opportunity to the State to promote the interests of the Scheduled Tribes and also ensures to protect them from discrimination, exploitation and various socio, economic and political inequalities. (Article 46). (Constitution of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, 2016). The Constitution of India has also ensured affirmative action/positive discrimination by providing Reservation of seats for the scheduled Tribes in Parliament and also in the State Legislative Assemblies; educational institutions and in services (Articles 330, 332, 335). Constitution of India has also empowered the State to appoint a National Commission for Scheduled Tribes to address the problems and to protect the interests of the Scheduled Tribes (Article 340) and also to recognize the Tribal Communities (Constitution of India - Article 342, Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2016, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes 2016).

### **Constitutional Safeguards and protective Measures**

The preamble to the Constitution of India provides social, economic and political justice and equality of status and opportunity. **Article 46** of the Directive Principles of State Policies of Constitution stipulates “the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation” (Constitution of India, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes 2016). To facilitate the implementation of the above Directive Principles, the Constitution of India provides various constitutional safeguards for the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes. These safeguards can be divided into five categories as mentioned below:

1. Social safeguards,
2. Economic safeguards.
3. Educational & Cultural safeguards,
4. Political safeguards and



5. Service safeguards

II. Provisions relating to STs <b>II.A - Definition and Specification of SCs &amp; STs</b>	
Art.	Title
Preamble	
341	Scheduled Castes
342	Scheduled Tribes
366	Definitions
<b>II.B - Educational, Economic and Public Employment - related Safeguards</b>	
15	Prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth
16	Equality of opportunity in matters of public employment
19	Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc.
46	Promotion of Educational and Economic interests of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other weaker sections
335	Claims of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes to services and posts
<b>II.C - Political Safeguards</b>	
330	Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the House of the People
332	Reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States
334	Reservation of seats and special representation to cease after sixty years
243D	Reservation of seats (in Panchayats)
243T	Reservation of seats
<b>II.D - Agency for monitoring safeguards</b>	
338	National Commission for Scheduled Castes
338A	National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, 2016

The priority of the government is to promote and develop the tribes; those who are living in tribal areas of our country have received attention of the government. Government of India has been implementing various schemes for the empowerment of Tribes in India. The Central and State Governments have been introducing various schemes in order to eliminate poverty, unemployment, the socio, economic, political inequalities in tribal society. The Constitution of India has also provided various constitutional measures and safeguards to ensure political, economic and social justice, equality of status, opportunity (National Commission for Schedule Tribes, 2016, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2016). The Constitution of India has also provided the social, economic and political rights to the deprived, marginalized and disadvantaged sections of the society in order to empower them and as well as to protect the interests of tribal communities. The following constitutional provisions are dealing with various socio, economic and political safeguards of tribes. These are:-

**Centrally Sponsored Schemes:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is implementing the following schemes for the empowerment of scheduled Tribes in India.

1. Research and Training
2. Information and Mass Media
3. National Tribal Affairs Awards
4. Centre of Excellence
5. Supporting Projects of All-India nature or Inter-State nature for Scheduled Tribes
6. Organization of Tribal Festival
7. Exchange of visits by Tribals
8. Monitoring and Evaluation
9. Information Technology
10. Lump-sum Provision for N.E.
11. Central Sector Schemes under which 100% Grant is given to States and UT
12. Post Matric Scholarship for STs /Book Bank
13. Upgradation of Merit of ST Students
14. Pre matric scholarship for ST students



15. Girls Hostels
16. Boys Hostels
17. Establishment of Ashram Schools

(Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, 2016, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes 2016).

**The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is implementing the following Central Sector Schemes for the development and empowerment of Scheduled Tribes:**

1. World Bank Project- Improving Development Programmes in the Tribal Areas
2. Special Incentives to NGOs performing exemplary tasks
3. Coaching & Allied Schemes
4. Vocational Training in Tribal Areas
5. Strengthening of Education among ST Girls in Low Literacy Districts
6. National Overseas Scholarship Scheme
7. Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship for ST Students (xi) Scheme of Institute of Excellence/ Top Class Institute
8. National Scheduled Tribes Finance & Development Corporation
9. Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)
10. State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporation for Minor Forest Produce
11. Market Development of Tribal Products/ Produce (Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Ltd. (TRIFED) Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of value Chain for MFP
12. Grants-in-Aid to Voluntary Organizations

(Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India, 2016, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes 2016).

**Initiatives of Ministry of Tribal Affairs**

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has introduced various schemes for the overall development of the people belonging to Scheduled Tribes and also to project the rights of Scheduled Tribes; to preserve and promote tribal culture and heritage.

- (i) **Strengthening of Institutions:** Government of India has been implementing various welfare schemes for the empowerment of scheduled tribes in India. The ultimate fruits of development are not reaching the scheduled tribes. The Integrated Tribal Development Agencies (ITDAs) have been playing vital role in development of scheduled tribes in India and they are facilitating the developmental process in the tribal areas. During the year 2014-15, the Ministry has taken up several steps i.e. SCA to Tribal Sub-Plan, infrastructure, Grant-in-Aid to Tribal Research Institutes' to strengthen the ITDs/ITDPs and Tribal research institutions in order to deliver the services in a more effective and efficient manner (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, 2016).

**Ministry of Tribal Affairs has taken the following initiatives in order to improve the literacy among STs**

- (i) Development of Primers in Tribal languages along with regional languages
- (ii) Academic sessions to be in sync with Tribal Festivals
- (iii) Schools Management committee to engage requisite teachers.
- (iv) Umbrella scheme for Education of ST Children: Establishing and strengthening of Ashram Schools. b) Establishing and strengthening of Hostels. c) Vocational training in tribal areas. d) Post-Matric Scholarship. e) Pre-Matric Scholarship. The needs vary from State to State and this new scheme gives flexibility to opt for expenditure. This year bulk of the grants have gone for scholarships.
- (v) Campaign for 100% physical enrolment
- (vi) Special focus on low literacy tribes and districts for all interventions
- (vii) Constructions of Residential Schools & Hostels and upgrade existing facilities (Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2016 & National Commission for Scheduled Tribes 2016).

**Institutional Mechanisms for promotion of Tribal Products and Marketing Centers of Excellence**

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs promotes research and sponsors research projects for Universities and reputed institutions in order to involve them in a more rigorous research and policy-oriented work. The following three research institutions are functioning with support from the Ministry of Tribal Affairs : i) BAIF Development Research Foundation, Pune in the field of Rural Technologies for Improvement in Livelihood and Quality of Life. ii) Bhasha Research and Publication Centre, Vadodra in the field of Information, Education and Communication. (iii) National Institute of Rural Development, Hyderabad in the field of Local Governance and Rural Development. (iv) The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has recognized the Department of Odia, Vishva Bharati, Shanti Niketan Centre of Excellence in the field of Tribal Language and



Literature. Another proposal has been approved by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has approved another proposal to establish a National Research Centre in the Tribal Research Institute, Bhubaneswar to promote research activities and also for the empowerment of Scheduled Tribes. (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2016, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes 2016).

**Inauguration of Call Centre and Toll Free Number:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs has started a Toll Free Number 1800180-1551 which was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Minister for Tribal Affairs on 02.09.2014. Tribes directly can contact on this number for latest information, daily prices of Minor Forest Produce.

**E-Commerce Portal:** Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) has started a portal for direct selling and TRIFED has tied up with "snapdeal.com".

### **Implementation of Forest Rights Act**

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal agency to implement Forest Rights. The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 is a landmark and significant legislation to recognize the forest rights of tribals and other traditional forest dwellers. According to Ministry of Tribal Affairs, by the end of July 2016, 41,82,806 lakh claims have been filed. Out Of these, 56,68,591 lakh Individual Rights; 45,45,358 Lakh Community Forest Rights titles have been distributed covering a total area of 1,02,13,949.20 lakh acres of land. So far 83.06 per cent of claim applications filed have been disposed of and forest right has been granted to the Scheduled Tribes (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2016; National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, 2016).

### **Scheme for Minor Forest Produce**

Due to lack of information, Scheduled Tribes have been deprived of various economic opportunities. The intermediaries and traders are deciding the Minor Forest Produce (MFP). The economic elite in tribal areas is exploiting the Scheduled Tribes by hiding the actual price of various forest products. The scheme for Minor Forest Produce has been initially implemented in the fifth schedule areas for 12 MFPs namely (i) Wild Honey (ii) Myrobalan (x) Tamarind (iii) Gums (Gum Karaya) and (iv) Karanj. (iv) Tendu Leaves (vi) Bamboo (vii) Mahua seed (viii) Sal Leaf (ix) Sal Seed (x) Lac (xi) Chironjee The Ministry's agency, Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) has hosted 'MFPNET', a web-based portal which will communicate the tribes about the latest price of Minor Forest Produce (The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes 2016).

**Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana:** Ministry of Tribal Affairs has introduced and implemented Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana for the comprehensive and holistic development of tribes. This scheme will lead to sustainable development among Tribes in India. The scope of Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY) is to cover all tribal people and all areas with tribal population across the country. The Objectives of Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana : (i) Improving the quality of life in tribal areas (ii) Improving the quality of education (iii) qualitative and sustainable employment for tribal families (iv) Bridging infrastructure gaps with focus on quality (v) Protection of tribal culture and heritage ( National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, 2016; Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2016).

**Components of Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana:** (i) Qualitative & Sustainable Employment, (ii) Quality Education & Higher Education, (iii) Accelerated Economic Development of tribal areas, (iv) All Weather Roads with connectivity to the nearby town/cities, (v) Universal Availability of Electricity, (vi) Urban Development, (vii) Robust institutional mechanism. (ITDAs/ITDPs), (viii) Promotion and conservation of Tribal Cultural Heritage (ix) Promotion of Sports in Tribal Areas. (x) Health for all (xi) Housing for all (xii) Safe Drinking Water for all at doorsteps (xiii) Irrigation facilities suited to the terrain (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Vanabandhu Kalyan Yojana 2016).

### **Conclusion**

The welfare schemes and the policies of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, Government of India have empowered the scheduled tribes in terms of social, economic and politically. The Scheduled tribes have benefitted out of the welfare schemes of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. There has been dichotomy between traditional indigenous political institutions and modern political institutions. Modern political institutions have to protect the human rights of Scheduled Tribes and they have to create opportunities for the scheduled tribes to effectively participate in the process of elections in contemporary Indian democracy. The social, economic, political and cultural rights of Scheduled Tribes should be protected. The National Scheduled Tribes Commission and National Human Rights Commission have to play pivotal role in order to empower the Scheduled Tribes in India. Bureaucrats, policy makers, academicians, politicians and social activists have to spread awareness about various schemes of Ministry



of Tribal affairs and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes to the scheduled tribes, those who are living in rural and tribal inhabited areas. Ministry of Tribal Affairs has taken various initiatives for the Socio-economic development and empowerment of the Tribal people. The constitution of India has also guaranteed various constitutional provision for the overall development of Scheduled Tribes. The ministry of Tribal Affairs has been implementing the scheme such as Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) for the rapid socio-economic development of tribal people. Similarly Central Ministries/Departments have earmarked funds out of their budget for the Tribal Sub-Plan. As per guidelines issued by the NITI – AAYOG (Planning Commission), The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes is plying predominant and vital role in order to empower the scheduled tribes in India.

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