

Socio-political Management & Resource Management for Tribal Livelihood

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Abstract: The rapid changes at the macro level that India witnessed since the early nineties has contributed to the instability of the livelihood systems of the poorer section of both rural and tribal households. The emergence of industry and market economy has disturbed the age old tribal and nature relation. 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. There is lot of controversy over the present day development paradigm of tribal livelihood. The tribal people have been facing problems from both inclusion in to and exclusion from the dominant development paradigm of the country. The tribal societies have experienced religious and other cultural inclusion in to the so called universal or dominant culture, and education etc. has led them to a situation where they find it difficult to cope with the outside world at present day situation. There are several reasons for this. One reason is that despite some transition taking place, for most tribal communities land (mainly forest land) is the main source of livelihood. So to address this, the resource management as well as socio-political management of developmental policies should be the theme for tribal livelihood.

Keywords: Tribal Society , Sustainable Livelihood, Management, Decentralisation, Policies, Market.

1. INTRODUCTION

Nature of tribal livelihood:

The livelihoods among tribal communities in India is complex, dynamic and multidimensional phenomenon, the perception of which varies with geographic location, type of community, age, gender, education, fluctuations in resources, services and infrastructures and social, economic, cultural, ecological and political determinants (Kumar et. al., 2009). Agriculture constitutes main source of livelihood among tribes in India playing a vital role in national economy, rural development, employment and occupation, agro-industries, food and nutrition security, growth and survival, social, economic and cultural conditions and poverty alleviation (Surayya et. al., 2008). About 70% of the population mainly depends on rain fed agriculture characterized by low productivity, un-predictive weather and calamities, degraded soil with low fertility, unprotective irrigation and degraded natural resources (Chakraborty et. al., 2009). These factors aggravated the problems of poverty, migration, unemployment, underemployment, food insecurity and malnutrition for millions of tribal people in India (Mourlin, 2007). The capability of agriculture and livestock production to form sustainable livelihoods of tribal poor is in continuous decline because the current overall endowments of production, distribution of productive assets and productive abilities are out of alignment with what is needed (Mourlin, 2007). Consequently, the tribal people are constrained to earn their livelihoods from forest resources

Forests based tribal livelihoods:

The self employment in forestry create local people's livelihoods through the sale of fuel wood and fodder, grazing, lopping and grass cutting, forest based handicrafts and cottage industries, sericulture, lac cultivation, bee keeping, charcoal burning, leaf plate making, liquor making, rope making and basketry, medicines, collection, processing and

marketing of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs), cultivation of agricultural crops under agri-silvicultural practices, livestock rearing, social and farm forestry and availing of rights and concessions. The application of local skills and village-level technology in wood-based and small-scale forest-based enterprises provide secondary employment and livelihood opportunities for tribal people, main amongst are saw milling, rayon, pulp and paper, ply wood and panel products, wood seasoning and preservation, tanning, sports goods, match splints, veneers, wooden boxes, bamboo and cane products, agricultural implements, furniture, structural wooden items, musical instruments, bidi making, educational goods, wood carving, wooden utensils etc. (Pant, 1984; Gera, Forest development integrated with agricultural and industrial progress has great potential to enhance livelihood security, poverty reduction and food security for vulnerable section of society including illiterate, unskilled, resource-poor, jobless, landless and labourers people in rural India (Tewari, 1989)

Tribal Sustainable Livelihood Management:

Dependence on forest resources is an important source of livelihood for a large number of poor families in the state and the pattern of dependence shown great variation across different regions of the state. Majority of the tribal households meet a large share of their construction, storage, agricultural, energy, nutritional, medicinal and income needs from forests (Quli and Singh, 2010). Ease of access and proximity to widely dispersed rural markets, enable tribal people to generate a major share of their household income from forest based livelihood. But, during recent decades the levels and patterns of forest dependence, nature and strength of needs for forest products and access to tree resources has changed considerably among tribal communities. Unsustainable utilization of forest resources resulted in forest degradation, unemployment, poverty and migration of tribal people to a great extent. Over the years, the focus on forest management has shifted from timber to resource conservation. Social Forestry plantations, Agroforestry practices, Joint Forest Management and Community Based Forest Management were few strategies evolved from time to time to meet the livelihood needs of the local people and reduce the pressure on the natural forests. Forest Conservation Act (1980), National Forest Policy (1988), Joint Forest Management Resolution (2001) and Schedule Tribe and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) (2006) are some Government attempts and interventions to strengthen both forests and livelihood dependence (Sivaji, 2009). The actual and potential role of forest goods and services in people's livelihoods is directly related to what's happening with forest reserves, protected areas, non-timber forest product (NTFP) use, farm forestry, the forest-product industry and the extent to which policy and institutions can influence all of these (Singh, 2007).

Tribal Livelihood & Sustainability:

SL as an analytical framework are compromised by the fact that it does not include political capital as an endogenous asset. The SL framework provides an understanding of the operational, technical and legislative factors that influence sustainable livelihoods at the local level. These are incomplete without an analysis of politics and power relations – which cannot be captured through 'structures and processes'. Political capital is one of the key capital assets on which 'people draw to build their livelihoods' and also one of the key constraining factors on sustainable livelihoods. The inclusion of political capital into the SL framework as an endogenous asset is critical for the following reasons:

The notion of political capital is critical because 'rights' are claims and assets – which in SL

language, 'people draw on and reinvest in to pursue livelihood options'. Because these rights are politically defended, how people access these assets depends on their political capital. It is therefore critical to understand how these are constituted at the local level and the dynamic interrelation between political capital and the other assets identified in the SL framework.

Political negotiation over rights is not transparent and cannot necessarily be captured in structures and policies. The notion of political capital is critical in linking structures and processes to the local level and understanding the real impact these have on sustainable livelihoods. Political capital explains where local people are situated – in terms of the balance of power – in relation to other groups. It therefore widens the focus from an examination of endogenous institutional innovation to one that encompasses their links with external institutions. The field studies found that such a perspective was critical to an understanding of the factors that contribute towards SL at the village level.

The balance of power and location of political capital is not fixed and is under constant political challenge. As is the case with the other five capital assets, an understanding of how political capital operates will emerge gradually and is constantly evolving. The SL framework provides a constructive context in which to examine political capital – in particular its local manifestations. Because political capital is analytically posited in relation to other capital assets at the local level, it places the focus on how it is constituted and reproduced. If ‘politics and power’ are left as exogenous to the SL framework, this analysis will be lost, as will the ability to answer questions about politics in the context of a specific project.

Not to include political capital also weakens the SL framework as an *approach* to development and therefore the likely effectiveness of interventions to meet SL *objectives*. Political capital is important because transforming structures and processes is likely to be met by resistance to change.

Political capital places the focus on transition costs of policies and projects; on those that are likely to meet resistance and on how these may be manifested. Further, placing political capital into the framework avoids a false sense of objectivity in deciding between alternative institutional arrangements, and makes explicit the values and notions of justice on which choices are made.

Debates over the role and scope of decentralisation are one of the most striking features in development policy discourse to have emerged over the last decade. Supporters of decentralisation do not belong to any single political group: they come from the centre, the left and the right. They also include groups who disagree fundamentally with each other on the objectives of decentralisation. India is no exception; decentralisation has taken vastly different forms in the regional States and has been supported by groups for very different objectives.

This paper explores the interface between two types of decentralisation in India – administrative decentralisation, taking the example of watershed management programmes, and democratic decentralisation in the form of *Panchayati Raj*. The principal question raised here, concerns the relationship between these two institutional systems. Specifically can (and should) institutions for political decentralisation play a role in achieving decentralised management of geo-hydrological complexes such as watersheds, in a way that leads to the participatory, sustainable and equitable use of resources, as well as enhance incomes and livelihood? This question is pursued here through an examination of the principles and assumptions inherent in the two institutional systems for decentralised governance, and a preliminary exploration of the factors that influence their operation. The interface between them is explored through village level fieldwork in Orissa.

2. SUSTAINABLE TRIBAL LIVELIHOOD FRAMEWORK

The three objectives of the SL framework – analysis, approach and objective – are integrally linked.

The SL framework was not intended to be a sophisticated model for theoretical analysis, but one oriented towards a comprehensive and practically focused understanding of ground realities that could directly or indirectly inform development interventions. The effectiveness of the SL framework for analysis is therefore judged by these standards in this paper, and not by comparison with more complex constructs. Because of the practical orientation of SL, the SL framework is also judged by how well it translates into SL approaches that meet SL objectives.

Advantages of the SL framework:

The three approaches to decentralisation outlined above, are evidently different in their theoretical starting points as well as their constituencies and final objectives. However, their assumptions about the community, types of decentralisation, natural resource use and process of policy change are very similar. It is argued here, that these assumptions weaken their arguments in theory and therefore the potential of deriving practical policy solutions from them:

The policy consensus in favour of decentralisation and in particular community resource management, is supported and legitimised by theories of collective action which produce apolitical and ahistorical constructions of communities. Institutional, economic and populist analysis has different assumptions about collective action; the former considers this to be rooted in rational selfmaximising behaviour whereas populists see the individual as a social being. However, both emphasise the independence and autonomy of local communities from the State and are not able to account for the ways in which external pressures constitute, reproduce or change community relations.

Decentralisation and devolution essentially become interchangeable mechanisms to achieve the same objectives in all three approaches. This is perhaps by default, since none of the approaches expresses a strong position on how the two might differ, and what their areas of conflict and complementarity are. Thus the good governance agenda supports participatory development through projects such as watershed development, while making the case for democratic decentralisation on the grounds of efficiency. The public choice and good governance agenda do not take a strong position on the issue of rights over natural resources either. Whether these are in fact rights that should be held in trust for people by democratic institutions or merely resources from which people should expect an efficient service is not addressed. Populism shirks this important question altogether by merely stating that they are traditional rights, but does not propose through which modern institutional system they should be protected.

Resource management is separated from other aspects of social life in the three approaches. There is little analysis of the relations of power that constitute collective action and conflict and how they are related under different resource use systems. Collective action is seen either as endogenous to the community or as a series of trade-offs made on the basis of self-interest and calculated by individuals, regardless of the specific structures of power in which these are located or the characteristics of the resources themselves. This has led to a standardised approach that positions the community (community as individuals) as the crux of collective action, regardless of internal or external relations of power. Further, in the current discourse any failure of institutional arrangements for resource management is more commonly attributed to social phenomenon than on the natural resources themselves, no matter how degraded these are.

SL avoids many of the pitfalls of the approaches outlined above. SL does not incorporate a political theory of change or transformation and because of this it was found to present a neutral starting point for the research. Central to the SL framework is a vision of the community seen as the outcome of relations based on capital assets and the influence they have on wider structures and processes. The SL framework is able to conceptually isolate one variable, such as social capital, and examine what influence the other capital assets (financial, physical, natural, human) have in constituting this, and how it is affected by the wider structures and processes. It therefore provides a much richer and dynamic picture of causality with much more accurate policy conclusions. The SL framework also allows for an analysis of the factors that contribute towards the development of natural capital through the same cross-examination of variables. For example, if collective action in natural resource management can be linked to mutual dependency – in terms of inputs to financial and physical capital – rather than social capital (as assumed in the populist framework), then this may have other implications. None of the approaches above are able to incorporate such an analysis into their framework.

3. CONCLUSION & FINDINGS

This research work on studying the livelihood pattern in a least known territory emanates from a voluminous literature available worldwide. It uses the definition of livelihood given by Chambers and Conway (1992) as the basis for the study. Further, contextually, livelihood pattern is considered, as a set of activities/portfolios people tend to do/adopt under different conditions as emerged from the findings. Conceptual and methodological questions in the pursuit of research reveals that livelihood, as a ‘means to living’ can be studied by using simple exploratory methods. This assumes greater significance in communities where collecting information on many aspects is confronted by inherent difficulties. The current work therefore draws parallel to the understanding by many early proponents that it is really a dynamic, complex, multifaceted and inter-disciplinary entity.

The current work further reveals that livelihood is a consequence of different geo-ecological, socio-economic, cultural and political conditions that offers different opportunities over time and space. In context of Orissa, it is observed that tribal people live in varied geophysical conditions, which offers them different opportunities to adopt to location specific portfolios thereby determining the livelihood pattern, specific to the conditions and different from one community to other.

Different scholarly works on the livelihood with policy perspective using empirical tools makes it an interesting subject of enquiry. It not only helps in understanding the dynamics of how people, possessed with range of resources (assets/capital) use available opportunities to make a living but also creates an un-biased assessment in order to measure the issues concerning the sustainability in the portfolios they chose in given situations. This was therefore found useful in understanding from the perspective of different assets viz. natural, social, human, physical, financial and from the political

capital, which were used in current research for livelihood framework analysis across three communities. This has helped in understanding inter-community variations largely and to identify areas for policy interventions

Having deep-rooted existence in practice, ever since emergence of human civilisation the academic discourse followed by development compulsions, livelihood encompasses a harmonious blend of capabilities, assets and activities as pre-requisites for a means of living. Under sustainable livelihood dispensation, it is considered sustainable when it is able to cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain and enhance its capabilities and assets or resources, and provide sustainable opportunities for the generations to come. The tribal communities living in the district despite being vulnerable to different stressful situations have shown considerable resilience to sustain them.

Livelihood is the dynamic term with respect to time and place, its meaning vary from place to place and depend upon availability of recourse in particular geographical area, people culture and practice. The depletion of forest Changes in the external environment can affect assets, activities or outcomes. The livelihood sources are changes in behavior are known as coping strategies. If coping behavior is constantly necessary, then the livelihood strategy becomes a survival strategy, leading to erosion of assets. Poor households in risky environments adopt coping strategies to protect their livelihoods. These strategies include, intensification of existing income activities, diversification into new activities, migration, drawing upon social relationships and informal credit networks, drawing upon assets and adjusting consumption patterns etc. Many of these strategies are noticed among tribal of the present study area. Rani and Dodia (2000) considered the evidence on coping strategies in rural India. It shows that one of the most favored mechanisms is that of diversifying into non-farm activities and seasonally migrating to other areas. Diversification into non-farm activities is of a temporary and permanent nature depending upon the severity of the situation. Like the present situation, the households that are badly hit are those of small, marginal farmers, landless households are diversifying first. The better-paid of non-farming works and concluded that there are constraints on access to non-farming employment in Sundergarh. In diversifying into non-farm activities, households simultaneously draw upon social relationships and informal credit networks. The social relationships and the traditional support system along caste lines continue to serve as a means of support in various ways, though these networks are weakening. The consumption needs of poor villager for whole years are partially met by drawing upon the reserve assets, which they build up during peak seasons. As we know nonagricultural sector work are not available in whole year. These may take the form of savings in cash or in-kind (e.g., stored grains), productive assets (such as livestock or land), and non-productive assets (such as jeweler). In unemployment period, households also reduce their consumption intake and expenditure on social and religious commitments. The reduction in consumption is more prominent among the women, land less and smaller farmers. Thus it is clear from the data that the tribal households experience quite different pressures and opportunities that adopted as livelihood and coping strategies. However many factors, which are to be studied in - depth, influence the choices of these opportunities made across the households. The rapid changes at the macro level that India witnessed since the early nineties has contributed to the instability of the livelihood pattern of the poorer section of both rural and tribal households. While the benefits of globalisation process have largely accrued to the urban sector growth the tribal and rural sector has not been left behind. Degradation of forest resources due to industrialization have forced the villagers to look for alternative source of livelihoods. The symbiotic relation between nature and human being got disturbed. In study area it was observed that not even a single house hold is completely depending on forest resources for their livelihood now days. Forest has become a dream for them. The villagers who used to sell the forest product in market earlier has become the buyers of same. Agriculture, which was the most labor absorbing field for the villagers are no more a profitable business. Introduction of various development programmes by government and emergence of new industries in locality have given an alternative source of livelihood for the villagers. The rural non-farm sector has become a major source of livelihood for the poor households. It has become a primary source of income and employment for many of tribal households. Some tradition patterns are still flow at present time but lots of changes comes in livelihood pattern of tribal people. The geographical situation and conditions of the study area like low land holding size, low fertility of land, no irrigation facilities and human factor are near to urban landscape and railway station, well communication system play an important role in influencing the trends of livelihood sources. The villagers who were fully depending on traditional methods are coping with new technology with their traditional knowledge. Tribal people are still use levees cup and plats in their family faction. Carpet and mats are made in home by using available natural row material.

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