

# Sustainable Livelihoods of Tribal Communities in Odisha, India



# Sustainable Livelihoods of Tribal Communities in Odisha, India:

*The Case of Mayurbhanj*

By

Narayan Chandra Jana, Anuradha Banerjee  
and Prasanta Kumar Ghosh

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**Narayan Chandra Jana, Anuradha Banerjee, Prasanta Kumar Ghosh**

## MESSAGE

In India, tribes are the most backward section of the society due to their level of development as well as lack of integration with the mainstream society. Their social and economic status has been a matter of concern. Keeping the above facts in consideration, the present manuscript entitled **Sustainable Livelihoods of Tribal Communities in Odisha, India: The Case of Mayurbhanj** authored by Narayan Chandra Jana, Anuradha Banerjee and Prasanta Kumar Ghosh focuses on the issues of sustainability and sustainable development of tribal livelihood. The authors have highlighted critical situations of tribal occupation leading to rising social discontent, unrest and involvement in extremist actions. The undesirable activities can be checked by more eloquent and sustainable development of the tribal areas.

The book is interdisciplinary in nature and would be useful for the faculties and researchers of Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, Tribal Studies, Economics, and Development Studies. In addition, this volume will help in capacity building of the policy and decision-makers of South Asian countries focusing on emerging issues concerning tribal livelihood, social exclusion, and backward area development.

My best wishes for its possible widest circulation.

14<sup>th</sup> May, 2022

**Prithvish Nag**

Former Vice Chancellor:

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## FOREWORD

The tribes of India numerically form more than 8% of the total Indian population. They are spread out almost in all states including the Union Territories from the plains to the hills. They present a variety of socio-economic and cultural diversities in terms of their attainments of differential levels in the backdrop of human development indexes that are normally considered for a comparative assessment of their actual predicament. Prof. Amartya Sen in his Foreword to *Living World of the Adivasis of West Bengal*, published by the Asiatic Society in collaboration with the Pratiche Institute (February, 2020) observed, "...the evidence that Adivasis' deprivations arise not merely from the lack of private resources and the prejudices of the society at large, but also from the neglect of their interests in the governmental distribution of public facilities. This seems to apply in many different fields, including education, health-care, employment offerings, forest rights, among others". It seems, therefore, that the tribal population in India requires close studies and research even after 75 years of independence, specially in the academic disciplines broadly belonging to the human sciences for an in-depth understanding of their entire socio-cultural and politico-economic spectrum.

In fact, studies on the pattern of livelihood of collective and individual tribal groups give us some scope to understand the problems and assess their overall placement in the context of development in general and tribal development in particular in our country.

The present publication, authored by three eminent scholars, who belong to the discipline of Geography, and are affiliated to various academic institutions, presents to us a vivid and comprehensive picture, contextualizing a special focus on Mayurbhanj district, which is one of the nine tribal districts of the state of Odisha. The special aspect of it is that 22% of the total population of the state are enumerated as tribes and out of 62 total tribal communities in Odisha 53 belong to the district of Mayurbhanj itself. By a general consideration of the context of livelihood pattern, as conceived and portrayed, they are identified as particularly poverty-stricken groups. The authors have painstakingly and meticulously recorded the base line data through field survey by using both quantitative and

qualitative aspects of conventional methodological tools commonly used in social science research. They have also based their observations going back and forth between macro and micro dimensional linkages. The monograph has been presented in 10 chapters including an Introduction and Conclusion. The authors have worked hard to collect intensely valuable data from the field as well as from the secondary sources. It has made us generally aware of the tribal situation of the country and various problems of livelihood pattern of the respective tribal groups, specially the Santals, who constitute a considerable number in the population of the district of Mayurbhanj in Odisha. I believe the readers will be enlightened on some basic problems of the tribal world in general and their livelihood problems in particular. I hope for wide publicity of the book which is worth keeping in individual and institutional library collections.

5<sup>th</sup> May 2022

**Dr. S.B. Chakrabarti**  
General Secretary  
The Asiatic Society, Kolkata

## PROLOGUE

India is home to 705 Scheduled Tribes, making it second only to continental Africa as a region with tribal populations. Officially designated tribes make up almost ten per cent of the country's population and are among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India. Their comprehensive integration into broader society, with the advantages that can afford, has been a matter of great concern for government policy-writers and decision-makers for decades. Paying particular attention to tribal communities in the state of Odisha, and against a national trajectory favouring faster, sustainable and more inclusive growth, this book attends to matters of sustainability and the sustainable development of tribal livelihoods.

Odisha is the second poorest state in India and has the highest concentration of tribal populations. Of 30 districts in Odisha, nine are regarded as tribal districts. The district of Mayurbhanj, which serves a focal case within this book, features the highest concentration of tribes. Here, a small land-base, low agricultural productivity, and low incomes have led to rising indebtedness, trapping tribal members into a vicious circle of exploitation. These challenges have led to rising social discontent and unrest, prospectively offering fertile grounds for extremist activities. Overcoming such intertwined problems makes meaningful and sustainable development of tribal areas vital. It is to this important challenge that the authors of this book direct our attention.

Narayan Chandra Jana, Anuradha Banerjee and Prasanta Kumar Ghosh divide **Sustainable Livelihoods of Tribal Communities in Odisha, India: The Case of Mayurbhanj** into ten interlinked chapters, providing vital historical and geographical background to tribal development in India and its sustainability implications, before moving progressively to a focus on prospects and plans for future tribal development and secure, sustainable livelihoods.

This book will be of use and interest to students and scholars of anthropology, development studies, economics, geography, tribal studies, and sociology, particularly in South Asian universities and colleges but

also further afield. It also provides a detailed resource for building capacity among those policy makers focused on livelihood issues amongst tribal communities, social exclusion, and sustainable development in developing countries.

May, 2022

**Iain Hay**

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## OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK

In India, tribes are the most backward section of the society because the development of the disadvantaged groups like the Scheduled Tribes (STs) and their integration with the larger society has been a matter of great concern for the government. In fact, this concern had been woven into the very fabric of the country's constitution as laid down in the Directive Principles of State Policy (Article 46). Keeping this in the backdrop, the present book focuses on the livelihood of tribals and their interlinkages with the physical and socioeconomic environment. The main aim is to investigate the issues of sustainability and sustainable development of tribal livelihood.

India, being the second largest tribal-dominated area, after Africa, is one of the most fascinating nations of the world, from an anthropological point of view. In India, there are two main areas of tribal concentration: (a) the Central Indian uplands, around the Vindhyan sub-region, and (b) northeastern parts of the country. More than 87 % of the country's tribal population is confined to eleven states. Among these states, Odisha is the state with the largest number of tribal communities. Out of thirty districts in Odisha, nine are considered as tribal districts. Mayurbhanj is one of them, and has the highest concentration of tribes.

Odisha is the second poorest state in India (based on Poverty Headcount Ratio in 2011-12) and, in percentages, it has the highest concentration of tribal populations. About 22 % of the population of the state are tribals, whose position is probably the worst in the entire country. A small land-base, low agricultural productivity and low incomes have led to rising indebtedness, trapping the tribals in a vicious circle of exploitation. This has led to social discontent and unrest, perhaps often providing fertile grounds for extremist activities, which can be prevented only by more meaningful development of the tribal areas.

This book, entitled *Sustainable Livelihoods of Tribal Communities in Odisha, India: The Case of Mayurbhanj*, is divided into ten chapters. *Chapter 1* is the *Introduction*, which gives an overview of tribal development and sustainable livelihood in India; characteristics of a tribal district,

Mayurbhanj, Odisha; tribal regionalisation—the case of Mayurbhanj; rationale of the study; data and methods; and the need for tribal development. **Chapter 2** highlights the *Historical Background of Tribal Development in India since the 1950s*, which covers issues like the historical backdrop of tribal development in India; constitutional provisions; tribes in transition, changing demographics; health care infrastructure and provisioning of services; empowerment of Scheduled Tribes; and mainstreaming tribal population, problems and challenges. **Chapter 3**, entitled *A Profile of Mayurbhanj: The Domicile of Tribes of Odisha*, discusses the study area on location, administrative setup, area and land use, physiography, drainage, climate, soil, flora and fauna, mineral resources, human resources, socioeconomic conditions, agriculture and cropping pattern, transport and communication network, and drinking water facilities. **Chapter 4** focuses on the *Tribes of India, Odisha and Mayurbhanj*, with the detailed issues of tribes of India—the historical legacy; distribution and population characteristics in India; distribution and population characteristics in Odisha; and tribal groups in Mayurbhanj—distribution, population characteristics and concentration. **Chapter 5**, entitled *Tribal Development and Livelihood in Mayurbhanj, Odisha: Health, Education and Economy*, highlights the important issues like health and human development, health status, health infrastructure, deficiency of health facilities, educational status, status of literacy, disparity in literacy rate, teacher–student ratio, school dropout rates among tribal children, status of the economy and infrastructure, workforce participation, agricultural sector, industrial sector, cottage and household industries, tourism, tribal livelihood and forest management policy, food security, and salient characteristics of economic activities. **Chapter 6**, *Tribal Development and Livelihood in Mayurbhanj: Evidence from the Ground*, focuses on the most vital issues of marginalisation and deprivation; national development vis-à-vis tribal development; decentralisation and community mobilisation; and situational inferences, evidence from the field. **Chapter 7**, entitled *Tribal Development and Sustainable Livelihood: Prospects and Constraints*, emphasizes “Regional Strengths”—land and forest, mineral resources, water resources, locational advantage self-help groups (SHGS), welfare programmes, handicrafts; “Regional Weaknesses”—poor connectivity, low literacy, inadequate health infrastructure, low agriculture productivity, lack of large-scale and medium-scale industries, inadequate railway services; “Regional Opportunities”—river systems, development of ecotourism; “Regional Threats”—acute unemployment, hazards and disasters, Maoist activities; and the summary of SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and

Threats) Analysis. **Chapter 8**, entitled *Sustainable Tribal Development: A Retrospect of Government Policies and Programmes*, focuses on land alienation; acquisition and displacement; resolving unresolved issues—constitutional safeguards; and resolving unresolved issues—departmental and NGO safeguards. **Chapter 9**, entitled *Towards Sustainable Tribal Livelihoods: The Roadmap*, covers different issues like defining sustainable livelihoods; factors affecting livelihood; loss of livelihood—an emerging issue; state of India's livelihoods; tribal and forest livelihoods; major issues of tribal livelihoods; securing tribal livelihoods in Odisha; strategies for sustainable tribal livelihoods; and manufacturing and utility of sabai products in Mayurbhanj—a case for sustainable livelihoods. Finally, **Chapter 10** is devoted to concluding remarks.

India is the homeland of diverse tribal communities engaged in a multitude of livelihood practices. This is also true for Odisha and Mayurbhanj. The present book will be useful for universities of South Asian countries that have departments for Geography, Anthropology, Sociology, Tribal Studies, Economics, and/or Development Studies, etc. Besides, the volume will enhance capacity building for policy makers in developing countries focusing on livelihood issues of tribals and for backward area development. Moreover, the outcome of this book will be helpful to Research Institutes, NGOs and the Government of India in dealing with livelihood issues, social exclusion and tribal development related projects.

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.1 Overview of Tribal Development and Sustainable Livelihood in India**

Livelihood issues of the marginalised people in various segments of the present and past societies in India are the major concern, witnessed through the broader looking glasses of environment and development over time. Identifying environmental problems and knowledge in both global and local fields, and interrogating the diverse narratives of development, the social science perspectives span and problematise the historical trajectories of livelihoods with special reference to the marginalised and dwell on their contemporary social and cultural relevance.

Survival becomes a crucial issue in the wake of massive degradation of land, forests, water and air in rural and urban India in the colonial and post-colonial eras. The displacement of people's livelihood as a result of large-scale dam projects, mining of minerals like bauxite and uranium, extensive deforestation and uneven developments in mega-cities in the contemporary period is also a major concern. Reinterpreting tribal livelihood systems in the wake of capitalist exploitation, relocating marginalised villagers for the protection of wildlife sanctuaries, legislating and managing against the erosion of people's rights over forests, fisheries and other common properties, and the problem of rehabilitation of the marginalised in metropolitan development regimes are also areas of concern.

The interdisciplinary nature of research on this issue requires integrated studies that would link livelihood studies with analyses of state, environment, social change and development in contemporary India. Several works of renowned researchers can be mentioned here. Devendra Thakur and D. N. Thakur (1994), in ten volumes, have studied tribal life and its relation to the forest, in historical, as well as in modern, perspective; tribal settlement in reserved forest and minor forest produce; tribal agriculture and animal husbandry, and their association with tribal



life; facts and figures of industrialisation in the tribal belts; problems of tribal workers and planning for their full employment; in-depth analysis of tribal women in India; constitutional safeguards and privileges accorded to the tribals as well as legal aspects relating to them; facts and figures relating to tribal education; socioeconomic development of the tribal people during plan periods; and the role of voluntary and governmental organisations in tribal development. In the paper entitled “Tribes in Transition: Experiences from North and South,” Arun Kumar Singh (2001–02) has looked at the process of transformation of the economy, ecology and culture of two tribal groups, namely the Apa Tanis from Arunachal Pradesh and Paniyans from Tamil Nadu. The Apa Tanis are basically rice cultivators and have gradually made themselves self-sufficient in food supply. In addition to cultivation, the educated younger generation is also entering into government and private jobs. The Paniyans were bonded labourers in the past and gradually shifted to tea plantation. They have not been able to ensure food security, and nor have they progressed in education. Their land is being purchased by outsiders, mainly migrants from Kerala. Eventually, this may lead them to be landless labourers again unless some precautionary measures are taken to protect their interests. In the article titled “Regional Development and Social Differentiation: A Study of Selected Tribal Regions,” Niladri R. Dash (2001) has analysed the impact of the processes of regional development on three tribal societies from three different tribal regions of India, endowed with distinct natural resources. They are parts of the Aravalli Ranges (Rajasthan), Chota Nagpur Plateau (Bihar) and Dandakaranya (Madhya Pradesh and Odisha). Selecting two villages from each region, the author, based on his extensive fieldwork with reference to social and economic parameters, has concluded that the tribal population has not benefitted much from the processes of regional development. He pointed out that the process of socioeconomic transformation is rather slow. However, it has generated an upcoming elite group among the tribals, which has been able to impound the development gains accruing from the regional development process. A.R.N. Srivastava (1991), in his book entitled “*Changing Values and Tribal Societies*”, has made a comparative study of two different and important ethnic groups, the Munda and the Oraon, which puts to the test the assumption that culture is one of the sources of value orientation. The volume entitled “*Glimpses of Tribal Life*”, written by Makhan Jha, Hari Prasad and Kamla Agarwal (1991), highlights the socioeconomic problems of two minor tribes, viz. Asur and Birjia of Chota Nagpur, and the cultural changes that have taken place over the course of time. The book entitled “Tribal Transformation in

India” (Volumes I & IV), edited by Buddhadeb Chaudhuri (1992), highlights the economic and agrarian issues as well as explaining the education and literacy programmes. The paper entitled “Tribe, Caste and Kinship in Orissa: A Retrospective and Prospective Look,” by N. K. Behura and N. Panigrahi (2006), is an attempt to spell out a few important aspects of the growth of Orissa as a separate state, sandwiched between two major cultural streams of India. Secondly, it provides a brief profile of the tribal societies of Odisha, where one finds the communities integrated together as a social type, constituting the foundation of Orissan society. Thirdly, it presents a historical account of the caste system in Odisha, where one finds the convergence of different castes, which builds the mosaic of Orissan society. Fourthly, it describes the formation and juxtaposition of two different types of kinship systems, which enrich the culture of Odisha, and, lastly, it tries to project the formation of Odisha as a cultural region, amalgamating the varied cultures of the neighbouring states. The paper titled “Tribal Indebtedness and the Functioning of Money Lenders Regulations in the Scheduled Areas of Orissa: An Empirical Study,” by N. K. Behura and N. Panigrahi (2004), describes the nature of credit transactions in practice among the tribal people. This also examines the functioning of informal credit institutions and the impact of state policies on their transactions. The study finds that the nature of credit transactions in the tribal areas is, by and large, informal, specific to the region and to the tribal communities. It establishes social obligations and is based on exploitative relations between creditor and debtor. The study justifies that, due to the failure of impersonal forces and formal credit institutions in fulfilling the needs of the tribal people, the informal credit institutions, though based on exploitative relationships, still prevail in tribal areas. Joseph Marianus Kujur (2006), in his paper entitled “An Adivasi Assessment of the UPA’s Two Years in Power,” has raised questions regarding the UPA government’s political will to ensure development in tribal areas, emphasising the needs for drinking water, primary education and basic health. For the last few decades, and more particularly since the 1990s, the issue of human rights—violation of rights to life and livelihood of tribal peoples—is a central concern. Therefore, the discourse on tribal movements and issues of tribal livelihood revolved around securing their well-defined rights on land and forest resources. The paper entitled “Tribal Movements and Livelihoods: Recent Developments in Orissa,” by Sakti Padhi and Nilkantha Panigrahi (2011), is relevant. It attempts to critically review major tribal policies and programmes of the state of Odisha, as well as to assess their impact on the livelihood resources of the tribal people. This paper also tries to review various

methods of articulation of collective concerns of tribal people, with regard to the promotion and protection of their natural resources-based livelihoods.

The lifestyle and tradition of each indigenous community is unique and is related to the utilisation of particular natural resources and particular types of work. They had been collecting resources from the forest without causing any damage to it. The forest provides them with food and livelihood security. Since tribal communities live in close proximity with biodiversity-rich landscapes, they have evolved local, specific and novel livelihood strategies, based on their indigenous knowledge. This knowledge was passed on through generations and it played an important role in the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. By and large, they were depending on nature for their survival. Thus, there has always been an organic unity between humans and their surrounding environments in the traditional societies. As a result, there was an intricate relationship between their culture and nature (Mishra 2007). It is pertinent to note that, traditionally, villagers, specifically the tribals, managed their affairs and resources on a sustainable basis (Roy Burman 1993).

Indigenous knowledge, conservation beliefs and values, environmentally adaptive and sensitive land use, resource management practices, and determined defence of territory and natural resources have enabled many of the tribal communities to inhabit natural habitats for centuries without destroying their ecosystems and biodiversity (Sterens 1997). Around 90 % of the tribal population in India were depending on land directly or indirectly for their survival. Land is the only tangible asset for them, followed by forest resources, the second source of their livelihood. Their economy was subsistence in nature. The natural environment, surrounding the people, provides several goods, services and amenities to them. However, the limited natural resources of the surroundings, the tribal societies being scarce, and many conflicting demands placed on the resources, from other sectors and other areas of society, reduces their availability to the tribal communities and affects their livelihood. Actually, they have little knowledge and little power to influence the direction of change taking place due to broader changes in society.

Since the Independence Government of India and various state governments have taken lots of initiatives for the development of tribal livelihoods, the development policy for the tribals has changed its strategy continuously in search of sustainability. The social and economic conditions of the people belonging to the Scheduled Tribes (STs) have been the concern of Indian

political and social movements in Pre-Independent India. Indeed, to Gandhiji, freedom was not a mere political objective but the raising of the mass of people from poverty and degradation.

Soon after Independence, the basic principles for the development of the STs were clearly enunciated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India, in the form of five principles known as the “Tribal Panchsheel,” which were later endorsed by the Renuka Roy team (1959), Dhebar Commission (1961) and Shilu Ao Committee (1969). Starting from the special multipurpose tribal blocks of 1956, the measures taken for the development of STs have been multifarious. A variety of approaches and strategies, like the top-down approach, regional planning, target group approach, integrated development, participatory development, Joint Forest Management, watershed management, and poverty alleviation programmes, have formed part of the development approach. Despite of all these development initiatives, the tribals in our country are still threatened by severe poverty (Mishra 2007). During the last fifty years, the planning process in India has failed to reduce the disparity between the tribal and non-tribal populations. Today, the first and foremost problem before tribal communities in India is how to earn and sustain livelihoods. There are varieties of livelihood practices in the tribal communities in different parts of India and elsewhere, such as the hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, and shifting cultivators who live in different environments. A number of changes have been taking place with regard to the land use, access, control and utilisation of their resources, and these changes, in turn, have largely affected the sustainable livelihoods of the people without any sustainable replacement (Siva Prasad and Eswarappa 2007). In tribal areas, this problem has assumed alarming proportions because the traditional means of obtaining livelihoods are threatened. Since Independence, however, the access to land and control over the natural resources have undergone drastic changes. On the one hand, the state monopolised and consolidated its ownership over nature and, on the other, non-tribals have begun to use premium resources without considering the ecological balance, so the ecological degradation has continued in large volumes. The present paradigm of development, emphasising urbanisation and industrialisation, has not only accelerated this process but also caused displacement of tribal populations from their habitats (Siva Prasad and Mishra 2007). The forest, which was the home of many tribes, was taken out of their control and, in most cases, the tribes were even evicted in the name of development. Along with this, it was noticed that the depletion of forest resources and the illegal cutting of the trees in the forest by non-tribals is affecting the tribals’ livelihoods (Siva Prasad and Eswarappa

2007). The growth of industrialisation, urbanisation and the cash economy have greatly affected tribal livelihoods. The destruction of biomass, to meet the urban and industrial needs, leading to deforestation, is having a major impact on the lives of peoples who live within the non-monetised, biomass-based subsistence economy (Mishra 2005). Along with the introduction of different developmental policies and programmes, changes in the land tenure have brought certain changes in the traditional system of resource management in tribal India. Further, the intrusion of non-tribes into tribal areas has disturbed the age-old organic unity of tribes. All these changes have had a telling effect on the natural resource bases and their management (Oraon 2012). Kalpana Das (2009), in her paper “Tribal Revolt of 1949 in Mayurbhanj,” described, in detail, the tribal revolt in Mayurbhanj. Karua (2009) gave a brief description of the people of Mayurbhanj, in general, and their culture, in particular.

The livelihood of forest dwellers is very much linked and intertwined with the forest. In fact, forests are the life streams of the “Adivasis” (forest dwellers). Forests are dearer and more valuable to the tribals than to others, but the tragic fact is that they practice illicit cutting of trees, being compelled to by dire economic necessity. Here, lies the importance of sustainable management of forest resources through the active participation of the tribals.

Tribes have almost always been considered as a peripheral phenomenon, even amidst the huge diversities of mainstream Indian life and culture. The prime reason behind this, perhaps, is demographics, namely that the tribal population of India has historically constituted a very small proportion of the total. But, what seems notable is that, tribal people, although quite diverse among themselves, generally demonstrate remarkably distinctive sociocultural features from the Indian mainstream patterns, even in the same geophysical setting. However, systematic studies on tribal demographic behaviour may provide important insights into the larger issue of how different patterns of demographic behaviour can be attributed to sociocultural as well as economic differentials.

In India, the tribal communities largely occupy the forest regions where they had been living in comparative isolation since time immemorial. These communities had a symbiotic relationship with the forests and had been drawing their sustenance largely from the forests, a relationship which continues undisturbed in the remoter tribal areas even now. But this situation is gradually being transformed due to human intervention and consequent recession/depletion of the forest cover.

*Minor forest produce* and its processing provide adequate sustenance to the tribal communities, particularly in the backward regions. In some cases, these are the main sources of their cash incomes. Dynamic uses of some forest produce have also increased their material value. However, no special attention has been paid to this aspect in the management of forests. Consequently, collection of minor forest produce continues to be incidental to, or, at best, a minor activity in, the general forestry operations. But, recently, the regeneration of tree-yielding minor forest produce is gaining importance. The collection of minor forest produce by the tribals in the earlier days was aimed primarily for meeting their personal requirements. With the progress of time, a few commodities acquired commercial value, leading to the development of trade, which became a source of cash income to the tribals. Minor forest produce should not be treated only as a source of revenue to the state. Rather, it should provide maximum return to the tribals so that economic interest is created towards the maintenance of forests with the possibility of substantial incomes accruing to the individual, regularly, from its collection. The price of minor forest produce should be remunerative and linked to the market price.

Not all tribal communities are caught in the present “technological trap” leading to complete denudation of forests through intensive shifting cultivation. Although the requirement for cereals is gradually met from the new settled cultivation, still, they continue to depend on forests for a variety of things for their sustenance. This situation necessitates sustainable utilisation of local resources towards sound economic development of the tribals in which people’s participation must be ensured.

As the planning for tribal development and forestry development is mutually reinforcing elements, a careful analysis of the resource potential of each region, as well as of the *socioeconomic situation* of the local communities, is required. The first essential step in this regard would be to evolve a consistent scheme for all areas according to the local factor-mix. In fact, the level of people’s development is not the same in all tribal regions. Similarly, the extent of forest resources is also not the same in all regions. If the plans and programmes are to be formulated purely on the basis of forest-based resources, the extremely backward areas will automatically get the highest priority because of their richness of resources.

In the present juncture of the resource–environment–development nexus, a basic question we face is whether the fast industrial development in the primitive/remote areas, which is forced on the tribal communities in view of the national considerations, can be tamed? There are limits to adaptation