



THE PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Tribes are generally backward, economically as well as educationally. The situation is not uniform in all the parts of India. In the north-east, the situation has been disturbed for several years, whereas in the mainland (central India) problems related to poverty, unemployment, indebtedness, backwardness and ignorance are acute. Since tribal people are at different social, political, economic and ecological levels, their problems also differ in degree from each other. These differences can be seen in terms of hill tribes. The seven states of northeast India and the “central tribal belt” stretching from Rajasthan to West Bengal have the highest concentrations of indigenous people. More than half of the Scheduled Tribes population lives in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Gujarat. Orissa and Madhya Pradesh have the most scheduled tribes, Santhals, Gonds, Angamis, Bhils, Khasis, Bhutias, and Great Andamanese are some of India’s major tribal groups.

KEYWORDS: Tribal people, poverty, debt problems, exploitation, land surplus, agricultural issues, illiteracy, Indebendents, Unemployment, Organization.

Introduction

Tribals in India are an important part of the nation. They consist of around 8.6% of the total population. They do face a number of challenges in India. By implementing the above-mentioned measures and promoting a comprehensive approach to tribal welfare, India can work towards protecting the rights and preserving the rich cultural heritage of its tribal communities. It is essential to foster an environment where tribal communities can thrive and enjoy the same opportunities and rights as other citizens of the country.

Classification of Tribes

Tribes in India are divided into three main zones based on where they live. These Tribes in India are divided into three main zones based on where they live. These are the

1. North-North-Eastern Zone

The east of Kashmir and the east of Punjab. This zone is made up of places like Himachal Pradesh, Northern Uttar Pradesh, Nagaland, Assam, etc. Some of the tribes in this area are the Aka, the Mishmi, the Billa, and the Naga.

2. Central Zone

This zone includes Bihar, Bengal, southern Uttar Pradesh, southern Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Orissa. There are many tribes in this area, including the Kondh, the Santhal, the Bhil, the Gond, the Muria, and the Baiga. This area is where most of the tribe's people live. In central India, there are a lot of people from tribal groups. Over 85% of the tribal people in the world live in the eight States that make up this zone.

3. Southern Zone

Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala are the four southern states that make up the Southern zone. Some of the most important tribes in this area are the Toda, the Chenchu, the Kadar, and the Koraga.

In addition to these main zones, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal are a separate zone. The most important tribes in this area are the Jarawa, the Andamanese, and the Nicobarese.

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Characteristics of tribal people:

- Each tribal group is an organization made up of several families or group of families.
- Speaking the same language or language that has no script.
- Each tribal group has a unique name ex. Bhil, dubla, khashi, garasiya, santhal, toda.
- Tribal people live in a designated region.
- The tribal group is an inter married group.
- There are social norms and taboo to make reciprocal transactions possible. Tribal culture differs from other tribes.
- The tribal panchayats are the administrative divisions of criminal justice.
- The division of labour and exchanges is very rare. Tribal is a closed society. Each tribal community has its own religion and magic as well as religious tradition. They are much less variable.

Problems faced by tribes in India

The indigenous tribes of India are some of the most marginalised groups in the country. There are multiple problems faced by tribes, as they have suffered centuries of exploitation and discrimination, with many still living in poverty. The government has made efforts to improve their condition, but there is still a long way to go. This article will examine some of the greatest challenges the tribes face, and discuss the measures being taken to improve their lives.

Exploitation:

The forests of central India, particularly in the states of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, have long been a source of traditional livelihoods for the indigenous Adivasi communities who live there. But over the past few decades, the forests have also become a source of conflict and resource exploitation. For example, in central India's Tongu forest region, a 500-acre concession awarded to a private company in the 1980s has expanded to over 14,000 acres today. The company has clear-cut the forests, drained the wetlands, and grazed the area's wildlife to grow timber for export.

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Gaps in rehabilitation:

The rehabilitation of the tribal community, which was heavily affected by the droughts or some development projects, has been a long, difficult process. The community's main sources of livelihood, farming and animal husbandry, were severely hit by the drought. The development projects have forced the tribal people to look for other means of income generation, which has resulted in a shortage of labour in the agricultural sector. This has further added to the woes of the already marginalized tribal community.

Cultural Defacement:

There is a great challenge in front of tribal communities, as they are being forced to mix up with modern society, which is leading them to lose their own culture and their habitat. "Tribals" are considered the lowest class in most regions of India due to which they have faced cultural defacement, which is a huge problem of tribes in India.

Unemployment:

There are numerous activities going on in the central region of the country regarding industrial and mining activities. Despite the intense industrial activity that is taking place in the central region of the Indian tribal belt, a significant number of tribal people in these areas are not employed in modern enterprises. They are made to suffer on the ever expanding low wage, unconfident, temporary and impoverished labour market. According to the India Human Development Report 2003, the poverty rate among the tribes of central India has dropped significantly. Although these people still suffer from high levels of poverty, the extent of the problem has been reduced. The provisions of the Apprenticeship Act do not stipulate for private or joint sector enterprises to recruit certain percentages of unemployed indigenous workforce

Identity-Crisis:

The tribes of India which represents a relatively isolated group, faces the problem of identity-crisis, paradoxically when they have gotten different representations by different cultures, scholars and themselves. This is probably the result of an amalgamation of different cultures at different junctions of space

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and time, when their existence uses a defined nomenclature for their representation and hence parting from a true cultural identity.

Poor literacy and education:

An important index of development is the estimate of the literacy and education level of an area. It imparts social cognition and ability to comprehend their social, political and cultural environment better. It is a catalyst for the social upliftment promoting the importance of health, nutrition, savings, employment, hygiene and personal and community growth. As per the 2001 Census, the literacy rate among the Scheduled tribes was recorded as 47.10% with the females of the tribes of Bihar accounting for the lowest 15.54%. The data shows that the literacy rate among the STs was lowest in Bihar (28.17%) and the highest in Mizoram (89.34%). Even among the tribes of India, the dispersion of literacy is not uniform. For example, In Bihar, the Oraons and Mundas are educated but the Birhors, Asurs and many other numerically small tribal groups are the least educated.

Poor Economic Conditions:

Although most of the tribals in our country are agriculturists and pastorals, their economic status lies at the subsistence level. In this condition it is hard to manage livelihood and education simultaneously, unless it is imparted with the help of missionaries or the provisions of the Central and State governments. For most of the tribals, their children are the bread earners and sustenance regulators of their family, especially when they belong to the occupational group of the hunter-gatherers, shifting cultivators and pastoralists.

Constitutional Provisions to Tribal's in India

The Indian Constitution guarantees that no citizen shall be discriminated against. There are specific provisions in the Constitution that address the rights and welfare of Scheduled Tribes (STs):

Article 15 pertaining to prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth

Article 16 pertaining to equality of opportunity in matters of public employment;

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Article 46 pertaining to promotion of educational and economic interests of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other weaker sections;

Article 335 pertaining to claims of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to services and posts.

As per Article 338-A of the Constitution of India, the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has been set-up to, inter-alia, investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution or under any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards; and to inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the Scheduled Tribes.

To protect tribal's in India and safeguard their rights and well-being, several measures and policies need to be implemented. Here are some key steps that can be taken.

- **Social and Cultural Preservation:** Take measures to preserve the unique cultural heritage of tribal communities. Encourage traditional practices and crafts, and protect their sacred sites and cultural spaces.
- **Community Empowerment:** Empower tribal communities by involving them in decision-making processes that concern their lives and resources. Recognize and support their traditional governance systems and cultural institutions.
- **Land Rights:** Ensure tribal communities have clear and undisputed ownership of their lands. Address issues of land alienation and take strict action against illegal land acquisitions.
- **Awareness and Sensitization:** Create awareness among government officials, law enforcement agencies, and the general public about the rights and issues of tribal communities. Sensitize them to the unique challenges faced by these communities.

Legal Protection: The implementation of the Forest Rights Act, which recognizes and secures the rights of tribal communities over their traditional lands, should be prioritized.

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- **Inclusive Development:** Ensure that development projects in tribal areas are undertaken with the full consent and participation of the local communities. Projects should aim to uplift tribal livelihoods and preserve their culture, rather than causing displacement and exploitation.
- **Rehabilitation and Compensation:** Properly rehabilitate and compensate tribal communities affected by development projects. The government must ensure that displaced tribes receive fair compensation, adequate housing, and opportunities for a sustainable livelihood.
- **Education and Healthcare:** Improve access to quality education and healthcare services in tribal areas. Building schools, and healthcare centers, and improving infrastructure will help in enhancing the well-being and future prospects of tribal communities.

Employment Opportunities Promote skill development and employment opportunities.

CONCLUSION:

India is a country that is home to a large number of tribes. These tribes are spread across the country and are a diverse lot, with each tribe having its own unique culture and language. The indigenous tribes of India are some of the most marginalized groups in the country. They have suffered centuries of exploitation and discrimination, with many still living in poverty. There are numerous Problems of tribes in India like unemployment, cultural defacement, gaps in rehabilitation, resource exploitation etc. The government has made efforts to improve their condition, but there is still a long way to go.

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