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FOSTERING INCLUSIVE GROWTH AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Dr. R. NITHILA
Assistant Professor and Head
Department of Commerce
Sri SaradaNiketan College for Women, Amaravathipudur.

Dr. B. SUDHA
Professor
Department of Bank Management
Alagappa University, Karaikudi.

K. NANDHINI
Ph.D Research Scholar
Madras Christian College, Chennai.

ABSTRACT

Tribal communities constitute an important part of India's social and cultural diversity and have been the focus of various welfare and development initiatives undertaken by the Central and State Governments. Since Independence, numerous programmes have been introduced to improve the livelihood, education, healthcare, housing, employment, and economic well-being of tribal populations. However, despite these efforts, many tribal communities continue to face socio-economic challenges and have not been able to fully benefit from the available government support. Limited awareness, inadequate access to information, and difficulties in accessing welfare programmes remain major barriers to their effective utilization. Against this backdrop, the present article focuses on the initiatives aimed at empowering tribal communities and improving their socio-economic well-being, with particular emphasis on the role of AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan. It examines selected government programmes for tribal welfare and development, highlighting their objectives, key benefits, and implementation mechanisms. The article also emphasizes the need for greater awareness, effective outreach, and community participation to ensure that government initiatives reach their intended beneficiaries and contribute meaningfully to the sustainable development and empowerment of tribal communities.

KEYWORDS: Tribal welfare, flagship programme, Government Schemes, AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan

INTRODUCTION

The development and empowerment of tribal communities have remained important priorities in India's social and economic planning. Over the years, both the Central and State Governments have introduced a variety of welfare programmes aimed at improving the living standards of Scheduled Tribes through better access to education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, social security, and financial support. Despite these efforts, many tribal families continue to face challenges such as poverty, limited access to basic services, and inadequate awareness of the benefits available under government schemes. As a result, the intended impact of several welfare initiatives has not been fully realized. In this context, the AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan has emerged as a significant initiative of the Government of India. The programme seeks to

empower tribal communities by creating awareness, enhancing skills, and improving their participation in socio-economic development. It aims to bridge the information gap between government welfare measures and their beneficiaries, thereby enabling tribal people to make effective use of available opportunities.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs, established in 1999, serves as the nodal agency for the welfare and development of Scheduled Tribes in India. The Ministry was created to provide focused attention to tribal issues and to ensure the coordinated implementation of policies and programmes intended for tribal development. Its responsibilities include policy formulation, planning, monitoring, research, evaluation, and coordination of various schemes related to tribal welfare. The Ministry also works to promote educational advancement, social security, economic development, and the protection of tribal rights.

The Ministry supports tribal development through a wide range of interventions that complement the efforts of other Central Ministries, State Governments, Union Territories, and voluntary organizations. These interventions focus on critical areas such as education, skill development, livelihood generation, social protection, infrastructure development, and institutional strengthening. Special attention is given to Scheduled Areas and vulnerable tribal populations to ensure inclusive growth and equitable access to development opportunities.

Apart from implementing welfare programmes, the Ministry plays an important role in safeguarding the constitutional and legal rights of Scheduled Tribes. It coordinates with the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, monitors the implementation of protective legislation, and oversees various development initiatives designed to improve the socio-economic status of tribal communities. Through these efforts, the Ministry seeks to promote sustainable development while preserving the cultural identity and traditional heritage of tribal populations.

This article examines the objectives and significance of AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan and reviews the major schemes and initiatives undertaken by the Government of India for tribal welfare. It highlights the role of these programmes in promoting socio-economic development and emphasizes the need for greater awareness and effective implementation to ensure that the benefits reach the intended beneficiaries.

IMPORTANCE OF ADIKARMAYOGIABHIYAN

The AdiKarmayogiAbhiyanlaunched by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, is a national movement to build a decentralized tribal leadership and governance ecosystem. It empowers 20 Lakh tribal change makers across 1 Lakh villages in 550 tribaldominated districts through capacity building, convergence and community participation.The AdiKarmayogi Portal serves as the digital backbone of this mission, which enabling registration, training, monitoring and transformation at scale.

Table 1 Tribal population in India and in Tamil Nadu

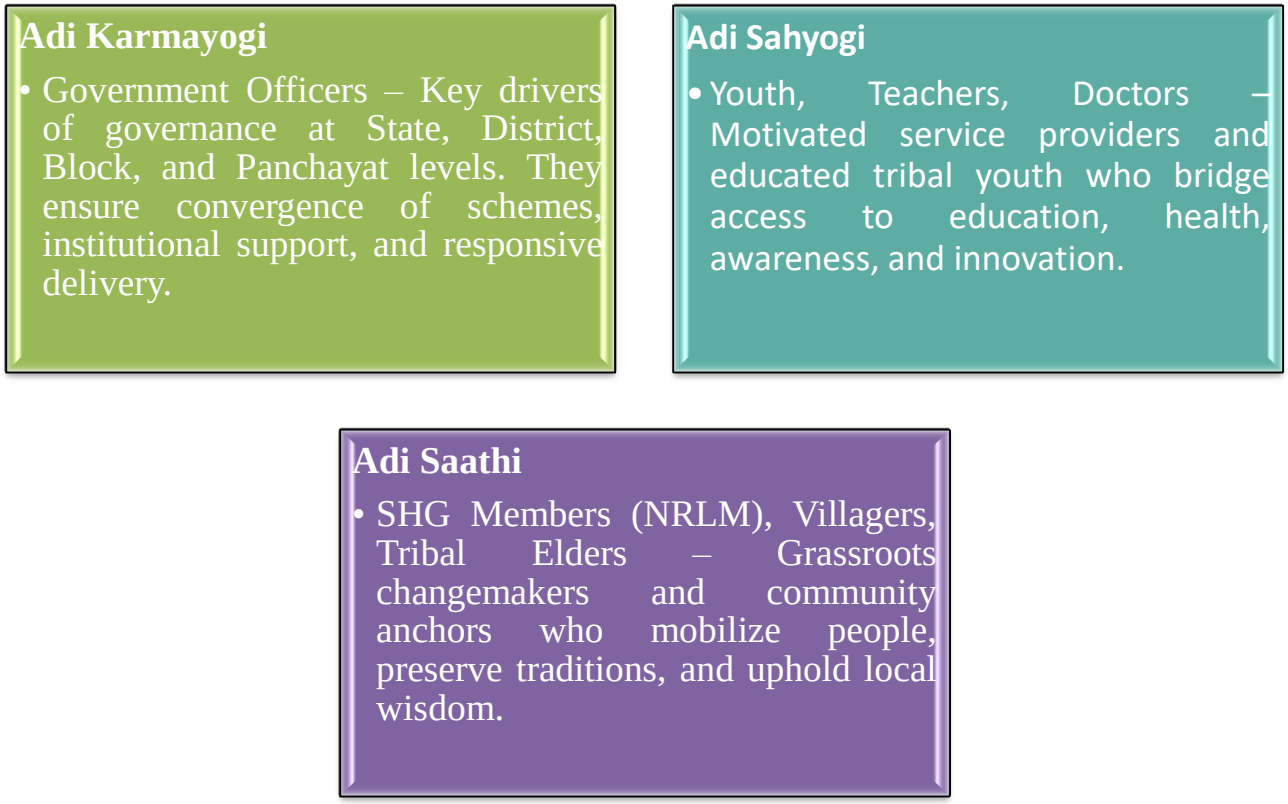
Total Population	121.06 crore
Tribal population	10.43 crore (8.62%)
Total Population in Tamil Nadu	7.21 crore
Tribal population in Tamil Nadu	0.08 crore (1.11%)

Source: Ministry of Tribal Affairs

Table 1 shows that India has a tribal population of 10.43 crore, accounting for 8.62 percent of the country's total population. This sizeable population highlights the importance of formulating dedicated welfare programmes to address the unique socio-economic challenges faced by tribal communities. Despite various development initiatives, many tribal groups continue to experience difficulties related to education, healthcare, livelihood opportunities, and access to government services. In Tamil Nadu, the tribal population constitutes 1.11 percent of the state's total population. Although the proportion is relatively small compared to the national average, tribal communities in the state often reside in remote and geographically isolated regions, making them vulnerable to social and economic exclusion. Their dispersed settlement pattern further limits awareness and utilization of welfare schemes.

The presence of a substantial tribal population at the national level and vulnerable tribal groups at the state level underscores the need for focused interventions such as AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan. The scheme plays a crucial role in creating awareness, improving access to government benefits, strengthening livelihood opportunities, and promoting the overall socio-economic empowerment of tribal communities. By bridging the information gap between welfare programmes and beneficiaries, the scheme contributes to inclusive development and helps ensure that tribal populations actively participate in the nation's growth process.

Figure: 1 Three Pillars of Leadership under AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan



KEY OBJECTIVES OF ADIKARMAYOGIABHIYAN

1. Facilitate Village Vision 2030 Planning and Development Action Plans by promoting responsive, participatory, and people-centric governance at the village and community levels.
2. Strengthen last-mile convergence and service delivery through multi-departmental Governance Lab and Process Lab workshops conducted at the state, district, block, and village levels. These capacity-building programmes, initiated on 10 July 2025, aim to train State, District, and Block Master Trainers for effective implementation of development initiatives.
3. Establish one lakh AdiSewaKendras as single-window tribal service centres. These centres will facilitate the co-creation of development plans, enabling tribal communities and government officials to jointly formulate the *"1 Lakh Tribal Villages – Vision 2030"* agenda, including detailed action plans and investment strategies.
4. Train and mobilize 20 lakh tribal leaders to create a network of change agents across approximately 550 districts and 30 States/Union Territories. These leaders will support grassroots development initiatives, strengthen community participation, and ensure that the voices and aspirations of tribal communities are effectively represented in the development process.

5. Collectively, these initiatives aim to empower tribal communities through participatory planning, improved service delivery, institutional support, and leadership development, thereby contributing to inclusive and sustainable tribal development.

Portal Features

1. Real-Time Registration & Dashboard – Role-wise and region-wise tracking of Karmayogis, Sahyogis, and Saathis.
2. Training modules for leadership development
3. Village Visioning Templates – Upload and monitor locally crafted development blueprints
4. AdiSewaKendras – Locate services nearest to each village
5. Changemaker Stories – Celebrate tribal leadership & impact on the ground
6. Feedback, Monitoring, Grievance Tools – Enable transparent and responsive governance

CATEGORIES OF PARTICIPANTS UNDER ADIKARMAYOGIABHIYAN

The AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan encourages the participation of various stakeholders from government institutions and local communities to ensure effective implementation of tribal development initiatives. The participants are categorized as follows:

1. **AdiKarmayogis**

   This category comprises government officials and administrators, including officers of the IAS, IPS, IFS, BDOs, District Collectors and other Central and State Government officials. They provide administrative support, policy guidance, and institutional coordination for the implementation of development programmes.

2. **AdiSahyogis**

   This group consists of professionals and volunteers such as youth, teachers, doctors, Anganwadi workers, and other social service providers. Their role is to create awareness, facilitate capacity building, and assist in the delivery of essential services to tribal communities.

3. **AdiSaathis**

   This category includes Self-Help Groups (SHGs), tribal elders, community leaders, and villagers. As grassroots stakeholders, they actively participate in identifying local needs, planning development activities, mobilizing community support, and ensuring that welfare programmes effectively reach the intended beneficiaries.

   Together, these three groups form a collaborative framework that promotes participatory governance, community engagement, and inclusive development in tribal areas under the AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan.

Other Central Government Schemes for Tribal Welfare

1. **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PMJVM)**

   The scheme has been formulated with the merger of the two earlier schemes for promotion of tribal livelihood, i.e., “Mechanism for Marketing of Minor Forest Produce (MFP) through “Minimum Support Price (MSP) and Development of Value Chain for MFP” and “Institutional Support for Development and Marketing of Tribal Products/Produce”.

2. **Marketing and Logistics Development for Promoting Tribal Products from the North Eastern Region (PTP-NER)**

   The scheme has been approved during 2021-22 to strengthen livelihood opportunities for tribal artisans of North Eastern States of India through increased efficiency in procurement, logistics and marketing of tribal products. TRIFED is the nodal implementing agency for the scheme.

3. **Equity Support to National / State Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC / STFDCs)**

   Under the scheme, the Ministry releases funds in the form of Equity Share Capital assistance to NSTFDC/STFDCs which is deployed for the purpose of giving concessional loans to eligible members of Scheduled Tribes. NSTFDC provides concessional loans through the State Channelising Agenciesnominated by the respective State Government, certain Public Sector/ Co-op. Banks, Regional Rural Banks having refinance agreement with NSTFDC and National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), StreeNidhi Credit Cooperative Federation Ltd., North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Ltd. (NEDFi), NABKISAN Finance Ltd. (Subsidiary of NABARD) etc.

4. **Venture Capital Fund for Scheduled Tribes (VCF-STs)**

   The scheme has been approved during 2021-22 and aims to promote entrepreneurship among the Scheduled Tribes and to provide concessional finance to them. The VCF-ST scheme would be a social sector initiative to promote ST entrepreneurship and to support and incubate the start-up ideas by ST youth. The scheme would be managed by IFCI VCF Ltd.

CONCLUSION

AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan represents an important step towards the socio-economic empowerment of tribal communities by promoting awareness, community participation, leadership development, and improved access to government welfare programmes. The success of the scheme, however, depends largely on its ability to reach tribal people living in remote and underserved areas. To ensure effective implementation, the government should appoint and train volunteers from within tribal communities in every region. Being familiar with the local language, culture, traditions, and challenges, these volunteers can act as a bridge between government agencies and tribal beneficiaries. Their involvement can enhance awareness, improve participation, and facilitate the delivery of services at the grassroots level. The ultimate objective of tribal welfare programmes is to improve the quality of life and standard of living of tribal communities. This goal can be achieved only when the benefits of schemes such as AdiKarmayogiAbhiyan reach every eligible tribal household. Therefore, strengthening community-based outreach mechanisms and ensuring inclusive coverage are essential for translating policy initiatives into meaningful socio-economic development for tribal populations.

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