

ENTREPRENEURIAL DEVELOPMENT AMONG THE TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The word 'entrepreneur' has not been generally used in the study of tribal and peasant societies mainly because the concept itself arose in the context of western, capitalist and industrialized economy. Most of the existing industrial ventures in the tribal domain are not beneficial for the local people as they ignore the development of local skill and environment resulting in non-participation of the tribal people in the process of development. Poverty and backwardness are major issues confronting tribal communities. Deforestation has disturbed the subsistence economy of the tribal people who have been forced to look out for alternative sources of livelihood. A need is thus felt to generate meaningful and environment-friendly sources of employment for tribal communities. Acquisition of skills by tribal communities through training and other programmes form an integral component for the empowerment of tribal communities. Interactive learning replaces transfer of technology as a principal function of the extension systems, for example 'field school approach' has helped in transferring many of the skills to the tribal communities. Implementation of extension programmes by 'family centered approach', that is by keeping the family as basic unit of the village was identified as the best method to teach certain skills. Forest produce plays an important role in the food security of tribals. Tribal regions are endowed with a wide variety of fruits and other Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Semi-processing and processing of fruits and other NTFPs can provide gainful employment to the unemployed tribal people. Growing of fruit trees on barren/ sloping lands can provide a fruitful source of income to the tribal people. The choice of species is such that they serve diverse day-to-day needs for fuel wood, fodder, small timber, etc. Rural technology workshop is needed to impart training to tribal youth and women in various technical skills like use of bamboo and cane in carpentry and other creative and constructive activities centred on forest and agricultural produce. Family centered approach can also be fruitful by imparting cattle management and backyard poultry keeping. These approaches are found to be better when training is offered to the female counterparts as they are part and parcel of the tribal family system. They can be empowered in simple need based technologies, like seed treatment, green manuring, vermin composting, soil test based fertilizer application etc., for improving the knowledge, skills and abilities of the tribals. The extension system with involvement of Government agencies, NGOs, tribal communities' organizations, private sector agencies, para-extension workers, etc., is going to be more effective and dynamic. The agricultural extension system will have to transform itself with the capacity building to meet the challenges arising in rural and tribal situations by utilizing the resources effectively. The transfer of technology system is likely to undergo radical reforms as the tribal communities need a wide range of services on aspects like marketing, credit insurance, infrastructure (including cold-chains), entrepreneurship, etc. It is possible only through changes in the institutional and organizational set up of our extension system by adopting important extension strategies.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneur, Tribal, Entrepreneurship

INTRODUCTION

The word 'entrepreneur' has not been generally used in the study of tribal and peasant societies mainly because the concept itself arose in the context of western, capitalist and industrialized economy. The real need for the study of entrepreneurship was felt when the hitherto traditional societies came under the impact of capitalism and industrialization, and started developing in the formal economic sense. Absence of an appropriate industrial and entrepreneurial climate and lack of access to relevant technology appear to be the crucial constraints for the developing communities to achieve a meaningful economic development. In India, the entrepreneurs have come to assume an important place and the development of entrepreneurship has become imperative in view of the economic development and prosperity of the country. It is evident that there is a big gap between industrial setup in the developing countries and subsequent manpower planning for a meaningful participation of rural and tribal people in industrial economy. Most of the existing industrial ventures in the tribal domain are not beneficial for the local people as they ignore the development of local skill and environment resulting in non-participation of the tribal people in the process of development. To make development planning meaningful for the target population, planned investment has to be directed towards the development of local human resources. A big challenge is to revitalise the rural economy by strengthening its ecological base which draws inspiration from the rich and diverse indigenous cultures and knowledge systems like traditional medicine and primary health care; ecological agriculture and conservation of plant genetic resources; nutrition and food security; employment generation; education; natural resource management; community video; and women's empowerment.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE AND PRIMARY HEALTH CARE

Local health traditions (also termed traditional medicine or folk medicine) were once common in the tribal region. Every village had atleast one traditional birth attendant and more than one folk practitioner. There was also a large body of knowledge of simple home remedies. These Local Health Traditions (LHTs) were community-supported, autonomous, oral in nature, self-reliant and based on the use of local resources, mainly plants. For instance, there are reports of over 300 medicinal plant species being used by tribals for their primary health care needs. Promotion of allopathic medicine and utter neglect of traditional medicine by the Government and mainstream medical institutions has literally wiped out local health traditions prevalent in tribal regions. These practices can once again be renewed through regular training programmes conducted for the midwives, housewives and tribal youth interested in learning about herbal medicine. Village level medicine preparation camps can be organized to train women in simple processing techniques for the treatment of common ailments.

ECOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE AND SEED CONSERVATION

Ecological agricultural practices must be encouraged among the tribal communities in the tribal regions. Indiscriminate and widespread use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides by tribal communities is a cause of concern. Efforts should be made to demonstrate the benefits of ecological agriculture. The importance of compost, vermicompost, green manures, etc. should be communicated to tribal communities. Demonstration and field trials must be organized. Erosion in genetic diversity of food plants is a common problem. Government policies to promote Green Revolution technologies have contributed to erosion in genetic diversity. Many traditional crop varieties cultivated by tribal communities have disappeared while many others are on their way out. The loss of genetic diversity is perhaps the gravest crisis facing agriculture since man began domesticating plants for food. Efforts should be made to promote conservation of

traditional crop varieties. Over 500 traditional varieties of rice, millets, pulses, oilseeds, tubers/rhizomes and vegetables have been collected from the Konkan region of Maharashtra. These can be maintained in field gene banks and seed banks. Seeds/ planting material can be distributed to the tribal communities every year in order to encourage farming practices. Training programmes on seed conservation must be organized for tribal communities in an effort to encourage replication of the work in other regions.

Forests provide game, fish, crabs, fruits & nuts, wild vegetables, tubers & rhizomes, honey, etc. to the tribals for their food needs but widespread deforestation in recent years has reduced the availability of these uncultivated foods. Deforestation has disturbed the subsistence economy of tribals and they have been forced to look out for alternative sources of livelihood. Gainful self employment within the region can prevent migration of these people to cities besides improving the standard of living of local communities.

FOOD PROCESSING CENTRES

Tribal regions are endowed with a wide variety of fruits and other Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Semi-processing and processing of fruits and other NTFPs can provide gainful employment to tribals. Fruits and cereals can be processed into products like pickles, jams, squashes, chutney, murabba, candy, satva, malt, etc. which provides seasonal employment to tribal women through collection of fruits and work in the unit during peak seasons. Food processing units can be innovative in developing and standardising several food products. These enterprises can demonstrate the benefits of standing forests and encourages growing of fruit trees on barren, sloping lands.

RURAL TECHNOLOGY WORKSHOP

Rural technology workshop to impart training to tribal youth and women in various technical skills like carpentry, bamboo, cane and construction technology must be conducted. Marketing centres should be established to develop various marketable products from bamboo and to train tribal people in bamboo craft in efforts to generate employment for forest dwelling communities. The centre has developed a wide range of bamboo products. Growing of fruit trees on barren/sloping lands of small & marginal tribal communities should be encouraged. The choice of species must be such that they serve diverse day-to-day needs for fuel wood, fodder, small timber, etc. Fruits make an important contribution to the nutrition of poor families apart from providing additional income. Fruit tree orchards have so far been set up on 200 acres of barren land. Different varieties of Mango, Jackfruit, Cashew, Jamun, Amla, Guava, Chikoo, Karvanda and Bamboo species can be planted so that they can be used to raise grafts and saplings for distribution to tribal communities in tribal regions. Livelihoods of tribals are woven around hunting/gathering and subsistence farming. Forest produce plays an important role in the food security of tribals. However, large-scale deforestation has resulted in depletion of forest resources and this has had an adverse impact on the livelihoods of tribals. Food grain yields from subsistence-based farming are not enough to meet the food needs of the family for the whole year. The periodic cycle of food grain shortages represents the "lean period" or "lean season" for tribal families. This is a period of starvation and hardships for tribals. Over 100 different foods (vegetables, fruits, tubers/rhizomes, fish, crabs, etc.) are consumed by tribals throughout the year. The hunting/gathering of these wild foods calls for specialised skills and understanding of nature and natural processes. The foods, their recipes and collection methods are closely linked to social, cultural and religious aspects of tribal groups. Uncultivated foods meet between 40-50 per cent of the food needs of poor tribal families, particularly during stress periods. Women are mainly involved in the gathering, processing, preservation and cooking of uncultivated foods.

Uncultivated foods thus play an extremely important role not only in food security but also in nutritional security by enhancing the diversity of tribal diets. The valuable knowledge about diverse uncultivated foods is gradually disappearing as the younger generation fails to learn about these survival skills in their pursuit of "formal" education through 'schools'. Efforts need to be made to document and disseminate knowledge about uncultivated foods to the younger generation. This can be done using the following techniques:

- **Improving extension research linkages:** The reforms in agricultural extension on the aspects of research extension linkages include promotion of direct interface between tribal communities and scientists to minimize transmission losses. Activating existing interface mechanism and institutional linkages through various forum and research prioritization based on strategic research and extension plans are the means suggested for improving research extension linkages, example, Field School Approach. The extension approaches not only focus at individual, but they should also meet the requirements by 'group centered approach' and 'face-to-face interaction approaches' where there will be discussions between extension stakeholders, tribal communities and scientists. This was possible by introducing and intensifying the available technologies and made possible through certain innovative approaches like 'field school approach' and 'family centered approach'. The field school approach can be applied to places where the tribal communities can be trained by seeing and believing. The group centered approach and face to face interaction with the scientists will be successful in imparting training and management strategies. These approaches are found to be better after completion of training and the tribal communities can be encouraged to elicit questions after completion of long duration training programmes. This will increase the confidence level and reduce the social barriers of the tribal communities.
- **Capacity building of extension functionaries:** Various measures are suggested for capacity building of extension functionaries include formulation of HRD policies by states to avail central support for the rural households. Today, the transfer of technology model is often viewed as the antithesis of participatory research. However, this is often not the case. In fact, much of the present participatory practices can still be classified as an expansion of the transfer of technology model because information is obtained from tribal communities and incorporated into scientific research. Participatory methods can be used to meet the needs of the tribal communities' and to adapt technologies to location-specific circumstances at a relatively late stage of the research process. Identification of problems, interaction and recommendation of interventions has taken a long time because of primitive nature, extensive psycho-social barriers, ignorance, illiteracy and lack of technological awareness of the tribal poor. Low productivity in field crops, low economic net returns in crops, drudgery in agro-based activities is a matter of great concern. Non utilization of natural resources, low income from alternative sources of livelihood, poor health and nutritional status, occupational health hazards are other peculiar features found in the tribal population. Innovative extension approaches are needed to help tribal communities to access information, innovate and strengthen their capacities and to solve the present agro-based problems in an effective way to improve the livelihood of rural and tribal societies towards productivity and sustainability.
- **Steps should be taken to preserve traditional artisan skills, building on local innovation and local knowledge systems in designing local resource management strategies through participatory research approach.** Efforts to explore and promote alternative livelihood potential (wherever the present occupation is dwindling) on innovative community-based approaches and technological options to enhance field-level impact must also be made. There is

a need to improve the existing equipment and machinery and to introduce new techniques/systems and to effectively complete the technology package which is very important.

SUGGESTIONS TO PROMOTE TRIBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

- It is suggested that training should be linked with bank loans and soon after completing the training, trainees should be provided bank loans if they are interested to start their own business. Only then training becomes fruitful. Regular monitoring is necessary for promoting the entrepreneurial activities at various stages. Frequent official visits to the villages and avoidance of bias while dealing with beneficiaries at various stages will help the tribal people to avail the benefits from the developmental programmes. It is also needed to introduce a new education system based on practical experiences and business orientation.
 - Industrial plots should be provided to scheduled tribe entrepreneurs with subsidy and loan facilities without or with low interest.
 - Machinery must also be made available at subsidized rates to scheduled tribes, artisans and entrepreneurs and technical workshops should be conducted to upgrade the product profile of the handicrafts made by scheduled tribes.
 - It may be strongly recommended that the banks and financial institution should not stress on security in case of genuine weaker section entrepreneurship as they hardly possess any property to offer it as security. Social banking still is needed for assisting poor artisans, craftsman and small entrepreneurs. It is suggested that the financial institutions should provide loans liberally with low interest, create awareness among people about the bank schemes and help them in official formalities, so that the role of dealers/middlemen (who are active in those areas) could be curbed and the villagers could approach the banks without any hesitation or fear.
 - Marketing assistance for scheduled tribe handicraft artisans must be provided, in addition to making financial assistance available to industrial and handicraft multipurpose (non-farm sector) co-operative societies. It is to be noted that small entrepreneur's still need protection as they are not enough sound to compete with big units. It is strongly recommended that reservation of certain products exclusively for small industries must be continued in future.
6. Efforts should be made to establish Self-Help Groups (SHGs) of women to collectively address problems faced by tribal families and to seek active participation of women in village development activities. Self help groups have been a grand success in the area of small funds mobilization and initiating small commercial activities. It may be strongly recommended that in every village at least 2-3 self-help groups must be formed and poorest of the poor should be given membership. Through self-help groups rural EDPs should be organized for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in rural areas.
- To promote entrepreneurial activities the connectivity of villages with proper roads, transportation facilities, creation of higher education institutions nearby places and regular power supply etc. are necessary. Awareness programmes must be organized by Panchayati Raj for increased participation of women in Gram sabhas. Apart from participation in development issues, women must be engaged in savings and credit programmes through which they can seek assistance to meet emergency cash needs.

The need of the hour is to bring the poorest of the poor in the national stream and give them the fruits of economical development by facilitating their participation in economic activities i.e. entrepreneurial activities.

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