



## **SOCIO - ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIA.**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Next only to Africa, India has the largest tribal concentration in the world. The 2001 Census put the number of persons belonging to Schedule Tribes in India at 84.3 million which is 8.2% of the total population. Scheduled tribes are largest in Madhya Pradesh followed by Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. Orissa is one of the largest tribal concentrations in India. This study discovered the problems of tribal's in India .The present research work is an attempt to study the impact of the various government schemes on the socio-economic development of the tribal population, and to give some suggestions, recommendations. The present research work is based upon secondary data only.*

*Keywords: Tribals, Schedule Tribes, problems of tribes.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The British rulers really did something in providing certain facilities in villages and towns such as, education, transport, communication, medical etc. though inadequate and mainly with self-interest. But it did nothing for ameliorating the socio-economic conditions of tribal people, except to the people in North- East region of the country, because of certain reasons. Firstly, the British administrators thought it expedient generally to leave the tribal's alone, as the task of administration in the hill areas was difficult and costly. Secondly, it was considered desirable to keep away the tribal's from possible political influence from the world outside world. Thirdly, some of the British officers genuinely felt that left to themselves, the tribal

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people would remain a happier lot. The Scheduled District Act of 1984 had therefore kept most of these areas administratively separate, the same situation was allowed to continue under the Govt. of India Acts of 1919 and 1935. However, after independence this policy was abandoned and new policy of tribal development and integration was initiated. The Constitution of India has made definite provisions for the welfare and uplift of the tribal people throughout the country. The Government of India is under constitutional obligation to protect the interests of the Scheduled Tribes communities and to uplift them socially and economically. In order to do so, the working group on Labour Statistics (fourth plan) in its interim report in the year 1964 recommended, inter-alia, collection of data on certain aspects of working and living conditions of Labour belonging to Schedules Tribes communities to assess the ways and means to be adopted for their welfare and improving their working & living conditions. Planning Commission and National Commission on Labour (1966-69) while commenting upon the inadequacy of available information in this regard also emphasized the importance and need for such data base.

### **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

1. To find the socio-economic conditions and educational status of the tribal's in India.
2. To review the tribal development policies and programmes and sketch the problems of tribal's peoples in India.
3. To give the suggestions and recommendations on tribal's peoples in India.

### **SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIA**

Scheduled Tribes (STs) are indigenous, have their own distinctive culture, geographically isolated and are low in socio-economic conditions. For centuries, the tribal groups have remained outside the realm of the general development process due to their habitation in forests and hilly tracts. After independence, Government of India has scheduled the tribal groups in the Constitution and provided special provisions for their welfare and development as in the case of SCs. There are about 654 ST communities across the States in India and 75 of the STs are most backward and are termed as Primitive Tribal Groups. Most of the tribal areas are hilly,

inaccessible undulating plateau lands in the forest areas of the country resulting in the bypassing of general developmental programmes. Due to this, infrastructure and development facilities in tribal areas for education, roads, healthcare, communication, drinking water, sanitation etc. lagged behind compared to other areas which has resulted in further widening the gaps of development between the tribal's and the general population for a long time.

Work Participation Rate is highest among the STs is 49.1% is higher than the general population (30.3%). While 80% of the workers among the general population are main workers, the share of main workers among STs is 69%. A large proportion of STs are engaged in basic agriculture work and only about 18% of the STs are engaged in nonagricultural works, as against 34% among SCs and 47% among general population. The proportion of self-employed are only 21% among STs, and the casual labourers are about 23% among STs in urban India. As per the NSSO data (59th round), the average value of assets owned by ST households in rural areas is Rs.1.4 lakh which is about one-third to the general population household (Rs.4.3 lakh). The average value of assets in urban areas also reflect similar trend of proportional variation though the assets are higher compared to rural areas for STs (Rs.2.40 lakh). About 18% of rural areas and 12% of urban areas STs were indebted as on 30.6.2002 in some form or other. If indebtedness is broken into different components, STs incurred 59% indebtedness towards farm related work and 25% towards household expenditure. STs Representation is abysmal with about 3% in Group A and B services, and about 6% in C and D services against their reservation of 7.5%. According to 2001 Census, access to electricity among ST households is only 36.5%. 45.2% households among the general population are having drinking water source within premises whereas only 15.2% STs households have this facility. The poverty ratios for STs are significantly higher compared to general population in 1999-2000. As against 27 % of all population living below the poverty line in the rural areas, 46% of ST population lived below the poverty line. There are large variations in the proportion of ST population living below the poverty line across the States as 74% of STs in Orissa and more than 50% STs in M.P, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal are in BPL category. In terms of geographical location, the distribution of tribal population is classified into the following zones:

**North-Eastern region:** Comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.

**Eastern region:** Comprising Bihar, Orissa, Sikkim and West Bengal.

**Northern region:** Comprising Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh

**Central region:** Comprising Madhya Pradesh

**Western region:** Comprising Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Gujarat, Goa, Daman and Diu, Maharashtra and Rajasthan

**Southern region:** Comprising Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamilnadu.

**Island region:** Comprising Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

## **TRIBAL PEOPLE'S EDUCATION IN INDIA**

Tribal women play a significant role in the economic development of tribal's as they contribute in various economic activities and education is one of the them. Education is a crucial requirement for the sustained growth of a developing society and lack of it is largely responsible for the exploitation and pitiable plight of the tribal's. The literacy rate of tribal's was 8.53 in 1961 and steadily increased to 47.10 in 2001, yet it is far below the national rate of 64.84 (2001 census).

## **THE TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES**

A review of the tribal situation would indicate that the strategy for development would require an intensive approach to the tribal's problems in terms of their geographic and demographic concentration, if the faster development of the community is to take place. The community development efforts in the tribal areas were therefore, taken up for supplementation by stating a few special multipurpose tribal development projects covering a few blocks in 1954. A number of commissions and committees were appointed in the recent past to look in to the problems of developments in the tribal areas in the country and they have recommended a number of measures to remove the socio-economic imbalances and also to break down their old psychological barrier, which existed in the tribal areas. The important commission and committees appointed so far are:

1. The Social Welfare Team of the Committee on plan projects 1959.
2. The Verrier Elwin Committee on Tribal Development.

3. The Committee on Tribal Economy in Forest Areas -1967
4. The Schedules Areas and Scheduled Tribal Commission (Dhebar Committee 1961)
5. The Special working Group on Cooperatives for Backward Classes - 1961 (Shri M.D. Bhargava as its Chairman)
6. The Task Force on Development of Tribal Areas -1972.
7. The Dube Committee -1972.
8. The Study Team on Co-operative Structure in Tribal Development Project Areas -1976.
9. The Study Group on Relief of Indebtedness Land, Alienation and Restoration in Development Agency Area -1973 (Shri P.S Appu as its Chairman)
10. The team of Marketing, Credit and Cooperation in Tribal Areas -1978 (Shri K.S. Bawa Committee)
11. The Working Group on Development of Scheduled Tribes during the 7th Five Years Plans (1985- 90)
12. The Dhebar Commission (1961) recommended an integrated approach based on the minimum essential items like food, drinking water, employment, educational health and village road.
13. The task force on Development of Tribal Areas constituted in 1972 suggested that the ecological, occupational and social preceptors. of the tribal population should be properly assessed for formulation of a policy and its implementation so that a steady flow of benefits could be assured to the tribal people.
14. The Dupe committee in 1972 tried to define a new strategy for tribal development and suggested that the problem of tribal development should be defined at the national level and national efforts required for tackling it, worked out. It also Suggested an integrated area development approach in consonance with the genius and aspirations of the tribal people.

## **PROBLEMS OF TRIBES**

Tribal societies are small-scale, simple in character, with contiguous populations and sociocultural homogeneity. There is less complex division of labour, apart from those necessitate by age and sex factors. The problems faced by each of the vulnerable groups are unique in nature

## **1. Economic Factor**

All the primitive tribes are still in the stage of food gathering, collection, hunting and shifting cultivation. They continue to veer round preagricultural technology. They are more egalitarian. They consider the natural resources as common communal properties and strictly abide by the community management of resources.

## **2. Problems related to forest**

The tribal's have always lived in an intimate relationship with the forest. They regarded him as the owners of the forests. Now they have been turned into subjects and have been placed under the Forest Department of the state. The traditional rights of the tribal's are no longer recognized as "rights"

## **3. Boundary Dispute**

In some of the states, the forest boundaries run very close to the tribal habitats. This has led to conflict between the tribal and the Forest Department.

## **4. Conversion of Forest villages into Revenue villages**

Due to improved accessibility, some of the States have converted forest villages into revenue villages to providing uninterrupted manpower for forestry operation. Nevertheless, there still exist between 2500 to 3000 forest villages in the country. Besides these; there are unauthorized inhabitants.

## **5. Shifting Cultivation**

At the moment, shifting cultivation is an essential practice and is unavoidable as it is a way of life for several tribes. But the 1988 National Forest Policy banned it without taking consideration of alternative avenues of income.

## **6. Pastoralism**

The condition of pastoral tribes is equally deplorable. They now face the severe problems of pasture and fodder for their livestock. For want of adequate feed, their live stocks get emancipated and diseased.

## **7. Bonded Labour**

In spite of the fact that forced or bonded labour is prohibited under Article 23 of the Constitution, it still exists in one form or another in the tribal areas. 8. Problems of health and

hygiene sudden change in the eco-systems of tribal settlements and migration of non-tribal population into tribal areas, led to the spread of diseases with which they were not familiar in the past. Moreover, medical facilities in the tribal areas are utterly inadequate and they continue to depend on their traditional magico-religious and ethno-medical systems.

### **9. Exploitation**

With large scale of land alienation, depletion of forest resources and imposition of restriction on the traditional tribal mode of use of forest and other natural resources have made them more vulnerable to exploitation by money lenders and unscrupulous traders who operate to sabotage govt. schemes.

### **10. Problems of Education and Communication**

Has been a steady rise in the level of education of the tribes as a whole but the educational achievement of primitive tribes is far from satisfactory. In tribal interiors, educational institutions function only in records and rarely in reality.

### **11. Traditional Institution and Problem of Leadership**

Traditional kinship and non-kinship associations and institutions among the tribes are gradually becoming weak. Still from among the particular tribes, modern leaders have not emerged in any perceptible manner for lack of modern education and such phenomenon impedes their development.

## **SUGGESTIONS /RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The role of tribal women is important but their socio-economic development is poor. More needs to be done. The problems of tribal peoples are largely common. Suggestions and recommendations to strengthen and empower tribal's are:
2. Increase agricultural production through conservation to settled agriculture, where possible, with linkage to easy credit and markets and assured irrigation.

3. Undertake a comprehensive survey of water resources, including surface water and groundwater, in tribal areas with the help of remote sensing to prepare land use maps. Where water levels have gone down, an integrated watershed management approach must be adopted. Ponds and tanks should be increased and renovated for optimum use.
4. Promote the diversification of agriculture and non-farm sectors to create job Opportunities. Train tribal's in kitchen gardening, childcare, food preservation, handicrafts and other house based activities.
5. Form and stabilize tribal's co-operatives to take up dairy, sericulture, fisheries, Handicrafts, horticulture agro-food processing and post harvest technologies , Impart practical knowledge and training in modern techniques to all tribals regularly so that their work becomes easier and crop production increases.
6. Undertake research and extension to improve current practices, increase output and incomes and eliminate adverse ecological effects.
7. As per the PESA 1996, the Gram Sabha enjoys the authority to decide the natural resources which include non-timber forest produce (NTFP). The monopoly restrictions over NTFP should be immediately removed while ensuring social protection through provision of support prices to tribal's who should be allowed to collect, process, and transport and market the NTFP.
8. Low literacy especially among tribal Children's and high dropout rates at elementary and higher levels are areas of serious concern. Focus on girls' education, inclusive of context-specific traditional and innovative interventions. Launch special and sustained education initiatives/drives in low female literacy tribal pockets.
9. Teach tribal children in their mother tongue at least at primary level. Prepare textbooks in tribal languages.
10. To prevent teacher absenteeism in tribal areas, give preference to local and tribal teachers from local panchayats, and place the teaching and non-teaching staff of primary schools under the control of the village management committee.

## CONCLUSION



Tribal peoples play a major role in the co-management of their natural, social, economic resources and agricultural development including crop production, livestock production, horticulture and post harvest operations but they remain backward due to traditional values, illiteracy, superstitions, dominant roles in decision making, social evils and many other cultural factors. The participatory role of tribal's in improving their living conditions by fully exploring natural endowments and alternative uses must find an appropriate place in the strategic approach. The social dynamics of tribal welfare and development is such that effective strategies to protect tribal's and their livelihood imply negotiating some kind of social consensus about criteria concerning tribal development and values of the society that evolves from such programmes. This also implies a broad social consensus about the basic rights and opportunities that tribal's should enjoy and the responsibilities that should be taken by different individual and social groups.

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