

Tribal Land and People of Himachal Pradesh: A Developmental Perspective

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Abstract

Apart from the welfare perspective, highlighting the tribal economy of Himachal Pradesh is important. The Scheduled Areas, where the majority of the Scheduled Tribes are concentrated, occupy a vast geographical area of the state and located in the hinterlands amidst the Greater Himalayas bordering Tibet and China. It is not wise to ignore these areas and leave space for separatist and other anti-national elements to create social and political troubles like the one the country is facing in other areas located at international boundaries. Thanks to the people of these areas, such events have not taken place so far, but it is necessary to be on guard against such events. Secondly, being located in Western Himalayas, these areas assume the role of the protector of Himalayan ecology about which concerns are being voiced not only at local and national levels but international level as well. The tribal region is also the place where major perennial rivers like the Sutlej, Beas and Ravi originate/flow. This has attracted the attention of development thinkers and practitioners to exploit this resource for the generation of power in a big way. Questions are being asked about the big hydropower generation projects in the context of the fragile ecology of the region and the repercussions of such developmental initiatives. Taking care of both the economic and the social and cultural needs and aspirations of the tribal people and the tribal areas of is not only vital but a national responsibility (Parmar,H.S.2007).

Himachal Pradesh: An Introduction

Himachal Pradesh is a small Indian state in the northwestern Himalayan region. It is bounded between 30° 22' to 33° 12' North latitude and 75° 47' to 79° 4' East longitude and is called the 'land of snowy mountains' although recent changes in the eco-system have drastically reduced its snow cover. Almost the entire state is mountainous with altitudes varying from 350 to 7,000 metres above sea level. It has a total geographical area of 55,673 sq. km. There are about 6.08 million people living in about 1.22 million households in 17,500 villages and 57 towns and cities scattered over the hills,

valleys and high mountains. The sex ratio is 968. The overall literacy rate as per 2001 census is 86.02% for males and 68.08% for females (Population Census 2001 Himachal Pradesh at a Glance. <http://www.censusindia.net/>. Also, see H.P.Govt., Economics and Statistics Department; *Statistical Outline of Himachal Pradesh 2003-04*).

Himachal Pradesh is significant in terms of its development performance and in showing the way to other hill states in the formulation of strategies for their socio-economic development. It has already made a mark in providing educational and other socio-economic amenities and is emerging as a role model of development particularly with respect to social sectors like health and education. Jean Dreze says "H.P. is emerging as the Kerala of the north" (The Tribune: 6 August 2003. Also see Dreze, Jean and Amartya Sen 1995: 103,129,135-36 and India Today (Special Issue) May 19, 2003: 22-31; (Special Issue) August 16, 2004; (Special Issue) August 15, 2005 and (Special Issue) September 24, 2007). Although the State has made tremendous progress and the level of absolute poverty is not very high, there are some Achilles' heels that need careful consideration to make focused strategies for hill area development, particularly the tribal areas of the State.

Who are the Tribal?

The word 'tribe' has different connotations for different branches of social sciences. Western anthropologists and sociologists take the term to denote a "primary aggregate of peoples living in a primitive or barbarous condition under a headman or chief". (David L. Sills, Rpt. 1972, p.146). In the Indian situation "till as late as 1766 one finds the term 'caste' being used synonymously with 'tribe' and as late as 1813 it meant to English writers on India nothing more than a kind of ranking based on birth." (Niharranjan Ray, 1972, p. 5). Efforts have been made to identify tribes based on elements common to them. In their endeavor to specify such elements, divergent views associated with the thesis propounded by Max Weber, Robert Redfield, F.G.Bailey, G.S. Ghurye and Surjit Sinha

notwithstanding, a synthesis emerges on the following most common features :

1. They live away from the civilized world in inaccessible parts lying in forest and hills;
2. They belong to one of three stocks—Negritos, Austroloids, or Mongoloids;
3. They speak the same tribal dialect;
4. They profess a primitive religion known as Animism in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element; and
5. They love drinking and dance and have primitive occupations. (A.R.Desai, 1961, pp. 48-63).

The above synthesis seems more or less in line with what Majumdar advocates (D.N. Majumdar, 1961, p. 367). The Tribes are also identified as the "remarkable phrase and social category called "Scheduled Tribes"-- that we inherited from the 1935 Constitution and chose, in our wisdom, to incorporate in the Constitution of Independent and Sovereign Republic of India." (Niharranjan Ray, 1972, pp. 20-21). At present, the entire tribal population does not strictly exhibit the peculiarities attached to them. There are semi-tribal communities that have taken to agriculture and allied activities and/or have migrated to urban or semi-urban areas. Many tribal people are also engaged in modern industries and vocations and have adopted modern cultural traits as well.

After India won independence, one of the first acts that the Constituent Assembly took upon itself was the task of appointing the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas (other than Assam) sub-committee with A.V.Thakkar as Chairman. Consequent upon acceptance of the recommendations of this commission by the Constituent Assembly, the concerns for and of the tribal people and tribal land became an integral part of the national endeavor for the development of India as a whole. (S.P. Sinha, 1981, pp. 65-81). After the promulgation of the Constitution, the ultimate authority for designating any community of people or areas as tribal was vested with the President of India. Article 244 empowers the President to declare any area a Scheduled or Tribal Area as specified in the 5th and 6th Schedules of the Constitution. Special provisions in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution govern the administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes in the State other than

Assam. The Sixth Schedule governs such provisions for Assam.

The President, in orders issued in 1950 (and subsequently amended) declared certain areas of tribal concentration Scheduled Areas in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Rajasthan. In Himachal Pradesh the tribal districts of Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti and Pangi Bharmour fall in the category of Scheduled Areas.

Policy Approach for Tribal Development

This was stated by Jawaharlal Nehru in 1958: "... Development in various ways there has to be, such as communications, medical facilities, education and better agriculture. These avenues of development however, should be pursued within the broad framework of the following five fundamental principles:

- People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
- Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.
- We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside are needed, especially in the beginning. However, we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into the tribal territory.
- We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.
- We should judge results, not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved" (Verrier Elvin, 1959, Foreword).

In independent India, the development of tribal people and lands needs a special approach based on special sensibilities that reflect a sense of respect, belonging and pride in their cultures and traditions. The attitude that 'their culture is inferior and way of life outdated', 'they are unable to shape their future and development', and 'we only can administer and develop them' must be replaced by

faith and trust in tribals, their life styles and practices allowing them to think and do whatever they want for their development. Outside influences have to work not in rivalry but through tribal social and cultural institutions. "It is necessary to introduce the programme of development among the tribals in such a way as to promote their growth by their own efforts and by the efforts of the extension workers recognizing:

- the totality of the community life of tribals
- the integrated life of the individual with the community
- the culture and tradition of tribals, and their adaptability to change" (Government of India, 1961, p.29).

Problems faced by Tribals

Tribals face the following problems that are common to all tribal communities.

First is the problem of physical isolation as they generally live in inaccessible areas of forest, mountain or desert. They are fringe dwellers and surviving on meagre needs in the midst of the bounties of nature. Another problem, which is, perhaps not that severe in Himachal Pradesh, is their exploitation. As the friend of tribals, Verrier Elwin states "... they were exploited by landlords and zamindars, robbed by money-lenders, cheated by merchants, and their culture was largely destroyed by foreign missionaries. ...They were not even free: weaker tribes had to pay tributes to the strong; rich and powerful Chiefs grew richer on the labour of hundreds of serfs, freedom of movement was severely restricted by inter-village conflict." (Verrier Elwin, 1959, p. 47). The situation took a turn for the better after independence but not all forms of exploitation have been eliminated. These two problems give rise to a third, economic backwardness. Generally, the tribes live in inhospitable environments on the fringes of areas with meagre means of livelihood and poor quality of resources. Combined with minimal educational and other facilities this has led to their backwardness and poor quality of life.

Strategy for Tribal Development

After independence, the Government initiated the process of planning for a well-directed and rapid development of the nation to "provide the masses of the Indian people the opportunity to lead a good life." (Government of India, 1961, p.1).The

development of Scheduled Tribes along with the Scheduled Castes and other backward sections was seen as a part of the overall endeavor towards the development of the country as a whole. Tribal communities were expected to participate in this national endeavor on terms of equality. "However, the distinct socio-economic situation of the tribal areas and the tribal communities were recognized and the Constitution provided a frame with the objective of enabling the tribal communities to join the mainstream of national life with adequate protection and support..." (National Committee on the Development of Backward Area, 1981, p.1). During the First Five Year Plan, the Community Development Program that was adopted for the entire nation was equally applicable to tribal areas as well. But the general feeling was that backward classes including Scheduled Tribes "cannot profit sufficiently from programs of economic development which are undertaken from the point of view of the national economy as a whole unless, they are quickly brought nearer equality with other sections of the population. This process entails special measures for raising their living conditions, affording increased opportunities for education and training and improving communications in areas in which they live in large numbers." (Government of India, 1957, p. 289). It was decided to supplement the community development programs in these areas with Multi-purpose Tribal Development Projects that were started during 1954. The nation finally settled for the Tribal Sub-Plan strategy. Although it was proposed in the Fourth Plan that tribal development blocks within a district should be grouped into one or more development areas, depending upon their physical features, social structure and other specific needs. (Government of India, 1966, p. 373), it was on the eve of the Fifth Plan that a comprehensive program was prepared initially meant for areas of tribal concentration. The program was launched under the Tribal Sub-Plan and the area covered was termed the Sub-Plan area. Under the new strategy of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (ITDP), the elimination of exploitation was accorded the highest priority followed by measures for 'building the inner strength of the community' through programs for the expansion of education and health services. Economic problems were to be tackled by properly thought out economic programs (National Committee on the Development of Backward Area, 1981, p. 16).

II

Tribal Economy of Himachal Pradesh

Although the tribal population is scattered all over the state there are prominent areas of concentration. On the basis of the Central Government norms of treating a community development block with 50% or above concentration of tribal population as a Scheduled Area, the districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti in their entirety and Pangti and Bharmour Tehsils of Chamba district were notified as Scheduled Areas /Tribal Area/Tribal Belt. These areas are covered by Integrated Tribal Development Projects and are also called Tribal Sub-Plan Areas. Situated in the north and the northeast, they form a contiguous belt in the hinterlands behind high mountain passes and are inaccessible with an average altitude of 10,000 ft. above mean sea level. Chopra describes it as "the last inhabited valleys on the Indian side of the frontier with Tibet enmeshed in the great tangle of mountains, the greatest in the world, which is known as the Western Himalaya." (Pran Chopra, 1964, p.1). Kinnaur is situated between 31°-05'-55" and 32°-05'-20" north latitude and between 77°-45'-00" and 79°-00'-50" east longitude. The district of Lahaul & Spiti lies between 33°-00'-10" and 33°-44'-45" north latitude and between 76°-44'-45" and 78°-40'-15" east longitude. The Pangti block of Chamba district falls between north latitude 32°-33'-00" and 33°-19'-00" and 76°-15'-00" and 77°-21'-00" east longitude. The Bharmour block is situated approximately between north latitude 32°-11'-00" and 32°-41'-00" and east longitude 76°-22'-00" and 76°-53'-00".

Apart from snow glaciers, high altitude and rugged and inhospitable terrain criss-crossed by fast flowing rivers and their tributaries, they are vast in size and thinly populated. They are mountainous, rugged and comparatively inaccessible. They constitute about 42.49% of the geographical area of the State but are home to only 2.74% of the total state's population. Of the total tribal population of the State, over 77% live in this tribal belt. Of the total population of tribal areas, 68 are Scheduled Tribes, 9.61 are Scheduled Castes and all are rural. The main features are given in Table 1. The important Scheduled Tribes are the Gaddi, the Gujjars, and Jad, Lamba, Khampa, Bhot or Bodh, Lahula, Pangwal, Kannaura or Kinnaura and Swangla. The main Scheduled Tribe inhabiting the Kinnaur district is known as Kannaura or Kinnaura;

and among the Scheduled Castes are Koli or Kolta and Chamang, Lohaar or Kathela, Bandhela and Damang. Bhot or Bodh and Swangla are the main Scheduled Tribes inhabiting the Lahaul-Spiti district. Pangwals and Gaddis are the chief tribes of Pangti and Bharmour respectively.

Kinnaur district is important in terms of both the total geographical area as well as the population. It accounts for over 27% of the total geographical area and over 47% of the population of the tribal belt. Spiti accounts for over 32% of the area and only 6.42% of the population. The density of population is highest in Bharmour (21 persons per square km.) followed by Kinnaur (12), Pangti (11), Lahaul (4) and Spiti (1) as against the figure of 109 for the state as a whole. In Pangti and Bharmour, more than 87% and 80% population respectively is that of the Scheduled Tribes. In terms of the literacy rate, these two regions, which account for one third of the total tribal population of the tribal area, are at the bottom. Pangti lags far behind in terms of female literacy. The sex ratio however is favorable in both areas. Perhaps the inverse relationship that is being witnessed these days between the level of development and the sex ratio is a proof of the low level of development in these two regions.

Planning for Tribal Development

Up to the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan, development programs for the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Areas tended to be formulated in an *ad-hoc* manner. (H.P. Government, 1985, p.1). The programs lacked perspective and were more in the nature of individual-oriented welfare programs like scholarships to Scheduled Tribe students, housing subsidy, etc. Under State plans, the allocations made for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes have been distributive in nature and content and were generally in the form of grants-in aid and subsidies to individuals. (H.P. Government, 1973, pp. II.1(31)-2 & 3 and III.1(1)). These programs were conceived as being supplementary to general development programs in different sectors of the economy. Although they were in addition to the plan allocations and were not to be a substitute for general development programs, in practice "these programs merely substituted the benefits available to the Scheduled Tribes under normal development schemes. This resulted in much lower investments for their development than envisaged" (H.P. Government, 1985, p.1). Consequently, the

pace of development was not adequate to catch up with other areas of the State.

The Fifth Plan will be regarded as a watershed in the history of tribal development. It was mainly because of the recommendations of a Task Force on "Development of Tribal Areas" headed by

L.P.Vidarthi (1972) and an Expert Committee of Tribal Development headed by S.C.Dube (1972) that the "Sub-Plan area" approach to the tribal development took a concrete shape.

Table 1: Geographical and Demographical Features of Tribal Area

Sr. No.	Item	Kinnaur	Lahaul	Spiti	Pangi	Bharmour	Total Tribal Area	Total H.P
1.	Geographical Area (sq. km.)	6404	6244	7591	1601	1816	23656	55673
2.	Population (No./2001) Persons Males Females	78334 42173 36161	22545 12567 9978	10679 5874 4805	175989 259 8339	37246 19259 17987	166402 89132 77270	6077900 3087940 2989960
3.	Percentage of ST population to total population	72	70.64	77.81	87.15	80.46	76.21	4.00
4.	Density of Population	12	4	1	11	21	7	109
5.	Decennial Growth rate of population (1991-2001)	8.05	3.87	10.18	17.63	9.94	9.88	17.54
6.	Sex Ratio	884	794	818	901	934	867	968
7.	Literacy : Persons (2001) Females Males	75.27 64.77 84.44	65.59 55.28 73.8	74.01 58.7 86.4	60.3 44.2 74.6	62.18 67.64 73.53	70.37 62.28 81.00	76.5 67.0 85.0

Source: Annual Tribal Sub-Plan 2005-2006.

The unit of planning was to be an Integrated Tribal Development Block. This approach required financial resources to be set aside from the general plan and canalized as investment in tribal areas. In Himachal Pradesh, initially three Integrated Tribal Development Project areas were constituted in place of the earlier seven tribal development blocks. These were Kinnaur, Lahaul & Spiti and Pangi & Bharmour areas of Chamba district. In 1978, two new ITDPs were carved out of the existing three keeping in view the geographical contiguity, relative level of economic development,

differences in cultural background and heterogeneity of the economic life of the tribals. There are now five ITDPs namely Kinnaur, Lahaul, Spiti, Pangi and Bharmour.

The flow of funds for the Tribal Sub-Plan from the State Plan outlay increased from 5.75% during the Fifth Plan to 8.62% and 8.78% during Sixth and Seventh Plans. During the Eighth Plan this percentage went up to 9% but declined to 8.68% during the Ninth Plan and is estimated to be around

8% for the Tenth Plan (H.P. Government, 2005, p.42).

Constraints to Development in Tribal Areas

The agriculture sector is the core sector around which all allied activities revolve. About 65% of the main workers are engaged in agriculture. However, agriculture i.e. crop husbandry, is constraints-ridden and of a subsistence nature because of the geographical, climatic and locational disadvantages since tribal areas are located in the far hinterlands bordering Tibet, away from the mainland and possess harsh geographical and unfriendly climatic conditions. Constraints include:

- **Availability of Cultivable land**

A very small proportion of the total area is available for cultivation. Out of a total area of 23, 65,533 hectares only 27,882 hect. constituting 1.18% is operational owned by 22,552 farmers (H.P. Government, 2005, p. 47). The net area sown is 12,510 hectares out of which 7268 hectares constituting over 58% is only in Kinnaur district. Net-cropped area as a proportion of the total geographical area is almost negligible. The average size of land holdings is only 1.24 hectares. Cultivated area per agriculture worker is 0.44 hectares (H.P. Government, 2005, pp. 47 and 349).

- **Single or Mono-crop area**

Due to the geo-climatic conditions, in a large part of the tribal area only one crop is possible in a year. Only 1516 hectares is sown more than once, of which 1324 hectares fall in Kinnaur alone. Severe cold conditions force large parts to be mono-crop. The cropping intensity (124.70%) therefore remains lower than at state level (171%). A preponderance of small and marginal landholdings combined with terraced and very small fields is another limiting factor.

This puts tribals in a situation where they have to tap all available resources to make a living from shallow, stony land holdings. Agriculture as an occupation extracts all the energies of hardworking tribals to make ends meet.

There are equally severe constraints relating to the development of industries. Remoteness from the main centers of economic activities combined with difficult geo-climatic conditions frightens entrepreneurs. The tribal area also presents a challenge for the development of physical

infrastructure. Provision of socio-economic roads and other communication links, educational facilities, medical and health facilities is not only difficult and costly, their upkeep and maintenance is equally daunting. It goes to the credit of the state that considerable success has been achieved in such difficult circumstances.

III

Planned Progress and Current Status

Nevertheless, tribals have always experimented to improve their economic condition. The tribals in Himachal Pradesh have always been in the mainstream of national life and have aspired and struggled to forge ahead even in the most difficult of circumstances. The pace of progress that they have achieved is summarized in Tables 2 and 3.

Development of Socio-economic Infrastructure

Tribal areas have progressed substantially since 1974. The socio-economic infrastructure is improving at a reasonable pace, although it is clear from Table 2 that the availability of socio-economic infrastructure measured in terms of averages is misleading and erroneous. The usefulness of the facility created in these areas is limited by the limited mobility of people as a result of geo-physical conditions. One school or hospital serves more people in plain areas as compared to the one we are looking into. The thinly scattered population living on the hilltops or the spurs here and there across the cliffs and gushing streams of water makes it difficult for people to use the facility provided even when it is within their sight a few meters across the rivulet or the cliff. This makes a case for increasing the network of alternative means of transport in the shape of ropeways and extensive workable pathways through which children could go to school and patients could be taken to health centers.

Table 2 shows that despite natural difficulties, the state government has done commendable work. Making the beginning of the Fourth Five Year Plan period i.e. the year 1974 as the benchmark, the number of educational institutions has more than doubled from 327 to 764. There are two degree colleges in tribal areas. The state government also identified problem areas such as shortage of classrooms, dropouts and girls' enrolment and efforts were made to redress these. Advancements in medical and health facilities are pronounced. There has been more than a threefold increase in

these institutions from 77 to 243 to 2004 and the same with veterinary institutions.

Table 2: Expansion of socio-economic facilities in tribal areas

	1973-74	2003-04	2005-06
Educational institutions (No.)	327	764	785
Primary Schools	262	581	582
Middle Schools	44	101	107
High Schools	21	49	54
Sr. Sc. Schools	-	33	42
Medical Institutions (No)	77	243	242
Civil/Ayurveda Hospitals	-	8	6
Primary Health Centers	8	31	35
CHCs/Rural Hospitals	-	8	9
Dispensaries & Sub-Centers	58	196	192
Hospital beds (No.)	134	491	581
Veterinary Institutions (No.)	55	160	166
Road Length (Km)	677	1394	2400
Double lane	-	64	193
Single lane	143	918	1642
Jeepable	122	184	286
Tracks	412	229	278

Source: Sub-Plan for Tribal Belt 1974-79: A Draft Outline; Annual Tribal Sub-Plan 2008-2009 and H.S.Parmar, 1992, Tribal Development in Himachal Pradesh, Chapters 5 & 7

Road networks are rightly considered the lifelines of any area. The lack of transport and communication facilities accentuates regional imbalances and keeps certain areas in perpetual poverty and deprivation. (Gunnar Myrdal, 1968, pp. 262-63). In hilly areas, its importance grows as life in the hills, in the absence of roads, rolls at a snail's pace.

Despite this, there has been substantial growth in the road network.

Some important indicators have been given in Table 3 with a comparison *vis-à-vis* the state as a whole.

Table 3: Indicators of Socio-economic Development

Sr. No.	indicator	Tribal Area	
		1974	2001/2006
1.	Literacy rate (per cent) Persons	21.99	70.37
	Males	N.A	81
	Females	N.A.	62.26.
2.	Population served per primary school (No.)	436	287
3.	Area served per primary school (sq. km.)	91	41
4.	Population served per middle school (No.)	2597	1513
5.	Area served per middle school (sq.km.)	544	215
6.	Population served per H/Sr.Sec. School (No.)	5441	1849
7.	Area served per H/Sr. Sec School (sq. km.)	1089	263
8.	Population served per medical institution(No.)	1484	685
9.	Area served per medical institution (sq.km.)	309	99

10.	Population served per hospital bed (No.)	853	339
11.	Veterinary institution per lakh of Livestock population	16	47
12.	Area served per veterinary institution (sq. km.)	433	148
13.	Motorable road length (kms.)	265	1166
14.	Area per km. of road (sq. km.)	89	20
15.	Area under fruits (hect.)	1579	3015

Source: Same as Table 2.

During the last three decades of the tribal sub-plan period, education and literacy have improved from about 22% to 70.38%. Female literacy stands at 62.28% (2001 census).

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Development of Production Sectors

Despite the fact that the most severe difficulties are faced in agriculture, it has remained the most important occupation. Changes in the agriculture sector although slow are praiseworthy.

Farming is highly agro-pastoral and most areas are mono-crop. The land available for cultivation is small as only 22,882 hectares area owned by 22,552 families is operational and the average size of holding varies between 0.94 to 1.89 hectares. Cultivable areas form only about 2.75% of the total geographical area and the cultivated area merely 2.3%. Proportion of agriculture workers has come down from 90% in 1971 to 64% in 1981, 62% in 1991 and 56.97% in 2001. The intensity of cropping varies from 100 to 146% as against 171 for the state as a whole. There have been perceptible

changes in the cropping pattern. Diversification in favor of horticulture and other cash crops has taken place. Despite harsh geo-climatic conditions, cash crops can produce high-grade disease resistant seeds and grow off-season vegetables in abundance. The area has already taken strides in horticulture, potato and other vegetable production. There has been some improvement in cropping intensity from about 125% in mid-1980s to 135 in 2004. There has been substantial increase in the area under fruits during the last 30 years. The areas under horticulture have increased from 1767 hectares in 1973 -74 to about 12000 hectares in 2003-04. The production of fruits has increased from little over 2000 tonnes to over 4000 tonnes during the same period. (H.P.Government, 2005, p. 42). The major thrust has been on apples and dry fruits. Kinnaur district and Bharmour areas have taken significant leads. The anticipated figures for the area under apples for 2004-05 show that out of over 7400 hectares under apples in the entire tribal area, about 6400 hectares would be in Kinnaur district. About 450 hectares of area under apples was in Bharmour. Almost the entire area under nuts and dry fruits falls in Kinnaur. The area under potato is expected to be about 1861 hectares of which Lahaul and Spiti will account for about 1250 hectares by the end of 2004-05. The production of 34761 M.T. is expected. Area under vegetables is expected to be 7973 hectares and production 42438 M.T. Kinnaur, Lahaul and Spiti are the major gainers. (H.P.Government, 2005, p.337). In Lahaul, the thrust has been the production of seed potatoes. The Lahaul Potato Growers Society, the second largest primary co-operative society in the country, has contributed a lot to the growth of potato production and marketing. Presently it has 2117 members. The production of peas has also contributed to the transformation of the Lahaul economy. An average family earns over Rs. 50,000 from peas and Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 70,000 from potato every year. (The Tribune, August 23, 2005). The agro-climatic conditions though hard,

are conducive for the production of off-season vegetables, hops, saffron, black zeera, kuth, pulses, sunflower etc. Chilgoza, medicinal and brewing herbs, and other minor forest produce support the tribal economy. Some progressive farmers have been experimenting with floriculture, bee keeping and other horticulture related activities. A support system was created long ago, but its benefits have taken time to materialize. A Seed Multiplication Centre at Leo later converted into Millet Research Station, Vegetable Seed Farms at Ribba, Barang and Kalpa, Dry Fruit Research Station at Bokta, Keylong, the Grapes Research Station at Sharboo and Thiro, Progeny Orchards at Ribba, Kilba and Nichar and Fruit Plant Nurseries at Bhaba and Spillo, Bee Keeping Farms at Urni, Bhaba and Kalpa, Sheep breeding Farm at Karcham, a Yak Breeding Farm at Sangla, a Goat breeding Farm at Sangla, Kuth Research Station at Keylong, etc. are some of the institutions established in the early 1960s and 1970s. There

have been some additions and deletions in these institutions since then.

Because of the physiographic and climatic conditions and remoteness of the area, development of medium, large and even small-scale industries is a distant dream. But the entire tribal area abounds in traditional skills that people have learnt over centuries of isolation in order to survive. They are efficient in handloom and handicrafts. To make this viable and income generating, it is necessary for skill up-gradation and to organize these activities on modern lines and find a market for their products.

Regional variations in socio-economic development

The tribal region has achieved a fair level of socio-economic development but here are some areas that lag behind others. Table 4 details inter-regional variations .

Table 4:Inter-regional Variations

Sr. No.	Item	Kinnaur	Lahaul	Spiti	Pangi	Bharmour	Total (Tribal)
1.	Area under food-grains (Hect.)*	7000	400	3708	2050	2880	16038
2.	Production of food-grains (M.T.)*	8600	700	37080	2200	5860	54440
3.	Area under potato(Hect)*	370	700	550	165	76	1861
4.	Production of potato (M.T.)*	7000	15500	8085	3250	926	34761
5.	Area under vegetables (Hect.)*	3550	1700	2273	350	100	7973
6.	Production of vegetables (M.T.)*	4000	20000	15911	2525	2.9	42438.9
7.	Area under apples (Hect.)*	6400	250	232.5	85	450	7417.5
8.	Production of apples (M.T.)*	33000	60	31.6	120	600	33811.6
9	Medical institutions per lakh population	130	226	240	160	127	152

10.	Beds available per lakh of population	274	737	313	170	150	283
11.	Educational Institutions per lakh of population	345	797	907	411	419	472
12.	Veterinary Institutions per lakh of livestock population	80	222	222	171	23	56
13.	Banking institutions per lakh of population	42	53	37	7	24	36
14.	Telephone connections	9500	1734	1107	450	1213	14004

*These figures are based on anticipated achievements for the year 2004-05.

It is obvious from Table 4 that there exist wide disparities in the availability of socio-economic services. Pangi and Bharmour, the most difficult areas within the tribal belt, are far behind other regions. They are still comparatively inaccessible and therefore present greater challenges.

IV

Measures to Further Boost Tribal Economy

It is obvious that the lives of tribals and their socio-economic milieu are primarily conditioned by the topography and other natural conditions. In these areas, development needs redefining because of the ecological considerations and the need for development. The popular perception of exploiting the hydropower potential of the area and developing tourism are two potential areas that can transform the tribal economy but must be assessed in terms of costs and benefits from the perspective of the tribals' well-being and the ecological issues. The present development strategy loses sight of some important dimensions like improvement of the quality of life and empowerment of the people. Many initiatives like improvement of hygiene, preservation and use of clean drinking water, understanding about appropriate food preservation and eating habits, scientific scrutiny of different practices at the time of birth of a child and other religious and social events and traditional child care

practices, inculcation of the belief in the utility and credibility of education particularly girl child, etc. are areas which can be addressed even before a road reaches a remote village or a hospital comes up which may involve a few crores of rupees as investment which the state finds hard to spare. All these are areas in which local and non-governmental initiatives can prove fruitful.

The traditional economy of the tribals cannot be overhauled overnight to install the so-called modern developed economy where IT, IT-enabled or service sectors can thrive. The process of change will be slow and ignited by internal forces. Time-tested traditional vocations cannot be shed overnight. There must be scientific knowledge and up-gradation of skills so that existing occupations yield greater returns. A gradual shift in the cropping pattern, up-gradation in handloom and handicrafts, more productive animal husbandry, scientific extraction of forest produce, etc. are the areas which need rethinking and redesigning. "Owing to the peculiar physical characteristics of the tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh, the long term strategy of planned development for the region needs some hard thinking. Neither the replication of policies being pursued elsewhere, nor those tried out here itself in the past may yield enough results in the

long run. The strategy must be appropriate to ensure sustainable development in this ecologically sensitive region. In other words, the redesigned development policy should mark a paradigmatic shift in the Himalayan tribal context.” (L.R.Sharma, 1998, pp. 90-99).

Measures to boost the tribal economy are listed below.

- Increase the network of alternative means of transportation in the shape of ropeways and extensive networks of workable pathways to be undertaken by the state and not by Panchayats only. The construction of even pathways involves a good amount of investment in geographically difficult areas and panchayats would find it difficult in view of their difficult financial position. Secondly, such pathways will transgress panchayat boundaries and need co-ordination, which the state can do more effectively.
- The tribals have traditionally acquired skills in many handicraft and handloom activities. There is a need to strengthen these by upgrading their skills on scientific lines and finding markets for their products so that their cultural traditions and traits become major assets.
- Exploitation of hydro-power potential and development of eco-tourism need serious thinking in terms of their environmental fallout and socio-economic benefits to the local population.
- Initiate ‘small’ actions like improving the hygiene, preservation and use of clean water and scientific scrutiny of many tribal practices that impinge upon the quality of life. Local communities, community-based organizations and non-governmental organizations, particularly those working among women and children, should be encouraged to undertake projects of social –engineering based on the principle of ‘respect for tribal people’.
- Tribal communities will gradually progress on the foundation of local resources and internal economic strengths rather than by making a direct leap to high-tech developmental paradigms. It is imperative to strengthen and not weaken their existing

patterns of livelihood. Interventions should give scientific support to what they are doing so that they are able to adjust to the changing world.

- The tribal area is full of aromatic, herbal, medicinal plants and other forest produce that people have traditionally harnessed to good advantage. There is a need for scientific exploitation of these resources, to create a niche in this field and to replenish them so that greater economic benefits flow to the local inhabitants.
- Animal husbandry has traditionally been an integral part of tribal life. Whole-hearted efforts are required to make it a vibrant industry that can have wide linkages in their economic lives.

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