

Marginalization of the Tribal People in West Bengal: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT: *Among all the tribal families poverty is widespread and asset base is extremely low. They, the tribal people should have to be properly organized, politicized and mobilized imparting a sense of participation among them in view of productive resources, productive relations, manpower position and socio-economic orientation and in view of their dissociation from the control of the resources, dissociation from decision-making in resource utilization and productive resources. Participatory culture has not yet developed among the tribal people. Decision-making process is controlled by the party and panchayat leaders. Mobilization of middle class intellectuals and concentration and consolidation of party politics have become the reality. Participation of the tribal people in party politics, in the development process and empowerment process has remained confined to the level of formality, when and where the power elites try to manipulate benefits in their own interests and also in the interests of their relatives and friends. In fact, they are marginalized. However, with the introduction of modern Panchayats the traditional authority of the tribals has not disappeared, rather there is a compromise between the two. The political life of the tribals is an admixture of both traditional and modern elements. And tribal societies are now intertwined with both the modern institutional developments and traditional institutional arrangements.*

I. CONCEPT OF MARGINALIZATION

The term “**Marginalization**” generally describes the overt actions or tendencies of human societies whereby those perceived as being without desirability or function are removed or excluded (i.e., are "marginalized"...) from the prevalent systems of protection and integration, so limiting their opportunities and means for survival. Marginalization has aspects in sociological, economic, and political debates. Marginalization may manifest itself in forms varying from genocide/ethnic-cleansing and other xenophobic acts/activities at one end of the spectrum, to more basic economic and social hardships at the unitary (individual/family) level. Marginalization was defined in the sociological literature as the situation in which people sit on the borders of two cultures existing within a society but are fully members of neither culture. It is cultural marginalization. (Gordon, 1964). Most recently, the phenomenon of social exclusion is important, where the socially excluded persons have no significant role in a society. They are excluded from the regular productive systems within the society and are problematic consumers of the benefits of society. They also belong to some minority group in society (Commission of the European Communities, 1993). Marginalization is more commonly made up of people who belong to the country in which they find themselves marginalized. Various situations that have become common to marginalization are less access to the protection of the state, the degree of protest, the reality of a degree of exclusion from and special treatment by society, intermittent participation in society and reactions from among the members of the marginalized group or groups etc.

II. CONCEPT OF SOCIAL EXCLUSION

There is also note of self-exclusion theory that says that human beings are socially constituted and as such are product of culture, social apparatus and their environment and then they can never take responsibility as individuals for their own marginalization. But it can be argued that though individuals are products of their social circumstances they do have space in which they can make decision about changing these circumstances. Thus, in totality, social exclusion denotes the following characteristics of a society at large or individuals at least.

- 1) Inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life.
- 2) Distance and alienation from a so called mainstream society.
- 3) Isolation from major societal mechanisms which produce or distribute social resources.

Social exclusion is a broader concept. It is a related concept with unemployment and poverty, but not an identical one with them. Social exclusion is a relative term particular to a place or country on certain circumstances. It is always related to a social agent or agents. Exclusion is also dynamic term depending upon people’s immediate condition. ‘The concept of inclusion means the encompassing of the entire population in the

performances of the individual function systems. On the one hand, this concerns access to these benefits and, on the other, dependence of individual modes of living on them. To the extent that inclusion is achieved, groups disappear that do not or only marginally participate in social living.' (Luhman 1990: 34). Social exclusion is the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live.

Social exclusion has to be seen as an institutionalized form of inequality, the failure of a society to extend to all sections of its population, the economic resources and social recognition which they need in order to participate fully in the collective life of the community. Social exclusion is a kind of mechanism by which 'access' and recognition is granted or denied. Economic theory suggests the distinction between 'open' and 'closed' groups as one way of understanding access and exclusion. Open groups are those which achieve their objectives by expanding their membership because the benefits they seek increase with the increased membership and outweigh the recruiting bringing new members. Closed groups like trade unions, on the other hand, achieve their objectives by restricting their membership on the basis of some agreed set of rules.

III. THE MARGINALIZED GROUPS – SCS AND STS

In less developed economies, women also tend to be marginalized, as also the physically and mentally challenged. In nations such as India, there is also the problem of the marginalization of Dalits, Tribals, and other backward castes and communities. Stagnation, unemployment, income inequality, and regional disequilibria are all seen as directly related to a less-developed country's position *vis-à-vis* the developed and capitalist world. The Scheduled Tribes like the Scheduled Castes face structural discrimination within the Indian society. Unlike the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes are a product of marginalization based on ethnicity. In India, the Scheduled Tribes population is around 84.3 million and is considered to be socially and economically disadvantaged. Their percentages in the population and numbers however vary from State to State. They are mainly landless with little control over resources such as land, forest and water. They constitute a large proportion of agricultural labourers, casual labourers, plantation labourers, industrial labourers etc. This has resulted in poverty among them, low levels of education, poor health and reduced access to healthcare services. They belong to the poorest strata of the society and have severe health problems. They are less likely to afford and get access to healthcare services when required. The health outcomes among the Scheduled Tribes are very poor even as compared to the Scheduled Castes. The Infant Mortality Rate among Scheduled Castes is 83 per 1000 live births while it is 84.2 per 1000 per live births among the Scheduled Tribes (Jain, 1981).

Among the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes the most vulnerable are women, children (Government of India, 2002), and aged, those living with HIV/AIDS, mental illness and disability. These groups face severe forms of discrimination that denies them access to treatment and prevents them from achieving a better health status. Gender based violence and domestic violence is high among women in general in India. Girl child and women from the marginalized groups are more vulnerable to violence. The dropout and illiteracy rates among them are high. Early marriage, trafficking, forced prostitution and other forms of exploitation are also reportedly high among them. In situations of caste conflict, women from marginalized groups face sexual violence from men of upper caste i.e., rape and other forms of mental torture and humiliation.

The scheduled castes and tribes have little access to education which is the poor's most potent weapon for self-advancement. In some of our most populous states there is scarcely one literate woman out of one hundred scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women. For the country as a whole, only 5 per cent of women and 20 per cent of men from among the scheduled castes are literate; the position of scheduled tribes is worse. This high illiteracy especially among women is one of the biggest obstacles in the race against poverty. Again, only a small proportion of those who are literate have had access to higher education, the drop-out rate, for economic reasons, being high. Though, seen over time, there is an improvement in the ratio of enrolment of the children of scheduled castes and tribes, in primary and secondary schools, they are still significantly below the enrolment ratio of the general population. Apart from education, assets are a vital means of economic advancement.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study is based on intensive fieldwork. In few cases qualitative method has been supplemented by quantitative method of observation or analysis. Every care has been taken to make the study objective and methodologically sound. At the same time, given the qualitative nature of study, purely quantitative techniques have been avoided to the extent possible. The attempt has been made mainly to elicit information through what Galtung has characterized as dialogical method in the interview process. For empirical work survey method has been adopted. The main respondents of this work were Panchayat members and the tribal beneficiaries based on non-probable purposive sampling. Apart from this, different records at Block and Panchayat levels have been used for getting necessary and relevant information. Block level officials of Land and Land Revenue Department, Health Department and Panchayat and Community Development Department etc. were interviewed. Government and Party Publications have been used. The study has been confined to observation in

one area only. *Jamalpur* block is one of the less developed or underdeveloped blocks in the district of Burdwan of West Bengal. The population is a mixed one, including pure Hindu castes, semi-aboriginals recently admitted in the pale of Hinduism, and pure aboriginal tribes, for example Santal, Kora, Oraon, Bhumij etc. Among them the Santals predominate.

V. DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The rural areas in West Bengal are characterized by accentuation of inequalities, poverty, lack of productivity and lack of basic minimum services. Recognizing this, the state has resorted to direct intervention in tribal development. Different strategies emphasize different set of policies in order to achieve goals. The development policies are related to land, agriculture, employment, education etc. Distribution of land and other assets is much skewed, in rural societies, characterized by large-scale employment on the one hand and lower productivity, on the other. However, agriculture remains the main avenue of providing incomes and employment in rural areas. The development programmes should be formulated through institutions like panchayats, are powerful agents in implementing development strategies. The development programmes are based on various approaches: Community Approach, Area Development Approach, Target Group Approach, Employment Generation Approach, Poverty Alleviation Approach, Social Welfare Approach, which are aimed at upliftment of the rural mass based on economic criteria and social welfare measures. The Community Development Programmes are aimed at the transformation of the socio-economic life of the rural mass, development of their material and human resources and development of rural leadership and self-governing institutions. (Programme Officer, *Jamalpur* Panchayat Samity, 2003). In the Area Development Approach, Intensive Agricultural District Programme, Drought Prone Areas Programme, Desert Development Programme, Command Area Development Programme, Hill Area Development Programme are important. This is the second phase of rural development aiming at improving agricultural production due to population explosion, food shortages etc. This growth-oriented agricultural development failed and special programmes for the weaker sections like Small Farmers Development Agency, Marginal Farmers and Agricultural Labourers Programmes, Tribal Areas Development Programme and Tribal Sub-plans did not make much improvement. The programmes for the tribals emphasize improvement of the quality of tribal life, elimination of all forms of exploitation, speeding up the process of socio-economic development and building up of confidence among them. Side by side, employment generation schemes like Crash Scheme for Rural Employment, Social Forestry, Indira Awas Yojana and Million Wells Scheme are important. Taking family as the unit of planning and employment generation Integrated Rural Development Programme is aimed at removing poverty and unemployment. The supporting component of IRDP is Training of Rural Youth for Self-employment aiming at providing technical skills for rural youth living in poverty. With a view to motivate women to take up income generating activities to supplement their family income Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) groups have been formed. Further, to enhance quality production and increase in income with the use of modern tools Supply of Improved Toolkits to Rural Artisans (SITRA) programme has been launched. Previously launched programmes like NREP and RLEGP have been merged into Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) for improvement of rural infrastructure, creation of social assets and sustained employment and increase in wage levels. Apart from JRY, the Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS) is likely to provide assured gainful employment to the rural poor. The rural poor for their livelihood need few basic services and facilities of social consumption like elementary and adult education, rural health, water supply, electrification etc. and to this end Minimum Needs Programme is intended to establish a network of basic services. For making a well-knit and communicable network of basic services improvement of the conditions of child and mother should have to be made through Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in terms of improvement of the nutritional and health status of children in the age group of 0-6 years, psycho-physical and social development of child, reduction in infant mortality and school dropout of children and enhancement of the nutritional needs of the child. Not only that. Under Central Rural Sanitation Programme the central government decided to provide sanitary latrine to poor SCs and STs, where the total resources are to be mobilized on a centre-state share of 50:50. Apart from this, in the National Social Assistance Programme three schemes have been formulated — National Old Age Pension Scheme: benefits provided to aged and destitute persons receiving Rs. 75 to 100 per month; National Family Benefit Scheme: benefits provided to persons in the age group of 18-64 years receiving Rs. 500 in case of death due to natural causes and Rs. 10,000 in case of accidental death; National Maternity Benefit Scheme: benefits provided to pregnant mother receiving Rs. 300-500 for pre-natal maternity care up to first two live births.

The development programmes for the tribals are mainly based on wage employment and house building and house repair loan, which take a recourse to *status quo* maintenance giving only side payments to the down trodden in the game of power politics, power in the forms of wealth and leverage. In this play of non-zero-sum game the down trodden tribals have had to succumb to the pressure and pull of market economy and politico-economic leverage of non-tribal and tribal haves and neo-haves. They receive dole-giving package and remain only as labourers. Their work participation is significant.

VI. THE ECONOMY

In the absorption of tribal labour force agriculture continues to operate a significant development. There is a percentage decline in females usually employed. The demand for male skilled labour is at the high level with the onset of industrialization and the demand for the reserve army of labour comprising largely female labour is renewed with the expansion of tertiary sector (Boserup, 1970 and Poulos, 1989). The transformation of workforce suggests that a region registers change in the structure of its workforce (Clark, 1957; Fisher, 1964 and Gregory). It normally experiences a shift from primary to secondary and tertiary functions. Recent changes, for example urban development (Ram, 1979), industrial development (Mukherjee) and immigration (Sinha, 1980) have affected the occupational structure. All tribal groups may be grouped into following categories: increase in primary at the cost of tertiary, increase in primary at the cost of secondary, increase in primary at the costs of both secondary and tertiary, increase in secondary at the costs of both primary and tertiary, increase in tertiary at the costs of both primary and secondary and increase in secondary and tertiary at the cost of primary. It may be mentioned here that proportion of male tribal workers in primary, secondary and tertiary sectors has remained almost constant. There also has occurred only a marginal shift and that too toward the primary sector at the cost of non-primary sectors. It may be due to the substantial increase in the growth of tribal labour force and low absorptive capacity of labour force in the secondary and tertiary sectors. This indicates the deterioration in the average employment situation and standard of living of the working tribal people. There is loss in the proportion of cultivators, has been mostly gained by the category of agricultural labourers, indicates the relative deterioration in the employment conditions of the tribals. The pressure of population upon agricultural land is increasing with the progress of time and more and more population pressure on agricultural land is the reality of present daytime. The non-agricultural functions are generally beyond the reach of the average tribal workers. However, few tendencies can be pointed out in this regard. First, the share of agricultural employment falls as economic development proceeds. Second, the per capita real income is low, wherein the percentage of total population engaged in primary production. Third, there is a general tendency for tertiary functions to expand more rapidly than the secondary. Fourth, there is a progressive fall in the proportions of workers in the primary sector has been invariably accompanied by rise in productivity. The efforts of development in tribal areas are rounded up with the approach to area development, has failed to uplift the lot of the poor tribals creating an artificial demarcation between the mass of the poor tribals, on the one hand and microscopic minority of elite and affluent tribals and non-tribals, on the other. Being uprooted from traditional occupations like food gathering, fishing and hunting without any proper alternative, they are divorced from their hold to local natural resources, different indigenous household industries resulting in the deterioration in the quality of tribal employment. They are becoming landless labourers more and more. As per 1991 census report only 1507 STs were engaged in cultivation, 15186 as agricultural labourers in the study area. Only 137 and 310 tribal population were engaged both in secondary and tertiary sectors. And in the primary sector 16720 tribal people were involved. Therefore, 50.83 per cent in primary sector is greater than 0.94 per cent in tertiary sector, which is greater than the secondary sector, *i.e.* 0.41 per cent.

VII. THE BENEFICIARIES

The individual beneficiaries under schemes like SGRY and IAY were a minimum. Besides this wage employment, *i.e.* the creation of mandays, mere housing loan and old age pension did not make them self-sufficient. Among them agriculture is the main occupation and inheritance is followed in case of property ownership, distributed among their sons. Unemployment problem in the society is mainly of seasonal in character. The strategy of increase in wage employment and the provision of providing house building and house repair loans and also mere old age pension has neglected the entrepreneurial aspect and self-sustained development efforts on the part of the tribals. Therefore, the strategy of development has neglected the poor and the problems of the poor have not been dealt with properly by the planners and administrators. The programmes like SGRY, IAY, NOAPS, NBMS and TSP devised to help the poor did not seek major changes in the socio-economic structure and hence, these were incremental. There is also the lack of political will to help the poor. The tribal people, who have economic leverage, and who are above poverty line, or who have economic strength to buy goods and services have their needs different from the needs of the majority in society or the needs of the poor. 'Just as the set of needs will vary from one society to another, it can vary in the same society as its standard of living changes.' (Roach and Roach, 1972: 24). These poor people are relatively deprived. Relative deprivation leads to powerlessness, which is the necessary pre-condition for violent civil conduct (Coser, 1968). The severer relative deprivation, the greater is the likelihood of civil violence (Dubey, 1969). And the development programmes are intended to mitigate the feelings of relative deprivation and to lessen the risk of violent upsurge. In fact, the programmes were vast and all-inclusive and touched all aspects of the life of the people. 'Most people have cots to sleep on and a few now like to have pulses and vegetables in their daily food. Their dress has been changed and their speech shows marks of urbanity. They have developed a strong liking for

earning money and would not do anything now for anybody without payment. There is no appreciable change in the standard of living of the people. Instead of depending on self-help and developing initiative, people are more inclined to look for Government support in all their activities.' (Sachchidananda, 1964: 118). The tribal people are handicapped. Their entrepreneurial initiative is dead. They are too much depended on Government help and less interested in the role of voluntary organizations. Waghmare's formulation — all the have favourable attitude towards voluntary organizations is not applicable in the study area of this district. In his study majority of the respondents, *i.e.* 69.6 per cent have favourable attitude towards voluntary organizations. 27.20 per cent and 2.70 per cent of the respondents are of undecided attitude and unfavourable attitude towards voluntary organizations respectively (Waghmare and Others, 1988). Tribal people in the study area are too much dependent on Government help in comparison to their dependence on voluntary organizations. During survey I found that majority of the respondents took Government help and institutional assistance as the way to growth and development. Panchayats in the rural scenario play an important role in this area (Field Survey, 2003).

It is to be noted that the sustainable development of the tribals depends on a system of self-development based on their own creative force and corporate productive resources. The plan for tribal development must take forest and land resources as base. The study area is not covered by forest. The prime resource base is land. Land remains the main source of their income. Here, there is direct participation of the tribals whether they are *bargadars*, *pattadars* or agricultural labourers. Very few of the tribes in this block are owner cultivators. Majority of the *pattadars* is from SC categories in comparison to STs and others. The numerical strength of *pattadars* and *bargadars* in this block up to Dec., 2002 (Table No. 1) may be cited as an example.

Table 1: Barga and Patta Operations in Jamalpur, Dec., 2002

Categories of occupants	Number	Total land in acres	Acres per beneficiary	Categories of occupation
ST	2248	2200.95	0.98	Barga
ST	506	474.80	0.94	Patta
SC	3709	3024.33	0.81	Barga
SC	2884	400.99	0.14	Patta
Others	3266	3633.78	1.11	Barga
Others	2512	224.70	0.09	Patta

Source: Calculated and compiled from data collected from *Block Land and Land Revenue Office*, Jamalpur, Burdwan

Though the SC beneficiaries form majority in number, but in terms of acres per beneficiary ST beneficiaries rank higher than SCs in the category of *patta* land and in the category of *barga* operation the others get more than that of STs and SCs. Secondly, *pattadars* are mostly illiterate and in the grind wheels of poverty. They are landless. On average, the ST beneficiary received 0.94 acres of *patta* land. Besides the *bastu patta* land, those who have got agricultural *patta* lands have slightly improved their economy. They are agricultural labourers working at the wage rate of Rs. 50 to 55 per day. When they need money for ceremonial or consumption purposes they go to private moneylenders or *mahajans* and draw credit at the rate of interest of Rs. 10 to 12 per month. This incidence of indebtedness does seriously harm their economic strength. Another incidence occurs. It is found that these tribal poor go to their employers or *manibs* for financial credit on account of repayment of loan during rainy and winter seasons without any interest. This is a positive sign. The *barga* beneficiary, on an average, got 0.98 acres of agricultural land and they had to operate *barga* cultivation on the basis of 75:25 crop-sharing generally and 60:40 occasionally. Mention here may be made that those *bargadars* or share-croppers and *pattadars* or vested land holders own more than 2-3 acres of agricultural lands, are economically sound. Few of them buy lands for cultivation. The savings and investment motives among them have made them more oriented towards further economic development. The conditions of these *bargadars* are much more improved than the mere *pattaholders*. Except institutional assistance, they need not credit from private sources. Thirdly, poor *pattaholders* and *bargadars* are members of *Krishak Sangathan* and they attend meetings of *Gram Sansad*. Many of the members say that we do not take decisions. We follow our leaders and their decisions. Fourthly, distribution of small piece of land to the poor and fragmentation of land are not conducive to production improvement, efficiency and economy. Few amount of money in hands has increased the consumption of luxury goods among them. Party leaders and panchayat members are in favour of distribution of land in more hands on head count basis and administration is subservient to the interests of the party leaders and liable to party dictates. Fifthly, programmes like land distribution among them, recording the names of the *bargadars*, resettlement of landless agricultural labourers providing house sites and housing loans, extension of employment, generation of self-employment have had little impact on their pressing problems and urgent needs. No individual programme from sectoral angle can heal the ulcer, rather an integrated approach to

economy and efficiency should have to be enunciated and expedited with possible effective co-ordination between various programmes. This area is prospective for development. Agriculture is the prime source of income. Infrastructural development is at the low ebb and taking gradually. Technology transformation is low. Tribals are being dissociated from the control over resources and from the decision making process. Their electoral turn-out is high, but political participation in the decision making is low. Resource utilization pattern is not so low. People from neighbouring districts like Bankura, Birbhum and Midnapore come for work in this block during the busy seasons of paddy sowing, harvesting and potato plantation. In this development process the tribals should play the role of an actor as co-sharers in the creation of wealth and take active part in its management. To ensure man-nature-society symbiotic relationship without generating conflicts between them emphasis should be laid on maximization of creative participation and minimization of socio-economic disorder. The poor tribals are too weak to stand as equal against the non-tribals. They have to be properly organized, politicized and mobilized imparting a sense of participation among them in view of productive resources, productive relations, manpower position and socio-economic orientation. In fact, development centres round a high rate of economic growth with social justice, priority investment, political decentralization and moulding of tradition with modernization. Popular participation should be treated as the basic policy in national development and as a basic policy measure active participation of all individuals in the development process is a *sine qua non* for development. Participation provides the beneficiaries of development programmes an opportunity for opinion building, helps the planners in setting goals and objectives, formulating policies, implementing plans and programmes, organizing and evaluating the target community, the less privileged few. The problems of the tribals, the rural down-troddens are germinated from structural conditions and not functional in a real sense. Participation makes the people aware of their problems and root causes behind these problems.

Apart from direct participation of the tribals in the operation of *barga* and distribution of *patta* lands, participation of the tribals in wage employment is also an important phenomenon as an approach to direct participation. Up to July, 2003 the wage rate of agricultural labourers was Rs. 50 per day and now it has increased up to Rs. 55. On an average, a family includes five members, is economically backward and subjected to economic hardships, social deprivation and alienation. The families who are poor brood over daily necessities of their life. The Government has fixed Rs. 9.14.5 as per capita expenditure per day as the minimum criterion of people living below poverty line and Rs. 45.72.5 of a family below the line of poverty. The monthly and per annum expenditures of an individual member of a family, and of all family members are Rs. 274.35 and Rs. 3,292.20, and Rs. 1,371.75 and Rs. 16,461. People living below these figures or within these figures are below poverty line poor and poor in general as per Government strictures.

Apart from operation *barga*, distribution of *patta* lands and daily wage employment, the extent of participation of the tribal people in the formulation and decision making process of the development programmes in this block is an important indicator of development paradigm. To this end Chakshanjadi, Shambhupur, Jamudaha, Sahapur, Parbatpur, Panchra and Galdaha areas of the block have been surveyed.

VIII. PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT

Mention here may be made that people 'feel that even the limited power at the disposal of the Left Front Government has not been properly used. It will not be an exaggeration to say that procrastination and misuse in the administration are on the increase. In areas like education, health, transport, irrigation works, labour, electricity, local self-government ... which are closely connected with the people, the role of the government has no impact on the masses. Even progressive measures like taking over the vested land and cancellation of illegal *pattas*, *barga* recording... all undertaken for the good of the people have not been properly implemented.' (Burdwan District Committee, CPI (M), 1985: 26-27). The destitution of most of the tribal people does not end with the implementation of the development programmes. This destitution has resulted in the culmination of four interrelated consequences: deterioration in resources, technological change without change in the quantum of total resources and the consumption pattern, stagnation in production relations, but rapid changes in technology and consumption pattern leading to progressive destitution of the tribals, and stagnation in resource position, technology and productive relations, but rapid changes in the consumption pattern. Tribal economy tends to be diversified in this area. They are dissociated from the control of the resources, from decision making in resource utilization pattern and development programmes. From the field survey it becomes clear that 59.75 per cent respondents regularly did not attend *Gram Sansad* meetings. 40.25 per cent respondents were regular in attending *Gram Sansad* meetings, 43 per cent were regularly casual, 16.35 per cent and 40 per cent were non-participatory when needed and occasionally. Henceforth, 40.25 per cent were never non-participatory (Field Survey, 2003). On an average the *Gram Sansad* meetings were casual and occasionally participatory (Field Survey, 2003). Therefore, the general people regularly participated less in the formulation of development programmes, *i.e.* who will take the benefits, how the benefits be percolated down and the overall decision making process. Understanding from the views of the respondents it is evident that party-panchayat leaders, *Gram Sansad* members and *Pradhans* combined a trio, contributed 95.11 per cent in

their control over the decision making process — benefits — who gets what, when and how? As decision making agents general people contribute only 1.63 per cent, which is just double than that of the Panchayat Samity. The influential personalities, who were influential during 50s and 60s, contribute only 2.45 per cent now and in a subtle way form a covert alliance with the newly dominant party-panchayat leaders-*Gram Sansad* members-*Pradhan* trio. In the development programmes 75.92 per cent tribal people participated as daily labour. This participation through daily labour is significantly supported by moral enthusiasm and benefit sharing of only 18.37 per cent and 75.50 per cent of participation through discussion. The poles apart diversification of tribal participation in the development programmes: participation through decision making and participation through discussion, and participation through money and participation through labour is ridicule, believes to be an unexpected phenomenon (Field Survey, 2003). These large-scale deviations of diversification of participation need to be shortened. It seems clear that participation of the tribals in the development programmes was mainly through labour, moral support and benefit sharing, but very poor through decision making. The deviation above 70 per cent is not conducive to the requirements of rural development in association with tribal development. It has been observed from the field study that majority of the respondents expressed that active participation and involvement of the tribal people or the rural populace is essential for the success of the development programmes. 94.28 per cent respondents expressed deep sorrows about their non-involvement and non-participation in multiple development programmes, were taken for their development. Regarding the choice of the scheme in majority of cases it was found that the beneficiaries were not allowed to select their own scheme, rather it was imposed on them. The awareness of the tribals about various development schemes is about 61.63 per cent. Despite the awareness, they only heard about decisions and participated the *Gram Sansad* meetings only to raise hands and voices in favour of decisions, but did not say anything that counteract the decisions and muddle the decision making process. 24.08 per cent of the respondents received benefits in terms of loans and subsidy, 2.45 per cent in the form of technical know-how. A negligible 0.82 per cent was in social forestry, when a larger share of 72.65 per cent in wage employment produced a negative tendency to tribal development. They received information about development schemes from Panchayat members (7.34 per cent contribution as source of information), local party leaders (38.78 per cent contribution as source of information) and *Gram Sansad* members (40 per cent contribution as source of information) out of total 86.12 per cent. Though only 13.88 per cent respondents did not receive information or were not interested to get information, the level of information or the quality of information, which the remaining portion received from the probable sources, was at the low ebb, had retarded confidence building among them — this is my perception (Field Survey, 2003). And the backdrop produced out of poverty and illiteracy has resulted in ignorance produced out of low qualities of perception, information and awareness among them — this is also my perception about my field area (Field Survey, 2003). The tribal people do not know the guidelines of the development schemes, how the programmes or programmatic schemes should be initiated, how the schemes should be profitable and how the efficiency and economy should be the guiding principles in the running of the programmes to become successful. Low quality information produces ignorance directly and indirectly (diagonally) through poverty, illiteracy and backdrops, and also reduces confidence indirectly through the same. Ignorance has made them oriented more towards consumption rather than investment. With regard to the desired effects of effective programme implementation 10.20 per cent respondents expressed their favour to increase in income, savings and investment and depending less on landowners or moneylenders. An environment of investment has not been created among the tribal people. Only 1.23 per cent said that banks should be liberal in providing loans. 45.30 per cent of the respondents expressed most lamentably that they were not getting adequate benefits and more facilities should be provided to them for buying more foods and consumer durable (24.50 per cent), living lives with more certainty and for getting more employment opportunities (2.86 per cent). The respondents also criticized the functioning of Panchayat authorities for non-utilization of fund properly. However, it was only 3.26 per cent of the total respondents. 53.47 per cent of the respondents were not satisfied with the selection of beneficiaries. They said that depressed and poor families were least benefited. My perception here is that the respondents tried to point out the procedural and substantive defects of providing benefits to the beneficiaries (Field Survey, 2003). Selection through Beneficiary Committee and *Gram Sansad* meetings was not proper. In fact, those who need did not get benefit, and those who got the benefit, were devoid of their own, choices. Schemes were superimposed on the beneficiaries. Here, Professor Sen's Theory of Choice as the prime choice for rural development approach is absent. Out of the total respondents 27.35 per cent received loans, technical know-how and help for social forestry. This does not mean that the beneficiaries are from the higher economic background. Most of the beneficiaries (79.10 per cent) are from lower economic category. Their general feature is economic hardships. Due to this low economic background the beneficiaries mostly consume the loans. Only 11.43 per cent expressed that the loans sanctioned for various development schemes were properly utilized and the remaining 88.57 per cent were in the category of non-repayment. And for that banks were not interested in providing loans — the majority respondents of 91.43 per cent stressed their conviction about the fallout of different projects sanctioned and rejection of many new projects approved by the

Panchayat Samity. Due to superimposition of projects the spontaneous involvement of the tribal people in the development programmes becomes absent. Panchayats' demand for people's participation in development programmes was more casual than participatory, but more participatory (57.55 per cent) than non-participatory (42.45 per cent) [Field Survey, 2003].

The respondents who were mainly from the age group of 21-30 years (67.35 per cent) and 31-50 years (20 per cent) with a socio-economic background: mostly illiterate (37.14 per cent) and literate (36.33 per cent), agricultural labourers (59.18 per cent) and share-croppers (34.69 per cent) in the low to medium category having a minimum portion of land in their ownership, except share-cropping and *patta* lands reported that participation in the decision making was not their task. The leaders took decisions and did the task of decision making. I have categorized the socio-economic status of the respondents into high (70>), medium (35-69) and low (up to 35) on the basis of points scored by the respondents. I have ranked them on the basis of living standard of the respondents, their daily food habits, socio-economic outlook, creativity, and sources of information, recreational implements, and their greater political access (Field Survey, 2003). The respondents of lower category form 67.76 per cent, who participate less in the decision making. The beneficiaries in the forms of loans and subsidy, technical know-how and social forestry were only 27.35 per cent, *i.e.* 57 in number. Out of these 54.39 per cent, 24.57 per cent, 21.04 per cent and 14.93 per cent respondents gave their first, second, third and negative preferences to their involvement with Panchayat members *vis-à-vis* 8.96 per cent, 5.97 per cent, 11.94 per cent and 73.13 per cent to their involvement with Government functionaries. Most of these beneficiaries were from the age group of 21-30 years (76.12 per cent), low economy (79.10 per cent), illiterate group (62.69 per cent) and agricultural labourers (67.16 per cent) [Field Survey, 2003]. Landless agricultural labourers and landless share-croppers also represented these groups of beneficiaries. Out of total respondents (245) 80.82 per cent tribals were landless and 11.02 per cent were of having lands < 1 acre. Very few (6.94 per cent and 1.22 per cent) reported to have 1-3 acres and 3 > acres (Field Survey, 2003). The down-trodden people are far away from acting as decision making agents. Distribution of *patta* lands and *barga* operation was act of dictated mobilization by the political parties and political leaders. Decisions were not taken by the tribals themselves, rather motivated by the party-political leaders in this regard. Field results (Table No. 2) in relation to share-cropping and *patta* lands distribution show that —

Table 2: Share-cropping and Patta lands Distribution

Parameter	Total No.	Number distribution	Percentage
SHARE-CROPPING:	155	...	100
Less than 1 acre		65	41.93
1-3 acres		72	46.45
3> acres		18	11.61
PATTA LANDS DISTRIBUTION:	43	...	100
Less than 1 acre		38	88.37
1-3 acres		5	11.63
3> acres	

Source: *Field Survey*

Empowerment means endowing those who are powerless or having no power with a share of it. It is both process and product. In so far as tribes control and enjoy some power the measures so taken, however inadequate they may be, may be conceived as products. They may be seen also as processes in that they constitute stages to or strategies for the larger process of greater empowerment of the tribes. The process of disempowerment of the tribes began with the incorporation of the tribes into the larger social structure. The whole thrust of development after independence was to integrate the tribes into the mainstream as to their geographical isolation, low level of development and social backwardness (Ray, 1972). The issues of tribal development could not be pursued outside of national development. The national development worked at loggerheads with the interest and welfare of the tribes and the interest of the latter was invariably sacrificed in the name of national development. The process of alienation has started with the process of incorporation. The fruits of development have not gone to the tribes, but to the people from outside. They find themselves increasingly subjected to impoverishment, exploitation and oppression. The tribes had very little to say or to do in administration that affected their life. One of the ways in which this problem could have been overcome is by ensuring their involvement and participation in the organs of the state. Empowerment to the tribal people means power to control their own resources and determine and regulate their own life according to their own genius. As per the Scheduled Areas Act, 1996, *Gram Sabha* is the prime unit of participation. Every village will have a *gram sabha* consisting of persons whose names are included in the electoral rolls for the panchayats at the village level. The *gram sabha* is vested with power to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, and community resources. It is also vested with the power to approve plans,

programmes and projects for socio-economic development. Participation of the tribes of this study area in *gram sabha* meetings is not encouraging; they are apathetic to participation (Field Survey, 2003).

Popular participation in the panchayat is quite encouraging. The participatory orientation of the tribals in different elections is high. Most of the respondents expressed their views that they cast their votes in almost all elections; they faced (Field Survey, 2003). In terms of age of respondents the age group of 21-30 was more enthusiastic; they faced several elections during their lifetime. They did not alienate themselves from mainstream politics. They have adapted themselves with regime values and norms. Their attitude towards political order and mobilization do not differ basically from the general mass of the population, though their culture of participation is not participatory in real sense of the term. With regard to attitude towards political order there appears to be an agreement on procedures. And with regard to attitude towards mobilization there appears a commitment to action and means of translating this commitment into action. The tribal people are adaptive to and compromising with the prevailing attitudes towards socio-political conditions. They cast their votes, discuss political matters with their leaders, friends and neighbours, and also attend political meetings. Most of the respondents are not aware of various political issues, but they participate in elections for expressive purposes. Though the number of voting turn-out is significant, most of them do not know the significance of voting, their rights and duties and their role in the political system. 37.14 per cent and 62.86 per cent respondents expressed that they cast their votes with a view to elect their candidate only and to elect the same as he would provide goods and services after being elected respectively. Being allured by wage increase, *patta* lands distribution and operation *barga* (40.81 per cent as motivating agent), motivated by political leaders (42.86 per cent as motivating agent) and inspired and encouraged by friends and relatives (6.94 per cent as motivating agent), they cast their votes without exactly knowing or without going to know or to understand what they are doing and why they are doing. They elect the candidate, which they support without keeping in mind the socio-economic background of the candidates, their leadership qualities and without being aware of the principles of their party. Though they took part in political discussion casually (56.33 per cent), however they showed their keen interest in elections and politics. The number of tribal people interested in politics does take part in political discussion, but the same percentage of people does not attend meetings (Table No. 3).

Further, there are various levels of participation, from taking part in political discussion to taking part in decision making. Casting of votes takes the middle of the row. Economic backwardness, lack of education and socio-economic inequality all have debarred the tribals from taking part in decision making. The participation of tribals in political activities may be listed as casting of votes, taking part in political discussion, attending meetings, participation in election campaigning, canvassing for candidates and in few cases contributing to election fund etc. For improving the quality and level of participation effective measures for tribal welfare are necessary. The present development efforts are not adequate, rather aim of these development efforts should not be mere incrementalism but a thorough revamping of socio-economic conditions. In fact, socio-economic mobilization and socio-economic participation should be generated first and then political mobilization and political participation would be stepped up. There are four pillars of tribal development. The order is cyclic.

Table 4: Development Indicators

Indicators or Parameters	Index
1. Total number of households surveyed	245 on an average
2. Average size of the households	4.50%
3. Earners	77.77%
4. Non-earners	22.23%
5. Illiterate	37.14%
6. Literate	36.33%
7. Class I-IV	20.82%
8. Class IV-X	4.90%
9. Class X-XII	0.81%
10. Average size of holding	1.47 acres
11. Landless	80.82%
12. Less than 1 acre	11.02%
13. 1-3 acres	6.94%
14. 3 > acres	1.22%
15. Percentage of land cultivated	Cent per cent
16. Percentage of area under food crops	98.12%
17. Percentage of area under commercial crops	1.88%
18. Percentage of area irrigated	Cent per cent
19. Average size of share-cropping	1.49 acres

20. Less than 1 acre	41.93%
21. 1-3 acres	46.45%
22. 3 > acres	11.61%
23. Average size of patta lands	0.63 acres
24. Less than 1 acre	88.37%
25. 1-3 acres	11.63%
26. 3 > acres	Nil
27. Percentage of area irrigated	93.15%
28. Average income per household (per month)	Rs. 2,258
29. Income from agriculture	68%
30. Income from wages	32%
31. Average expenditure per household (per month)	Rs. 2,550
32. Expenditure against food	50%
33. Expenditure against drinks and gambling	9.50%
34. Expenditure against clothing and footwear	10.30%
35. Expenditure against rites and ceremonies	8.20%
36. Expenditure against tobacco	5.88%
37. Expenditure against consumer durable	6.20%
38. Expenditure against health	5.37%
39. Expenditure against education	4.55%
40. Household below poverty line as per govt. rule (Rs. 274.35 per head per month)	Nil
41. Average loan per household (institutional)	Rs. 10,695
42. Percentage of household institutional loan borrowed	24.08%
43. Average loan per household (traditional)	Rs. 778
44. Percentage of household traditional loan borrowed	11.4%

Source: Based on *Field Survey and Block Development Office, Jamalpur, Burdwan*

The development indicators (Table No. 4) in this block area indicate that the conditions of the tribal people are not well developed, but prospective for further development. The maximum number of households is found in the size group of three to five persons indicating that there is no significant variation in the average size of households. The earners constitute 77.77 per cent and non-earners 22.23 per cent represent economic conditions of average tribal households. The non-earners include aged, disabled and children, contribute nothing to the economic benefit of the family. Only 37.14 per cent are illiterate. Remaining 62.86 per cent range between literate to educated one. The average size of landholding in this area is 1.47 acres. Fragmentation of landholdings, population explosion and nucleus family system are the reasons for this low level of landholding. Landholdings in the hands of the tribal people are limited and the lands should be allotted to the landless tribal households. Limited landholdings available with cultivators are uneconomic and should be improved by intensive cultivation and adopting new techniques. Irrigation system in this area is improved. Cent per cent of the lands in possession of the tribals is cultivated, out of this 98.12 per cent are under food crops and 1.88 per cent are under commercial crops. The average size of share-cropping is only 1.49 acres, is a slight improvement over the average landholding pattern, but a much more improvement over the average size of *patta* land. The average income per household is Rs. 2,258 and expenditure is Rs. 2,550. Income from agriculture accounts for 68 per cent and from wages it is only 32 per cent. Higher percentage of income from agriculture is due to irrigation facilities, improved seeds and application of pesticides and fertilizers and lower percentage of income from wages is due to huge supply of labour force, seasonal unemployment etc. The expenditure pattern among them is also high in respect with their level of income accounting for an average deficit of Rs. 292 per month. Food is a major item of expenditure, which accounts for 50 per cent. Expenditure on clothing and footwear (10.30%) is high, next to expenditure against food. Expenditures against drinks and gambling and also against rites and ceremonies account for 9.5 per cent and 8.2 per cent respectively. Expenditure against consumer durable like radio, cycle, torchlight, wristwatch, utensils etc. is 6.20 per cent. The minimum amount of money is spent on health and education. In fact, they have adapted themselves with the non-tribal society and are in tune with the growing needs of the society. Though these households are not below poverty line as per government criteria, still lead a poor life. Government help is available, which has not been properly utilized. The tribals cannot afford to lead a normal economic and social life. This is the reason why government is now granting loans to the poor. The institutional loan forms 24.08 per cent with an average of Rs. 10,695 per household, when private money-lenders grant Rs. 778 on an average to the tribal households accounting for 11.4 per cent in total. The tribal people are very much aware of the functioning and role of institutions granting loans, of the

exorbitant rates of interest of the private money-lenders, of the conditions of bonded labour due to non-repayment of loans to the private money-lenders. They prefer institutional than non-institutional loans.

The educational and economic development in this area is very low. The populace is drowned with illiteracy, ignorance, hoary superstitions, abysmal poverty and unsettled occupations. Natural and human resources are grossly underdeveloped. Income distribution is far from equitable. Literacy, education and economy have a substantial bearing on the receptivity of change and the level of participation in development activities. Though they cherish more cash in their hands to improve their living standard, they are unmindful to development programmes. Most of the respondents say that the development programmes have not made better economic life for them (Field Survey, 2003):

The tribals are less exposed to development programmes. The programmes initiated by the government did not produce sufficient good to the extent expected. The participation of the tribals in community affairs is lower, but this is not the case with political participation, where the tribal respondents' rate is higher on the political participation continuum than that of in community affairs. In matters of economic, nutritional and educational betterment and also of increased leisure activities as a consequence of development programmes, the tribals lag far behind the non-tribals. As an example of development programmes or schemes mention here may be made about TSP (Field Survey, 2003).

The tribal people in this study area maintain their livelihood pattern through activities as like settled agriculture, industrial and agricultural labour, animal husbandry, fishing, trade and commerce. Development imperatives for the tribal people administered by economists and bureaucrats are almost centralized. Participation of the tribal people is not envisaged as an integral part of development. Numerical smallness, low perceptive capacity, low level of literacy, simple technology, primitive agricultural pursuits, lower economic capacity and lesser capacity to buy improved agricultural inputs — all have made the development pursuits meant for them to a negligible extent. The needs, aspirations, motivations and desires of the tribal people are not taken into consideration in the development process. In order to make the development programmes meaningful, to restore confidence among the tribals and bring the tribal people in closer contact with the outside world a bold, enthusiastic and authoritative leadership is necessary. The development programmes — family based and area based, *i.e.* land redistribution, land reclamation, soil conservation, supply of agricultural inputs, animal husbandry etc and construction of roads, tubewells, sanitation, minor irrigation, *shishu shikha kendras*, free primary schools, *anganwadi* centres etc. are intended to improve the economic conditions of the tribals and to create new job opportunities for them. However, the efforts should be directed towards the development of human capital, efficient utilization of human resources.

IX. CONCLUSION

The tribal people are marginalized. Except TSP there is no special programme for the tribals in this area, though the future of TSP is not so promising. Individual beneficiary schemes were a minimum. Creation of mandays through various community development programmes, mere housing loan and age old pension as individual beneficiary schemes did not make them self-sufficient on the one hand, and had neglected entrepreneurial aspect and self-sustained development efforts on the part of the tribals on the other. Participation and entrepreneurship development are absent among them. Development of the tribal people may be made through small scale industry development programmes by and through physico-psycho, socio-cultural and economic study and understanding of the area concerned where the programme is to be implemented and training of various categories of personnel involved. Apart from developing entrepreneurship, a follow-up action in providing developmental benefits to the tribals should be made. The single stroke formula of providing loans and facilities is unsuited to the development needs of the area.

It needs to be added here that the sustainable and self-reliant development does not mean an isolated and anarchic existence and it gives importance to financing development through domestic savings and fulfilling the basic human needs like subsistence needs of food, shelter and work; welfare needs of a fair deal for the weal and marginalized and overall social development; cultural needs of care, leisure, creative utilization and equal opportunity for all-round development; societal needs of social cohesion, institutionalizing mechanism of consensus and social discipline; identity needs of closeness, belongingness and partnership; security needs of autonomy for dissent, free expression and a way of life without repression; and development needs of change and development of skills for critical consciousness with an urge for justice and equality. The needs for need-based sustainable development are systemic model of development, healthy, self-reliant and participatory development, popular participation, social creativity, a fair distribution of wealth and a respect and tolerance for socio-cultural diversities, an ecological harmony and equilibrium, development of quality of life in totality, and empowerment of social actors and groups so as to transform economic development for the satisfaction of fundamental human needs. In fact, sustainable development refers to inter-generational development and justice and also an intra-generational development and justice. The first one means that the next generation should have access to at least the same resource base as the previous generation, and the second one justifies the socially

disadvantaged and marginalized individuals and groups are given special concern and a positive understanding of the significance of cultural diversity.

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