

# Contemporary Problems of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in India

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## ABSTRACT

Scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs) are among the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups in India. They have been facing problems since colonial India to the present times. Scheduled castes, who are also known as 'dalits,' have been suffering from social, religious, legal, political, economic, educational, and other problems. Scheduled tribes live in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas and are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. Problems of tribes are mainly related to forest rights, land alienation, exploitation by money lenders, mining and displacement in tribal areas. Development projects, such as industrial projects, dams, roads, mines, power plants and new cities, displace the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes from their homes resulting in destitution and unemployment. Today, displacement is the main problem confronting these communities. Therefore, the present paper outlines the contemporary problems of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of India.

**Keywords:** Scheduled caste, Scheduled tribes, problems, Socio-economic development, India

## INTRODUCTION

Anthropologists have been engaged in the study of scheduled tribes from the very beginning. They initially started field enquiry among the tribes but later on started taking interests in the scheduled castes. By the systematic exposure of the life and culture of the SCs and STs, anthropologists brought to light their miserable conditions. Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes have been, for centuries, the most neglected, marginalized and exploited people in India. These communities suffered from extreme social, educational, and economic backwardness arising out of:

- Age-old practice of untouchability
- Primitive agricultural practices,
- Lack of infrastructure facilities and
- Geographical isolation

Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes suffered from times immemorial for no fault of theirs. These problems have aggravated the situation over years and pushed the SC and ST masses to total subjugation and exploitation.

Although SC and ST communities have made considerable progress in many human development indicators, they still lag behind the rest of society. Social exclusion, poverty, landlessness, health and education are serious concerns for these marginalized sections. This module gives an outline of the status of SC and ST in India.

## Profile of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

Occupying the lowest rank in the caste hierarchy, the SCs and STs are socially inferior to all others in the community. In the past, they were socially ostracized, economically exploited and denied human dignity and a sense of self-worth. The terms scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are recognized in the Constitution of India and the various groups are designated in one or other of the categories.

- The communities notified as scheduled castes are contained in Clause 1 of Articles 341 of the Constitution.
- The communities notified as scheduled tribes are contained in Clause 1 of Articles 342 of the Constitution.

During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes. In modern literature, the scheduled castes are referred to as Dalits and scheduled tribes referred to as Adivasis.

The word 'Dalits' comes from the Sanskrit root dal which means "broken, ground-down, downtrodden, or oppressed." Those previously known as Untouchables, Depressed Classes, and Harijans are today increasingly adopting the term "Dalit" as a name for themselves. "Dalit" refers to one's caste rather than class; it applies to members of those menial castes who have borne the stigma of "untouchability" because of the extreme impurity and pollution connected with their traditional occupations. Dalits are 'outcastes' falling outside the traditional four-fold caste system

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consisting of the hereditary Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra classes; they are considered impure and polluting and are therefore physically and socially excluded and isolated from the rest of society.

SCs are called by different names in different parts of the country. These names were given by the caste Hindus as expressions of contempt. They include: shudra, harijans, das, chaandal, malezhha, dasyasa, rakshasa, asura, avarna, panchanama, chandala, dalits and untouchables. Within the Dalit community, there are many divisions into sub-castes. Chamar, Dusadh, Dom, Pasi, Mehtar, Mahar, Balai, Adi-draavid are numerically dominant scheduled castes. Various names appear in various states thus, chura in Punjab (North-West India), dalit or lal deggi in Hindi (North India), mala, madiga in Telugu, paraiya in Tamil and pulayam in Malayalam (South India).

The term 'Adivasi' comes from 'Adi', which means 'from earliest time', and 'vasi', which means 'resident of'. The term literally means 'indigenous people' or 'original inhabitants.' In India, Adivasis are called by different name such as 'scheduled tribes', 'tribes', 'janajati', 'girijan', 'vanvasi', 'vanyajati', 'hill tribe', 'aboriginal', and 'native'. The major tribal groups who have been scheduled in India include Gonds, Santhals, Khasis, Nagas, Garos, Mundas, Oraons, Kharias, Hos, Angamis, Bhils, Kols, Chenchu, Kondadoras, Kondakapus, Totos, Paharias, and Bhutias.

The government of India recognizes Dalits and Adivasis under the Constitutional terms "Scheduled Castes" and "Scheduled Tribes" derived from a schedule in the Constitution Order of 1950. The terms Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes is an administrative terms used for purposes of 'administering' certain specific constitutional privileges, protection and benefits for specific sections of peoples considered historically disadvantaged and 'backward'.

### Distribution of Scheduled Castes and Tribes

According to the 2011 census the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes comprise about 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively, of India's population. Scheduled castes are notified in 31 states and union territories (UT) of India and scheduled tribes in 30 states.

- The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 lists 1,241 individual ethnic groups, etc. notified as Scheduled Castes in different states and union territories.
- The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 lists 705 including 75 Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), in 29 Indian states and seven union territories.

There has been some changes in the List of SCs and STs in states and union territories during the last decade. In the SCs list 20 new castes have been added as main scheduled castes in ten states and one union territory, whereas the corresponding number is 41 in the scheduled tribes list in 14 states. The number of main scheduled castes has increased from 1,221 to 1,241 and the number of main scheduled tribes from 664 to 705 during the last decade. In addition, 115 sub-entries as synonyms/ subgroups/ sections have been notified along with the main scheduled castes in 15 states and 3 UTs. The corresponding number for scheduled tribes is 194 in 9 states (Table 1).

### Population of Scheduled Castes 2011 in million

People belonging to scheduled caste communities are spread all over the country, with 80% of them living in the rural areas. They

constitute more than a fifth of the population of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and West Bengal. Punjab has the highest proportion of scheduled castes to state population. More than half of the scheduled caste population is concentrated in the following five states:

- Uttar Pradesh (35.1 million)
- West Bengal (18.4 million)
- Tamil Nadu (11.8 million)
- Andhra Pradesh (12.3 million) and
- Bihar (13.0 million).

### Percentage Share of Scheduled Castes

The states having high proportion of scheduled tribes to their total population are:

- Lakshadweep (94.8%)
- Mizoram (94.4%)
- Nagaland (89.1%)
- Meghalaya (85.9%).

The major states having high proportion of scheduled tribes to their total population are

- Chhattisgarh (31.8%)
- Jharkhand (26.3%)
- Orissa (22.1%).

The following states account for the high proportion of scheduled tribe population to the total population of India:

- Madhya Pradesh (14.5%)
- Maharashtra (10.2%),
- Orissa (9.7%),
- Gujarat (8.9%),
- Rajasthan (8.4%),
- Jharkhand (8.4%)
- Chhattisgarh (7.8%).

In fact, 68% of the country's scheduled tribe population lives in these seven states only (Figures 1 & 2).

### Scheduled Castes versus Scheduled Tribes

The pattern of historical development has been different for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes with the latter never have been an integral part of mainstream society [1]. Though the scheduled tribes and the scheduled castes share in common the elements of poverty and exploitation, their demographic profile is different (Table 2). Scheduled tribes are those communities who are outside the caste system. The majority of the scheduled tribes lives in hills, forest, coastal and desert areas, and even on islands. They have their own culture and social organization. They also had their own political system.

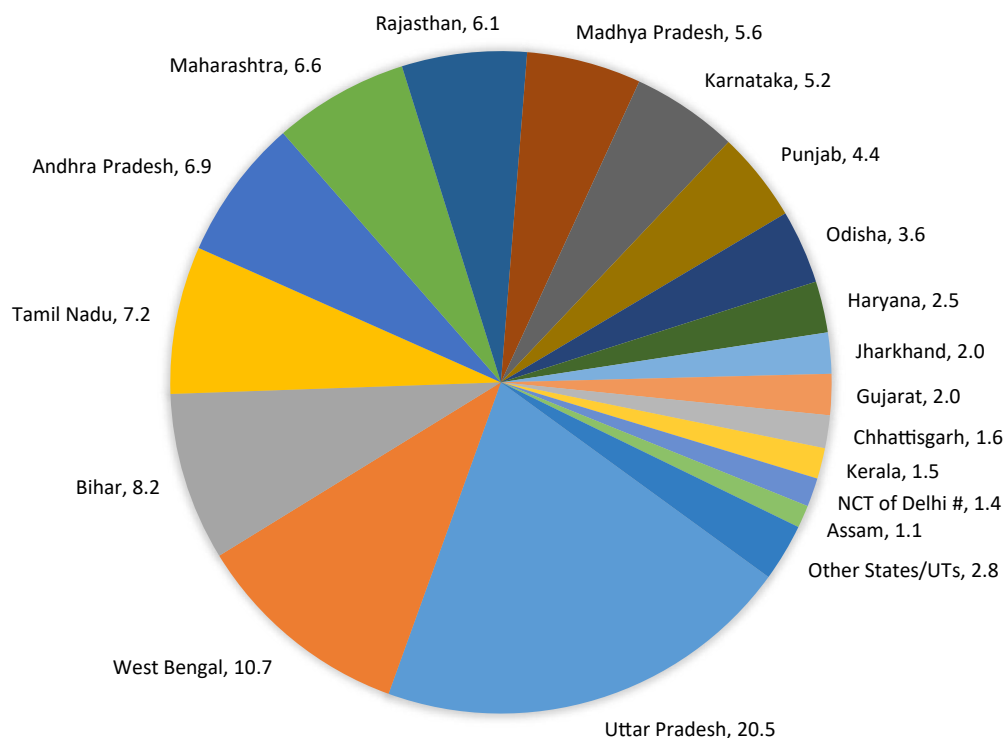
In many ways, their way of life is characterized by homogeneity, distinctiveness, self-sufficiency and they maintain symbiotic relationships with the nature.

Tribal art, dance and craft still have an intrinsic value. Although both polygamy and monogamy are prevalent among tribes, some

**Table 1:** Primary Census Abstract for Total population, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 2011 Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India.

Indicator	Absolute		Percentage		Growth rate
	2001	2011	2001	2011	(2001-11)
Total Population					
Total	1,02,86,10,328	1,21,05,69,573	100	100	17.7
Rural	74,23,02,537	83,34,63,448	100	100	12.3
Urban	28,63,07,791	37,71,06,125	100	100	31.7
Scheduled Castes					
Total	16,66,35,700	20,13,78,086	16.2	16.6	20.8
Rural	13,30,10,878	15,38,50,562	17.9	18.5	15.7
Urban	3,36,24,822	4,75,27,524	11.7	12.6	41.3
Scheduled Tribes					
Total	8,43,26,240	10,42,81,034	8.2	8.6	23.7
Rural	7,73,38,597	9,38,19,162	10.4	11.3	21.3
Urban	69,87,643	1,04,61,872	2.4	2.8	49.7

### STATE/UT'S SHARE OF SCHEDULED CASTES (SC) TO TOTAL SC POPULATION OF INDIA

**Figure 1:** Primary Census Abstract for Total population, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 2011 Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

tribals, such as Todas and Khasas of Juansar-Bawar, practice polyandry. Many tribal societies are patrilineal, but matriliney is also prevalent among few tribes like Khasi, Jaintia and Garo.

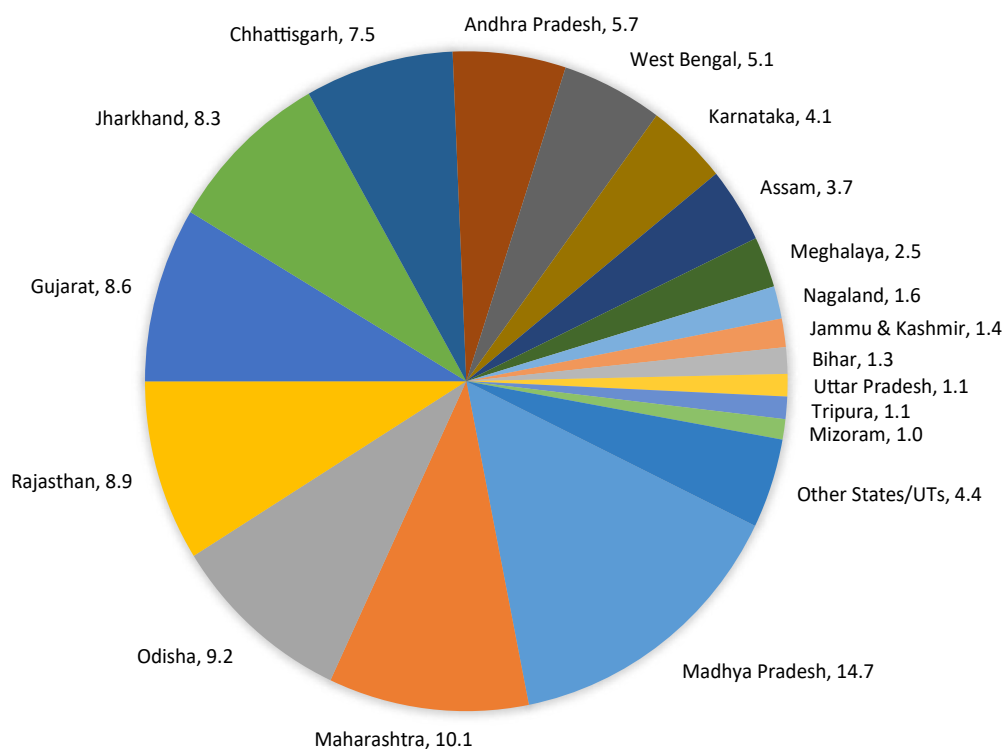
On the other hand scheduled castes are those castes which were placed at the bottom in the traditional caste system. The scheduled castes are scattered on the agricultural plains, and are 'part-societies' owing to their constant interactions with the dominant castes of the respective villages. Demographically, while the scheduled tribes are concentrated in certain regions of the state (though there are certain scattered pockets also) and are in majority in the respective areas, the scheduled castes are largely scattered in the high caste-dominated villages all over the country.

Most tribals are dependent on land and forest for their livelihood and are masters of their respective habitats, but in case of scheduled castes, by and large, they are landless and in some cases, service castes, and all of them are dependent on the high castes for earning their livelihood.

Tribal people have their own socio-political system called traditional panchayat system for exercising social and political control, and whenever there have been intolerable interferences from outside, they have reacted adversely and in several cases even violently.

The scheduled castes from the very ancient times have been an integral part of the Hindu caste hierarchy, and have continued to exist as a part of the Hindu Jajmani system. Though they enjoyed

### STATE/UT'S SHARE OF SCHEDULED TRIBES (ST) TO TOTAL ST POPULATION OF INDIA



**Figure 2:** Primary Census Abstract for Total population, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 2011 Office of the Registrar General & Census Commissioner, India

**Table 2:** Scheduled Castes versus Scheduled Tribes.

Scheduled Tribes	Scheduled Castes
Never have been an integral part of mainstream society.	An integral part of mainstream society.
Outside the caste system	At the bottom in the caste system.
In hills, forest, coastal and desert areas, and even on islands.	Scattered on the agricultural plains.
Have their own culture, social organization, and political system.	Dependent on the dominant castes. Part-societies.
Concentrated in certain regions of the state and are in majority in the respective areas.	Scattered in the high caste-dominated villages all over the country.
Polygamy, monogamy, polyandry.	Monogamy
Dependent on land and forest for their livelihood and are masters of their respective habitats.	By and large, landless and in some cases, service castes. All of them are dependent on the high castes for earning their livelihood.
Patrilineal, but few tribes practice matriliney	Patrilineal

important functional roles, owing to mythological, historical and contextual reasons, they were considered ritually impure by the high caste Hindus. They were marked with the stigma of being impure. These have led to different types of social inequality and disability even today [2].

Scheduled caste and scheduled tribes were subjected to many hardships, exploitation, injustice and unequal treatment for many centuries because of the caste system. Scheduled castes were the lowest castes in the caste hierarchy of the Hindu social system. The scheduled tribes were the tribes that had not confirmed to Hinduism and followed animistic lifestyles.

Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes constitute the deprived sections. In the name of caste and development adivasis and dalits were exploited by the dominant sections of Indian society. Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes lead miserable lives and they

were treated with contempt. Besides, there was no proper mobility for these people in the society.

The problems of the SCs and STs emerged during the British regime and grew in independent India because the British method of administration continued even after independence. Although the British colonialism added to the abnormal poverty and exploitation of Indian masses by plundering resources, the caste system and the untouchability and inhuman treatment that is meted out to the SCs is not a British invention. The Indian caste system and untouchability are the creation of Brahminical ideological forces such as Manu and Kautilya [3].

#### Problems of Scheduled Caste

Scheduled castes are those castes which were placed at the bottom in the traditional caste system. Usually these castes used

to perform unclean occupations, so they were treated as polluted or impure. The concept of pollution attached to them had made them untouchables. Members of the scheduled castes faced many problems almost at every level - from access to education and medical facilities to restrictions on where they can live and what jobs they can have. Let us discuss some of the major problems faced by scheduled castes.

### Problems of untouchability

Within the scheduled castes community, there are many divisions into sub-castes. Scheduled castes had to perform unclean occupations such as:

- carrying human waste,
- sweeping,
- scavenging,
- oil grinding,
- spinning,
- tanning,
- shoemaking,
- leather works,
- carrying dead animals.

These were regarded as degraded and inferior [4]. On account of the practice of untouchability, the SCs had to suffer from the following types of disabilities.

- They were not allowed to use public places and avail of civic facilities such as village wells, ponds, temples, hotels, schools, hospitals, dharma shalas and choultries.
- They were forced to live on the outskirts of the towns and villages during the early days. Now a day also they are segregated from other spatially.
- They were allowed to work as labourers during construction or repair, storing grains, etc., but later the houses were purified by sprinkling cow urine or cow dung.
- They were not allowed to carry umbrellas, wear shoes or golden ornaments or to milk cows [5].
- They were denied the services of barbers washermen and tailors.
- They were not only kept at a distance but also denied various civic facilities. They were not allowed to enter the houses of members of upper caste.

### Poverty

The most important reason for the backwardness of the Scheduled Caste was poverty and untouchability. The SCs were deprived of economic rights. Being at the lowest rung of caste hierarchy, they were severely oppressed and had no means of production. So they remained poor and dependent upon others. As they could not afford proper food and adequate shelter, they suffered ill health. Most of the members were below poverty line. The problems associated with the poverty of SCs are as follows:

- Material deprivation: They were deprived of material possessions. They were not allowed to have land, house and animals. In case of natural calamities, such as drought famine and floods, they were the first to suffer. During famine they

did not get any work and had to suffer from starvation.

- Indebtedness and Bonded labour: Most of them did not own land for the purpose of residence and agriculture. They lived in huts erected on the land of the master and worked as agricultural labour. Even today majority of the Scheduled Caste members are working as landless labourers. They are lowest paid workers; some of them continue to suffer as bonded labourer at the hands of the upper castes. They are exploited in the payment of wages so they have to take loans to survive. Banks do not give them loan because they have no property documents so they have to take from money-lenders and employers at a high rate of interests, so they end up becoming bonded labourers. Even today the ownership of land and business by the scheduled castes is very marginal.
- Educational Backwardness: Illiteracy is responsible for their backwardness. Due to deprivation and poor socio-economic condition, SCs did not attend school and remained educationally weak. As most of the SCs are illiterates they are not aware of the importance of the education, and the safeguards and protection that are provided by the Constitution to ensure social justice. Most young ones discontinue their education before completion of their primary education. After independence schools have been opened for them but it has not been possible to enroll all children of SCs in schools. Nowadays the Scheduled Castes are getting educated due to various programmes such as Vayaskara shikshana samithi, Saksharatha andolana, Akshara dasoha, Mid-day meals to the schools.
- Employment and Government Service: After independence reservation in education and employment and other Constitutional benefits helped a lot to members of scheduled castes to move forward to get the higher education. Some of them have received higher education and are well placed. But they did not get proper guidance from anyone or at home, and this has adversely affected their academic achievements and attitude towards life and society.
- Agrarian Society: India is an agrarian society, where 60% of the population depend upon the agriculture directly. Employment opportunities, either in agricultural farms or those industries depending upon agricultural products, depend upon a perfect monsoon. Their employment is therefore seasonal and unpredictable. Because they cannot get job throughout the year is the main reason for their backwardness [6].
- Health and Nutrition: Most of scheduled caste population suffer from malnutrition and protein and energy deficiency. Many of them live in unhygienic conditions due to poverty. They are often victims of various health problems because they lack proper housing, drinking water, and other basic amenities.
- Political Disabilities: The Scheduled Castes hardly participated in the political matters for centuries. Before the British rule, they had no say in politics, administration and general governance of the country. They were not allowed to hold any public post, and political rights and representation were denied to them. After the British rule, they were given the right to vote, due to the struggle of Ambedkar. After the independence through the Constitution, political opportunities and rights have been provided for Scheduled Castes, but politically they are yet to become a decisive force [7].



- Atrocities: The scheduled castes are subjected to atrocities when they resist and demand their social, economic or political rights. The atrocities they face are many; their houses are burnt, their domesticated animals are snatched away and women are subjected to humiliation. They are beaten mercilessly. They are also murdered and lynched.

### The Problems of Scheduled Tribes

Tribal communities are vulnerable today because of their inability to cope with the consequences of their integration with the mainstream economy, society, cultural and political systems, from all of which they were historically protected by their relative isolation. They suffer from so many disabilities, such as the following:

- Indebtedness
- land alienation
- poverty
- migration
- industrialization and urbanization
- exploitation of non-tribals
- cultural difference
- lack of awareness
- lack of proper representation
- linguistic disability
- development projects and displacement
- problem of identity
- lack of communication
- migration
- geographic separation
- economic disabilities
- cultural disabilities
- social disabilities,
- Educational disabilities.

Among these some of major problems are discussed below:

**Economic problem:** Tribal people are economically the poorest people in India, most of them living below the poverty line. The tribal economy is based on forest and agriculture. Most of the tribals are landless. The tribals who are engaged in cultivation practice shifting and settled cultivation. The tribals possess uneconomic holdings because of which their crop yield is very small. Shifting cultivation, which is not ecologically sound, is still being practised by the tribals living on the higher slopes of hilly areas of the country. As estimated, more than 6 lakh tribal families in the North-Eastern states, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh practise shifting cultivation. This shifting cultivation is integrally linked to the tribal economy in the areas where it is practiced. The social and economic activities and rituals of tribals are centred around shifting agriculture. The problem of shifting cultivation is a very complex one, involving economic, social and psychological aspects of the tribal communities. Although shifting cultivation is one of the prime sources of living for the tribals, yet the same has been severely restricted.

**Tribal land alienation:** Land is not only the most important productive resource for the tribals, but also occupies an important place in their psyche as the mainstay of their social and religious practices. The innocence, illiteracy and helplessness of the tribals are exploited by the zamindars, landlords, moneylenders, forest contractors, through fraudulent transfers, forcible eviction, mortgages, leases and encroachments. Right from the British days, the tribal lands have been acquired for development projects and for public purposes. In this way, land alienation has resulted in landlessness among tribals. Various states enforced tenancy laws to protect landlessness of the tribals. But even these laws have not been able to prohibit the incidence of land alienation in tribal areas of Chotanagpur, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. As per the information available with the Ministry of Rural Development, as many as 4.65 lakh cases of alienation of tribal land covering an area of 9.17 lakh acres were registered in the various states of India. Against this, only 2 lakh cases were disposed of in favour of 1.56 lakh tribal families covering an area of 5.31 lakh acres.

The states affected by largescale tribal land alienation include the following:

- Andhra Pradesh (2.79 lakh acres),
- Madhya Pradesh (1.58 lakh acres),
- Karnataka (1.30 lakh acres), and
- Gujarat (1.16 lakh acres).

The problem of land alienation among tribals is perpetuated because of the lack of political and administrative will as reflected in the reluctance to amend legal provisions and plug the existing loopholes and swift administrative action to identify alienated land, and restore it to the tribals with delivery of possession.

**Indebtedness and Bonded labour:** The problem of indebtedness among tribals is not only an indication of their poverty but also reflects the wider economic malaise, lack of education, low purchasing/bargaining power and lack of resources for engaging in gainful activity and meeting emergent expenditure. Therefore, the problem continues to persist with increasing menace as the indebtedness pushes the tribals further into extreme conditions of poverty and forces them to dispense with their meagre resources, including the small bits and pieces of land to pay off the loans at exorbitant rates of interest. The initiation of commercial vending of liquor in tribal areas has started impoverishing the tribal population, making them victims of indebtedness and exploitation. As labourers, they do not get work around the year and the payment is neither regular nor proper. As a result most of the tribals are in trouble and they have to take loan from money-lenders at a high rate of interest. When they are unable to pay back they are made to repay it by working as bonded labour at nominal wage. Lack of a sound policy to support consumption credit to tribals has tended to make them dependent on usurious money-lenders, resulting in debt-bondage. The problem of tribal indebtedness often gets aggravated and compounded with the government subsidy-cum loan schemes which further lead the tribals into deep indebtedness.

**Educational Backwardness:** For tribals bread is more important than education. Many tribal families have to struggle hard to maintain their existence. Along with studies many tribal children have to work in their houses and fields. As a result many tribal children drop out from the schools. Although, there has been a substantial increase in the literacy rates of STs during the last three developmental decades, the gap between the literacy rates

of STs and those of the general population is not only persisting, but also found to be widening. Many of them are not aware about education, schools, colleges, universities, and degrees. The illiterate parents do not consider their primary responsibility to give education to their children. The medium of instruction is another hindrance to promote the education among the tribes. Most of the tribal languages do not have a script of their own. Even in tribal areas the numbers of tribal teachers is very less. Communication problem always arises between the students and the teachers. The pace of progress of enrolment of both ST boys and girls at the middle level between 1990-91 and 1999-2000 has been quite impressive, as compared to that of the total population. The drop-out rate, which is another crucial indicator in the field of educational development, also shows that there has been a steady decline in respect of both general and ST categories. Literacy and education is higher in converted tribals than non-converted ones. Among the tribals female illiteracy is more acute.

**Unemployment:** A large number of young tribal men and women are unemployed. They are not able to get jobs that can keep them occupied throughout the year. They need to be helped in finding secondary source of income by developing animal husbandry, poultry farming, handicrafts in the tribal areas. Income generation is so inadequate that the tribals have to depend money-lenders. Further, the incidence of poverty among STs still continues to be very high with 45.86 and 34.75 per cent living below the poverty line in rural and urban areas. For the purpose of employment the tribals migrate to different places inside the State or outside for work and wages. As labourers they work at construction sites, small industries and factories etc. Many of the tribals are exploited and oppressed at work places.

### Problem of Health and Nutrition

The tribals continue to be one of the fragile population, mainly due to their poor health and nutritional status. The major contributors to the increased disease risk amongst tribal communities include:

- poverty and consequent under-nutrition;
- poor environmental sanitation, poor hygiene and lack of safe drinking water leading to increased morbidity from water and vector-borne infections;
- lack of access to health care facilities resulting in the increased severity and duration of illnesses;
- social barriers and taboos preventing utilisation of available health care services;
- Vulnerability to specific diseases like G-6 PD deficiency, Yaws, and other endemic diseases like malaria.

Malnutrition is fairly common among the tribals, especially their children and women, debilitating their physical condition and lowering their resistance to disease. As most tribal women suffer from anaemia which lowers resistance to fatigue, this affects their working capacity and increases susceptibility to disease particularly for those having closely-spaced frequent pregnancies. Lack of income and poor health facilities at PHCs also affect their health adversely. Almost all the tribals in the country do not have a satisfactory dietary pattern as their diets are frequently deficient in calcium, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Riboflavin and animal protein. The tribals are thus caught in a vicious cycle of malnutrition and ill-health.

**Displacement of Tribals:** Displacement or forced/voluntary eviction of tribals from their land and their natural habitats and

subsequent rehabilitation has been a serious problem. Due to large development projects in tribal areas, millions of tribal people have been uprooted from their lands and homes. Thus, affected people face a broad range of impoverishment risks [8]. To achieve rapid economic growth, India has invested in various development projects to create new infrastructure. This has been made possible through massive acquisition of land and subsequent displacement of people. So, dams, mining industries and other developmental like SEZs projects have displaced people from their homestead and the total number of displaced and affected people runs into millions [9].

Between 60 and 65 million people are estimated to have been displaced in India since Independence, the highest number of people uprooted for development projects in the world. In India, "This amounts to around one million displaced every year since Independence," says a report released in 2012 by the UN Working Group on Human Rights in India (WGHR).

"Of these displaced, over 40 per cent are tribals and another 40 per cent consist of dalits and other rural poor" (Times of India; 2012). The studies also pointed out that in India from 1947 to 2000, about 60 million (6 crore) people have been displaced from 25 million ha of land, including 7 million ha of forests and 6 million ha of common property resources. The incomplete rehabilitation of the displaced tribals has further compounded their woes as they are pushed into a vortex of increasing assetlessness, unemployment, debt bondage and destitution. Women and children as ever are the worst affected.

Most displaced people have not been properly resettled or given adequate compensation. For instance, in India 75 percent of displaced people have not been "rehabilitated" [10-11]. Their livelihoods have not been restored; in fact, the vast majority of development resettlers in India have become impoverished [12]. Resettlement & Rehabilitation policies have been unable to avoid the impoverishment of the displaced population and restore the previous level of well-being [13].

**Deprivation of Forest Rights:** Forests and tribals share a symbiotic relationship. Tribals continue to live in forest areas, though in isolation, yet in harmony with environment. Historically, tribal communities have depended on forests for their livelihoods, both for cultivation and forest product collection. Tribals were severely marginalized by reservation of forests during the colonial and post-colonial period.

The total forest cover in India is reported to be 765.21 thousand sq. kms. of which 71% are adivasi areas. Of these 416.52 and 223.30 thousand sq. kms. are categorised as reserved and protected forests respectively. About 23% of these are further declared as wild-life sanctuaries and national parks which alone has displaced some half a million Adivasis. By the process of colonisation of the forests that began formally with the Forest Act of 1864 and finally the Indian Forest Act of 1927, the rights of adivasis were reduced to mere privileges conferred by the state. The Forest Policy of 1952, the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 has further deprived tribal peoples of their rights in forested landscapes of the state in the post-colonial period. The expropriation of adivasis from their forest lands and their political marginalisation and neglect in development initiatives has been a major cause for the prevalence and persistence of acute poverty in India's forested landscapes.

The process of alienation of the lands of adivasis has been going on

for decades, but has accelerated after independence. Despite special safeguards, tribals continue to struggle for mere survival as they face formidable problems and displacement due to development of national parks and wild-life sanctuaries and other projects and lack of development in forest villages. The protection of rights of tribals in forests is the key to the amelioration of their conditions.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 has been passed by Parliament to address the injustice done to tribal and adivasi communities and other forest dwellers. It confers legal entitlements on the lands they were cultivating for centuries. Forest Rights Act 2006 promises to be a pro-poor institutional reform, and indeed, many poor have already benefited from its implementation. However, the process has been severely anti-poor, and so the pro-poor benefits have been restricted in many ways [14].

To overcome the historical discrimination and the problems of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, India has taken several steps to prohibit the practice of untouchability and to eradicate poverty. These steps are:

- Constitutional provisions,
- guarantees,
- legislative enactments and
- Policy measures.

Despite the constitutional provisions and modern democracy, the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of India are still struggling hard for survival and for the social justice.

## CONCLUSION

Though scheduled tribes and the scheduled castes share the elements of poverty and exploitation, their demographic profile is different. Scheduled tribes are those communities who are outside the caste system of our society. On the other hand scheduled castes are those castes which were placed at the bottom in the traditional caste system.

The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are faced with many problems, which are of social, economical, political and educational in nature. Scheduled castes traditionally performed unclean occupations. So they are treated as polluted or impure. The concept of pollution attached to them had made them untouchables. As a member of the lowest rank of Indian society, scheduled castes faced many problems almost every level from access to education and medical facilities to restrictions on where they can live and what jobs they can have. For a long time the Scheduled Castes were treated as untouchables and they were not allowed to use public places and avail of civic facilities. They were forced to live on the outskirts of the towns and villages during the early days. The most important reason for the backwardness of the scheduled caste is poverty. The SCs were deprived of economic rights. So they were remained poor and dependent upon others. The problems associated with the poverty of SCs are material deprivation, indebtedness and bonded labour, educational backwardness, employment and government service, health and nutrition, political disabilities, and the problem of atrocities.

Tribal communities continue to be vulnerable even today, not because they are poor, asset-less and illiterate compared to the general population, but often their distinct vulnerability arises from their inability to negotiate and cope with the consequences of their integration with the mainstream economy, society,

cultural and political systems, from all of which they were historically protected by their relative isolation. They are suffering from so many problems such as, indebtedness, land alienation, agriculture, poverty, migration, industrialization and urbanization, exploitation of non-tribals, cultural difference, lack of awareness, lack of proper representation, linguistic disability, displacement, mining, problem of identity, restrictions on forest resources, lack of communication, migration, geographic separation, problems of health and education, socio-economic and cultural problems, etc.

To overcome the historical discrimination and the problems of scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, India has taken several steps to prohibit the practice of untouchability and to eradicate poverty. Despite the constitutional provisions and modern democracy, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of India are still struggling hard for survival and for the social justice.

The scheduled castes and scheduled tribes are still facing problems due to policies under liberalization, privatization and globalization. Although the Constitution of India includes certain articles specific to the safeguards of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, their development still remains deficient. Many problems remain unresolved in tribal areas due to ineffective implementation of PESA and other development policies.

These problems are

- displacement,
- mining,
- indebtedness,
- land alienation,
- shifting cultivation,
- deprivation of forest rights,
- Inadequate and inaccessible health services.

Therefore, it is necessary to strengthen the concerned departments to make effective implementation of policies and programs for the development of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes.

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