



**TRIBES AND FOREST ADMINISTRATION IN SCHEDULED AREAS IN  
TELANGANA – A STUDY**

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**Abstract:**

India is a land of tribes (10.4Millions) which constitutes 8.6% of its total population and spread over 15% of its geographical area. Tribe has very close relation with the forest and their life and sustenance is harmonized with available forest resources. The ongoing pursuit for economic development and market pressure on government have forced policy-makers to convert forest land into large corporations which again push away the indigenous people from their soils. Since the colonial period the forest policies jeopardized the tribe's rights over the forest and ignored their voices during framing the laws. In the colonial period the legal and policy instruments transferred the right over forest from communities hand to government's hand. The post colonial law has provided a dignified status to tribes but it will not be able to resolve tribal people's human rights and livelihood issues without similar or greater advancement in law and administration in other areas such as land acquisition development – induced displacement and political autonomy. Government and our policy makers should not ignore the importance of tribes and rights should be given to the latter by proper implementation of the law.

Keywords: Administration, economy, development, tribes, policy

## **Introduction:**

Tribes, also known as aboriginal communities/indigenous people/ Adivasi/ Janjati/Schedule Tribes, are residing in forests since time immemorial. There are nearly 10.4 million tribal people residing on 15% of total Indian geography and constitutes 8.6 % of total Indian population. Forests and tribals are culturally and traditionally linked to each other. Tribals have been living in the forest ecology and that has shaped their life and the society they presently have. Most of them live in close proximity of forest and depend on the forest for their livelihood and sustenance. Their entire existence evolves around the forest as they evolve in these woodlands and extract prerequisites like clean water, air, food, medicines, shelter, and even recreational retreats from these forests. The tribals get food from the forests by shifting or settled cultivation, apart from picking varieties of edible and herbal roots, tubers, creepers, fruits, leaves. Along with that tribals extract varieties of minor forest produce (MFP), which includes fodder and grasses, raw materials like bamboo, canes and leaves, gums, waxes, dyes and resins and several forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, and honey.

National Commission on Agriculture (1976) has classified MFP as i) Fibres and flosses, ii) Grasses (other than oil producing), bamboo, reeds, and canes, iii) Oil seeds, iv) Tams and dyes, v) Gums, resins and oleoresins, and vi) Leaves (Prasad, 2011). Forests are an integral part of tribal social life, because its importance is not only economic but also social, psychological and religious. Tribes worship the trees, bushes and animals, which dwell in the forests, as totem and believe that their gods and ancestors' spirits reside in the forest. So they never want to deplete it but conserve it through their traditional conservative methods. The symbiotic relationship between forest and tribes was acknowledged and crystallised by the customary right over forest produces.

In India about 74.8 million hectares of land is classified as forests, which is about 23 percent of total geographical area. The outer Himalayas, the Western Ghats, the Deccan plateau including Vindhyas and the North-Eastern region are the main forested regions in the country of the seven percent of tribes of the total population of India; nearly 4 percent out of the seven percent live in the forest areas. They are often called as Adivasis. A cursory look as the whole thing indicates the potential of the region and its people.

## **Objectives of the Study:**

The main purpose of the study is to comprehensively examine the forest policy in the background of the tribal development. In addition to this main purpose, there are other substantive objectives which are to be studied under this broad priority areas of the study, they are:

1. To examine the under currents of the forest policy followed during the Nizam Rule in specific relation to its impact as the tribal communities.
2. To assess the situation from the background of the gradual shifts of the Indian Forest Policy and its consequential impact.
3. To explain the impact of the deforestation over the native tribes in Telangana region for the last two decades.
4. To examine the implementation of Forest Development Programmes such as social Forestry Programmes afforestation and their utility to the tribal communities in the selected villages of the study.
5. To examine the implementation of participatory forest protection and management programmes such NAP & FDA (JFM & CFM).

The present study intends to examine the changing nature of the forest policy being adopted by the state, its overall impact in general and in relation to tribal community in particular and assess the implications of the new Forest development programmes like FDA District level and CFM Village level through VSS programmes in the micro context.

## **Hypothesis of the Study**

The major hypothesis of the study is depended upon a principal assumption that the constant denudation of the forests lie in ill conceived priorities of the public policies pursued by the Government from time to time for the years while simultaneously undermining the native communities right's over the forests.

The second assumption of the study is that "the bureaucratization of the priorities of the afforestation programmes has been often led to the elite plant regeneration that further

resulted in creation of socio-economic distance between the clientele and implementing agency, i.e., tribes and local forest administration". These two basic assumptions are examination in the present study.

### **Scope & Methodology of the Study:**

The study is undertaken with the assistance of the both descriptive and empirical tools generally adopted in social science research. The descriptive part of the study would be substantiated by the secondary sources where as the empirical part of the study is undertaken through the administration of a structured questionnaire and 3 forest ranges of I.T.DA's Jurisdiction Bureaucracy, concerned officials and non-officials related to the implementation of the afforestation's programmes at the villages level, belonging to the various political parties, especially drawn from selected villages, specially chosen for this purpose. That data for the purpose of study is drawn from two sources, 1. Primary data 2. Secondary data

Study villages chosen on the basis of purposive random sampling technique. The justification for selection of the study villages has been summed up as:

1. The villages should have predominantly tribal population.
2. The sizeable extent of the forest covers both in the erstwhile and contemporary times in the surroundings of the selected villages.
3. The villages should and must a part of the usually specified scheduled area.
4. Intensity of the effect of the deforestation over the tribal life which is seen both in terms of physical and long run contexts.
5. Differing forms experimentation of the programmes formulated in the Government for regeneration of the forest in the villages and the protection of the tribal rights over the forest resource.
6. Accessibility to information and extensive rapport with the study villages.

## **Conceptual Frame and Sample Selection:**

In accordance with the above guide lines Schedule Tribal villages of the Telangana state are a case for the study. The Villages such as from I.T.D.A's of Badrachalam, Utnoor and Eturnagaram (Akulavari Ghanpoor) all Forest Ranges of district Divisions of the Agency areas respectively have chosen as the universe of the study.

## **Limitations of the Study:**

- The study is confined to the analysis of the problem of the tribals. Due to the limited scope the study it may have only a limited validity in understanding the problems. However, this study observed a social phenomenon not only from its background, but tries to integrate it with the overall forest-tribal system in which these villages are also a part.
- The researcher has found it very difficult to collect the data on certain aspects of the study, where the question of memory of the tribal respondents, towards the comparison of the earlier and present forest cover available in the vicinity of the village which act as a one of the crucial limitations over the extraction of the appropriate responses from the respondents. The non-availability of the recorded figures on forest cover in village records had severely limited the researcher's choice were left with no option except depending upon the memories of the respondents which again often subjected to further verification.
- Finally, the limitations of distance time and finance. Since the villages have been situated in the remote and dense forest areas of the Adilabad, Warangal and Khammam districts, the researcher has been subjected to many hardships to make frequent trips to the villages, which further might have strengthened the basis of information for extraction.

## **Forest Policies under the Rule of British Crown:**

The forest governance established by the British was authoritarian in nature which imposed restriction on the local forest dweller communities through a definition of forest as a national property for the colonial objectives. These policies acquired control of forest for commercial purposes and national development at the cost of local forest based livelihood,

rights and privileges. The chronological narration of forest policies and management taken by the British and its impact on the socio-economic lives of the tribals.

### **The Forest Act of 1865:**

This act was first attempt in the direction of regulation of forest produces by the forest dwellers and asserting the State monopoly over the forest. The state was empowered to declare any land covered with tree as forest and to regulate it by notification, provided that such notification should not abridge or affect any existing rights of individuals or communities (sec.2). Thus, socially regulated practices of the forest people were to be restrained by law. So, the customary 'rights' of using forest products were transformed as 'privileges'. The Act was applicable only to forests under the control of the Government and no provisions were made to cover private forests (Kulkarni, 1987).

### **The Forest Act, 1878:**

This Act was more comprehensive than the previous and extended state's authority over the forests. This act divided forest into three parts namely reserved forests, protected forests and village forests. The Act tightened the government's control on forest by prohibiting certain activities like trespassing or pasturing of cattle (Husnain, 2009). But this was not applicable to neighbouring forests where rights were still in the hands of communities. Through this legislation, by one stroke of the executive pen, obliterate centuries of customary use of the forest by rural populations all over India. Thus, when the Colonial State asserted control over woodlands, which had earlier been in the hands of local communities and provided to work these forests for commercial timber production, it intervened in the day to day life of the Indian villages to an unprecedented degree (Prasad, 2011).

### **Forest Policy Resolution-1894:**

The first forest policy envisaged the supremacy of the State's interest over the people's interest. The sole objective of the policy was administration of the state forests for public benefit but it imposed restrictions on the inhabitants of the forest and neighbourhood of the forests. It also classified some forest as minor forest for fulfilling the needs of the communities (Prasad, 2011). The commercial value of the forest has prompted the British Government to restrict the community use of the forest. This helped the British to augment

their revenue but in the process the rights of the tribals has been curtailed severely. Consequently, this colonial forest policy not only alienated them from forest but seized their forest rights (Bahrgava, 2002). This policy has made the forest officials to come in the scene and claimed the authority to limit and regulate the traditional tribal rights over the forests (Husnain, 2009).

### **Forest Act-1927:**

The India Forest Act of 1878 was amended in the past by different Acts of local Governments. It was later on replaced by a very comprehensive Act called the Indian Forest Act, 1927. This has not only further regulated the people's right over forest but also codified all the practices of the forest officials. The forest officials, who played crucial role at the grass-root level, had direct interaction with the communities. They were very authoritative and used their power arbitrarily and played havoc with the lives of tribal people. Their coercive behaviour and abuse of power forced many tribals to leave their native places. The Act deleted the reference to communities' rights over forests, which were made in the 1878 Act. Persons were expected to put in their claims over forest lands and forest produce before the Forest Settlement Officer who was to enquire into their claims.

This Act has put some control on the shifting cultivation, which was considered as biggest reason of forest depletion, with certain special provisions. The gravest consequence of colonial forestry working on commercial and imperial interest was dwindling of customary rights as well as the decline in traditional conservation and management systems. The restriction of communal ownership of forests by the State severely destabilized the subsistence economy of the forest people. It forced many communities to change their occupation. As Sengupta (1988) observed to compensate for the loss of source of livelihood tribals have been forced to explore alternative avenues of engagements.

So, in the colonial period the legal and policy instruments transferred the right over forests from communities' hand to government's hand. The common property had become the state property and alienation of village communities from forest was begun. In 1935, Forest was transferred from the union to state list according to Government of India Act, 1935. This authority of the state over the forest produces continued even after Independence.

## **National Forest Policy of 1952:**

The first post independence forest policy was formulated in 1952 with a realisation of 'maximum annual revenue from the forests' in the nation making. This belied all hopes of tribal people by higher regulation on their rights over the forest resources. It followed the lines of colonial policy makers but it went beyond in infringing on the privileges of the tribals. The private forests of tribals that were not touched in the old policy were subjected to controls under the new one. Free grazing was recognized under the old policy but a fee was imposed on it in the new one. A concession is given relating to shifting cultivation, by the provision that should be curbed not by coercion as earlier but by persuasion.

So the 'rights' which were converted to 'privileges' in the colonial periods were turned to 'concession' in this policy. New policy withdrew the right over forestland for cultivation which was provided by the colonial predecessor and it also started controlling the private forests which was totally under the control of the tribals in colonial period. The old policy didn't touch free grazing in forests. The new policy sought to bring it under control. Fees were introduced and grazing was to be kept to the minimum. The forest policy of 1952 of free India was considered worse than its colonial predecessor policy of 1894, particularly for the indigenous people (Reddy 1995).

To analyse the Forest policy and its impact on the tribals of India, The President of India constituted a commission under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar. The Scheduled area and Schedule tribe commission emphasized the importance of forests in the life of the tribal people in providing them with all kinds of food, wild game and fish, wood for construction of houses and even income from the sale of forest produce besides fuel and criticised the gradual extension of Government authority over forests to the detriment of tribal life and economy. It also noted the gradual changes in the rights of the tribal communities over the forests and its transformation from 'rights' and 'privileges' in 1894, then 'rights' and 'concession' in 1952 and thereafter it remained as concession. The Commission recommended that the policy of 1952 should be reconsidered and tribals should be allowed to cultivate forest lands. Their requirements for grazing and shifting cultivation should be conceded. It also noted responsibilities of forest officials.



## **Forest Act-1988:**

The basic objectives of forest Act, 1988 stated, "the principal aim of forest policy must be to ensure environmental stability and maintenance of ecological balance including atmospheric equilibrium which are vital for sustenance of all life forms, human, animal and plant. The derivation of direct economic benefit must be subordinated to this principal aim". The concept of joint-forest management evolved in this act. While this policy has more people-oriented provisions, it still has the concept of exclusive state ownership of forest and mention industrial needs as national needs (Choudari, 1987).

The practice of Shifting cultivation was permitted for a period of three years. Special provisions were made to prevent encroachments on reserve forests with punitive measures. State was allowed to constitute village forests except reserve forests. Provisions are made to regulate trespassing of cattle in reserved, protected and village forests and penalties for such offences have been made very severe.

The Resolution has a special provision on tribal people and forests. It is stated that having regard to the symbiotic relationship between the tribal people and forests, all agencies responsible for forest management should see that the tribal people are closely associated in the protection, regeneration and development of forests so as to provide them gainful employment (Hiremath et.al 1994).

A movement by social and human right activists was started which considered Rights of the tribal over local resources as sacrosanct and nonnegotiable and a move was initiated to secure Constitutional recognition for these rights. These movements along with Bhuria Committee's recommendation forced government to amend in Vth schedule and known as the Panchayats Extension to Schedule Areas (PESA), 1996. It decentralized existing approaches to forest governance by bringing the *Gram Sabha* centre stage and recognized the traditional rights of tribals over "community resources"—meaning land, water, and forests. PESA was important not just because it provided for a wide range of rights and privileges, but also because it provided a principle as well as a basis for future law making concerning the tribals (Patnaik, 2007).

In 2002, Ministry of Environment and Forest, India passed a circular in which tribals were denoted as 'encroachers' and were directed to evict the forest. This incapacitation of

forest-dwelling tribals was aggravated by the establishment of the Protected Area Network, which meant further sacrosanct areas with no or negligible rights over forests and forest land by the tribals; it enabled the State to evict local forest dwellers without settling their bona fide rights to residence (Patnaik, 2007).

### **The Forest Act, 2006:**

The forest Act, 2006 is a landmark law in the evolution of the government's attitude towards the tribal community. After Honourable Supreme Court's decision in 2004, the Parliament has enacted the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 (the 'Act') to 'undo the historical injustices' suffered by tribal communities throughout colonial and postcolonial period. The purpose of the Act is to recognise the rights of forest-dwelling communities and to encourage their participation in the conservation and management of forests and wildlife. The 'encroachers' were considered as an important agents of conservation and management of the forests and wildlife. The bill has identified the forest dependent Schedule tribes and non-tribal forest dependent tribal population and made a distinction between two to on the ground of sustenance and commercial purpose (Bhullar, 2008).

In the previous years, 10 million hectares of land was affected by floods in which 58,000 Cattles and 1200 people lost their lives. Average annual loss due to floods is as high as Rs. 1000 Crores. Deforestation also causes droughts and desertification. In addition, destruction of forests leads to landslides as in the hills of Himachal Pradesh. Silting of Canals and Reservoirs is also caused by deforestation. Forest land occupies a large proportion of the river valley catchment area and determines soil stabilization and stream flow. Soil erosion and high station of river beds have jeopardized nearly 39 major river valley projects.

The Indian Government began realizing and discovering the fact that no less than 4.2 million hectares of forest land had been destroyed since Independence. Alternately, the Governments at the state and central levels began to encourage afforestation programmes. State Governments have spent Rs. 10 crores for such programmes, of the 38 lakh hectares of land that has been brought under afforestation programmes since independence, 22 lakh hectares have been devoted to economic and industrial plantations while 14.8 lakh hectares have been devoted to quick growing species like Eucalyptus and Casuarina. Recently, the

Central Government has started championing the so called Social Forestry (Go.ms 9 & 218 January 1992) means is clear from the fact in the sixth plan while Rs. 356 crores is allocated for commercial forestry only Rs. 50 crores is allocated for fuel-wood plantations.

**Table – 1**

**Variation of the increase and decrease details of the Forest India Level(in Sq.km)**

<b>Type of Forest</b>	<b>Sq. Kms</b>
Very Dense Forest	83969
Dense Forest	342438
Open Forest	299853
<b>Total Forest Cover</b>	<b>726260</b>
Scrub Forest	42177
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>768437</b>

Source: India State of Forest Report 2011

As per the records of the N.R.S.A, The forests must have to be around and over 33% of area throughout India, the forests have situated mostly in hilly area anywhere else, present forest area is 768.437 square kilometers. Presently the forests occupied 23.37% in the country instead of 33% on the land, according to National Forest Policy - 1952. The forests have classified in to two categories.

- 1) Ever green forests,
- 2) Leaf Pelting forests

The central government has provided sanctuaries for wild life (Act - 1972) protections i.e. 88 national parks 490 reserved forests, and 200 parks in nearing in urban areas, the sanctuaries have been extended up to 1.53 square kilometers area.

In this connection lot of unconventional situations are surrounded to the tribal the cause deforestation as well as decreasing the conventional food and their traditional system. In this circumstances the forest dept. and bureaucrats spent crores of rupees for protection of the forest and the "Adivasis", through five year plans implemented by the government of India, the certain new policies and some G.O's are also released for the upliftment of the tribes and their scheduled area development.

In pursuance of the recommendations of the conference of the officials and non-officials held at the Secretariat in December, 1949, the Government appointed a committee headed by Sri R.S. Malayappan, Special Agency Development Officer to tour the Agency areas and select suitable sites for Tribal Development Schemes such as improvement of Forests, Plantations, Irrigation, Hydro-Electric Projects and exploitation of Mineral resources. The Committee has recommended for taking up the following Schemes for development of Tribal's in Scheduled Area (Extract).(1) Land Colonization (2) Forest (3) Irrigation (4) Hydro-Electric Schemes (5) Plantation (6) Agriculture (7) Public Health (8) Rural Water Supply (9) Leprosy Eradication (10) Medical Aid (11) Prohibition (12) Animal Husbandry (13) Small Industries (14) Sericulture (15) Fisheries (16) Women Welfare (17) Education etc.

Apart from the above, one of the important recommendations relates to prevention of exploitation of hill-men by plains, merchants and money lenders.

The Committee favored organization of Co-operative for implementation of Land Colonization Scheme and extending credit facilities at a nominal rate of interest and other services to cater to day-today needs of the Tribal's. Accordingly, Government has taken steps to implement the recommendations of the 'Malayappan Committee'.

Late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, laid down the approach of development of Scheduled Tribes during the times of generous of the community. Dhebar Commission appointed Article 339 of the Constitution of India also endorsed this approach and observed that the tribal should be integrated with the rest of the Society while allowing them to continue their traditions, ethos, arts, culture and their identity. Their right-on land and forest should be safeguarded and they should be trained for their administration and development.

The resources of products and forest material available from the forests are (M.F.P) recommendations of the UN. Debar Commission - 1961. The forest provides the essential food for tribal providing calories, vitamins, proteins, minerals or some other component needed to supplement the staple food in their diet. Gathering and processing of forest produce is a routine work in their daily life. Around 157 plants are available in the forest, these are useful to man as food as medicine and as a shelter to tribal people. In these

forests same of the forests animals are useful. The tribal are also getting the herbs and food grains from these forests.

### **Geographical area of the Forests in Telangana State:**

According to the census of AP forest department, the forest area spread over 63814 square kilometers. The area situated from south Tirupathi to Simhachalam. The largest forests occupied area is called Nallamala hills; Srikakulam, Vishakhapatnam, East and West Godavari, Adilabad, Cuddapa, Chittur, Kurnool, Karimnagar, Khammam, and Warangal have forests. In this areas have lowest density forests are also have groomed with thorny bushes which are very short in nature.

The Geographical area of the Telangana State for the year 2013-14 (Combined State) is 1,14,840 Sq. kms, and Stood at 12<sup>th</sup> position in India, having 29,242 Sq. Kms, forest area which accounts for 25.46% of total geographical area, including social forestry. Out of 29,242 Sq. kms., Reserved Forest area is 21,024 Sq. Kms, Protected Forest forms 7468 Sq.kms., and the rest of 750 Sq. kms, are unclassified. The total revenue realized during 2013-14 is Rs. 148.28 crores on sale of forest produce in the state.

The present study intends to examine the problem with both micro and macro perspective over the problem. Particularly, the relevance and implementation of the social forestry programmes in all the forest divisions of Warangal, Adilabad and Khammam district for the study observation.

**Table – 2**

**Statistics of Forest Coverage of the Three districts (in Sq.km)**

<b>Districts</b>	<b>Division</b>	<b>VDF</b>	<b>MDF</b>	<b>OF</b>	<b>SF</b>	<b>NF</b>	<b>WB</b>	<b>Total</b>
Warangal	North	-	950.81	1016.09	90.32	246.30	6.73	<b>2310.25</b>
	South	-	306.44	425.36	78.76	341.80	22.29	<b>1174.65</b>
Adilabad	-	482.93	3618.62	1450.08	872.98	707.86	34.83	<b>7101.30</b>
Khammam	-	133.48	2336.56	2979.75	7772.88	753.68	29.60	<b>7945.35</b>

The above table explains that the forest area of Warangal (4023.45) (23.9%), Adilabad (7101.30) (37.6) and Khammam (7945.35) (43.2%) sq. kms. Khammam is the highest forest coverage of the three districts.

### **Conclusion:**

The tribals who were enjoyed the forests from time immemorial had no clue but to surrender against the mighty powers. This forced them to alienate the forest and come out from their ancestral home. They were depended on the mercy of the colonial rulers for their sustenance and livelihood. These miseries were aggravated by their own Indian rulers who barred them to access the forest resources and used it to commercial profit in the name of nation building and developments. The control has been transferred from communities to the corporate sectors that are making profit by using these resources. In spite of these the policymakers consider tribals as destructor and encroachers of the forest. The indigenous people struggle for autonomy and identity throughout the colonial and post-colonial period demanded state recognition of the integrity of their culture and nature. As far as the tribes are concerned, the forest is inseparable from their existence, the tribal and forest policies of state could not be framed on incompatible premises. However, this demand was never honoured by the state. Tribal people suffer from physical displacement mainly because the laws that do not recognize communal customary rights of people to forest lands. The eviction of millions of tribes from their natural habitat is not solution to the problem of deforestation and degradation. The focus should be on delegating rights of forest dwellers, who are the only people who can become good stewards of forest resources through their traditional conservative knowledge. Government and our policy makers should not ignore the importance of tribals and rights should be given to the latter. Due to lack of the awareness about the law and rights, the benefits of the policies are not reaching to the desired people. No doubt, the forest Act 2006 has given a ray of hope to the tribals for getting the rights over the forest land and resources but a proper implementation is demanded.

### **Policy Implications:**

1. Larger tribal people are living under poverty line in agency areas.
2. To Protect their constructional rights.
3. To increase the tribes through developmental activities.

4. Tribal Man and forest relation to be increased.
5. To be growth of Afforestation by the fruit plants.
6. To provide the employment and training to youth tribes in forest agency areas.
7. To support institutional agency to provide ESS.
8. To come forward the tribes main stream of the society.

**Recommendations:**

1. Forest protection rights to be given to the tribal.
2. To increase the Institutional organisation with participation of the proper tribes.
3. To provide the infrastructure and staff facilities.
4. Increase the forest resources i.e., Major Minor produce vegetable animal and mineral products.
5. To be moderate the tribes from processes.
6. To provide the Schemes with opinion of the tribes suggestion of PESA.
7. To be plant the permanent fruits trees in schedule area.
8. To issue the Chitta Pattas for forest protection by the tribes.
9. To improve the innovation plant grazing technology training for the tribes.

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