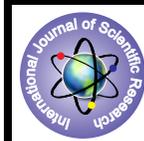


## Socoi-Economic Features of Tribal Peple in India And Their Status: A Political Analysis



## Political Science

**KEYWORDS :** Socio-Economic features,  
Tribal Women and Empowerment.

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### ABSTRACT

*The tribal way of life is very much dictated by the forest right from birth to death. In spite of the protection given to the tribal population by the constitution of India, tribal's still remaining the most backward ethnic group in India. The tribal population in India, though a numerically small minority, represents an enormous diversity of groups. They vary among themselves in respect of language and linguistic traits, ecological settings in which they live, physical features, size of the population, the extent of acculturation, dominant modes of making a livelihood, level of development and social stratification. They are also spread over the length and breadth of the country though their geographical distribution is far from uniform. A majority of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in the eastern, central and western belt covering the nine States of Odessa, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal. About 12 per cent inhabit the Northeastern region, about five per cent in the Southern region and about three per cent in the Northern States. In the modern world we are aware that society is never static and that social, political, economic and cultural changes occur constantly. Hence, here this paper focused on Socio-Economic features of tribal people in India and their status.*

### Introduction:

Tribes in India, constituting 8.6 per cent of India's total population, and classified into about seven hundred communities, including both 'major tribes' and their 'sub-tribes', inhabit all parts of the country except the States of Punjab, Haryana, and Delhi, and the Union Territories of Chandigarh and Pondicherry. Although Indian tribes have their own spatially-demarcated communities, they have never been isolated; they and their neighboring communities are interdependent and have had long term contacts for exchange, as a result of which their social and cultural features have often been subject to external influences. Even those communities that are now isolated, for instance in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, were not so in the past. In fact, the isolation of tribes increased when outsiders (especially the colonial rulers) started entering into their territories in search of precious and non-renewable resources. As surveys of forest and hill territories began, tribal people moved to non-surveyed areas to escape the tyranny of exploitation and suppression.

In India, the tribal's can be divided into two categories: (i) frontier tribes, and (ii) non-frontier tribes. The former inhabit the North-East frontier states at the borders of Burma, China and Bangladesh. They occupy a special position in the sphere of national politics. The nonfrontier tribes are distributed in most of the mainland states, though they are concentrated in large numbers in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. Both groups are known as tribals, Adivasis (original inhabitants), aboriginals, autochthons, etc. They have their own mother tongues, life-styles, social structures, rites and rituals, values and so on, differing in many ways from those of the non-tribal social groups. Many of them are today settled agriculturists but the forest still forms much of their economic resource base. They have one thing in common, namely, their protest culture against the external forces which try to subjugate them.

### Tribal Culture:

Culture is the way in which a group of people live, think, feel, organize themselves, celebrate and share life. In every culture, there are underlying systems of values, meanings and views of the world which are visibly expressed in languages, life-styles, gestures, symbols and rituals. Culture is what a social group considers the best and the sum-total of its thinking, living and expressing. Over the years tribal culture has attained a clear distinctiveness by fostering a special balance between nature and culture. Economically, natural resources, which are gifts of nature, are shared in common among the tribal's.

### Effect of Globalization on Tribals:

The impact of globalization is strongest on these populations perhaps more than any other because these communities have no voice and are therefore easily swept aside by the invisible hand of the market and its proponents. Globalization is not merely a question of marginalization for indigenous peoples it is a multi-pronged attack on the very foundation of their existence and livelihoods, for example:

Indigenous people throughout the world sit on the

- "Frontlines" of globalization's expansion; they occupy the last pristine places on earth, where resources are still abundant: forests, minerals, water, and genetic diversity. All are ferociously sought by global corporations, trying to push traditional societies off their lands.
- New advances in technology, the reorientation toward export-led development, and the imperatives of pleasing global financial markets are all driving forces in the extermination of countless native communities which stand in their way.
- Traditional sovereignty over hunting and gathering rights has been thrown into question as national governments bind themselves to new global economic treaties.
- New trade and investment agreements, which are opening up previously inaccessible territory to industrial extraction of natural resources, has forced indigenous peoples to defend their homelands under an invasion of unprecedented rate and scale: Big dams, mines, pipelines, roads, energy developments, military intrusions all threaten native lands.
- Global rules on the patenting of genetic resources via the WTO have made possible the privatization of indigenous peoples' genomes, the biological diversity upon which they depend, and the very knowledge of how that biodiversity might be used commercially.
- National governments making decisions on export development strategies or international trade and investment rules do not consult native communities.

### Threats of New Economic policies on Tribals:

The new economic policies have serious impact on the adivasi lives whose right over access to natural resources, livelihood opportunities, right to primary education and health, protection from atrocities and human rights abuses and the right to uphold their traditional and customary practices, are under series threat due to the changes in laws and policies. The most serious threat to the adivasi people on the country today is the pressure on the Fifth Schedule. Both Central and Several state governments are seriously making efforts to amend the laws prescribed under

Fifth Schedule and their corresponding state laws in order to allow private and corporate players to take over tribal and forest lands. Violation of the Fifth Schedule has occurred in many states like in Andhra Pradesh where the Land Transfer Regulation Act was ignored while giving mining leases in scheduled areas to private companies. Private mining has been taking place in Rajasthan, M.P, Odhisa, Maharashtra and other Fifth Schedule states. One of the ways of globalization in India is disinvestment or privatization. Many Public sector Enterprises are being sold off to private sectors with the objective of raising revenues to meet the fiscal deficits and to improve efficiency. Profit making enterprises like BALCO, which are in the tribal belt, have been privatized. Public Sector Enterprises in the tribal belt were beneficial to tribal people giving the employment and livelihood. Privatization of these enterprises will adversely affect the tribal people and disturb the regional balance in terms of industrialization.

The new Industrial policy paved the way for Tribal Land alienation. While the adivasis have been displaced and pushed into the fringes of globalization, the natural resources were victim to large scale destruction directly for industry purposes and indirectly by the non tribal's. As a result the tribal's ended up as debris in the globalised policies unable to access the resources which were their life sustaining forces or to compete with the mainstream society to be absorbed into alternate economies. Those absorbed in the new industries and projects were minimal compared to the extent of displacement and the destruction of traditional livelihood.

#### **Forced migration for economic survival:**

Tribal people suffer predominantly from the phenomenon of poverty-induced migration on account of rain-fed agriculture and absence of other avenues of employment. Fragmentation of land, loss of land due to acquisition and illegal land alienation by non-tribal also cause people to migrate. Deforestation and decreasing access to forests and drought are other contributory factors for tribal migration. Due to compulsion involved in migrating in search of livelihood it would be more accurate to describe such migration as 'forced migration'.

#### **Protests and agitations:**

It is the fear of impoverishment that has made people, particularly tribal communities to launch protests against land acquisition and displacement and is one of the reasons for Left Wing Terrorism in tribal regions of Central India. The response of the State ought to be to engage with tribal people to find out what they want.

#### **Impact of Migration on Tribal Communities:**

The main sources of data on migration are the Census of India, Office of the Registrar General and the National Sample Survey. Both these data do not throw full light on seasonal and circular migration and do not capture various forms of child labour. Smaller studies show that child migrants from families of weaker sections such as from tribal communities form a large part of the work force in several sectors such as construction, brick-kilns, small industries, domestic work etc.

#### **Migration-poverty interface:**

There are three important constraints that perpetuate poverty among migrants in the Indian situation. These are: poor education, discrimination, and a hostile policy environment. In the case of tribal migrants, the literacy rate is low, not much is being done for developing skills and they do not have access to public facilities such as PDS in the place they migrate to. The State's apathy and lack of capacity to implement protective migration/labour laws compounds the problem. Moreover, the wage rate is very low. Circular/seasonal migration is the domi-

nant form of migration of poor tribal people. They leave their village after completing agriculture work and migrate as casual, low skilled workers and return after completion of work. Since tribal migrants have little or no education and low skills, which translate into low marketable skills for both rural and urban employment, they form a part of the unorganized sector and have little bargaining power. The poorest and deprived areas of the tribal belt in Central India such as Chhattisgarh, Telangana region, Jharkhand, southern Madhya Pradesh have become labour pools, from where cheap labour can be drawn on seasonally. Due to poverty and lack of employment opportunities, tribal families send unmarried daughters to cities in search of work. Single women and tribal girls are, however, prone to exploitation not only by employers, but also by anti-social elements.

#### **Displacement:**

Development-induced displacement has resulted, not only in loss of land due to acquisition for the project but also in influx of non-tribal outsiders in these areas, who illegally alienate tribal land and take the benefits of the new economic opportunities in commerce, trade and industry. Migration of displaced Scheduled Tribes is indicative of Government's failure to provide livelihood in the new environment.

#### **Tribal women, Development and Participation:**

Tribal women constituting a little more than 10% of the total Indian population and unlike in the population, the tribal people hardly show an adverse sex ratio especially in the 1 to 7 years age group reflecting no sign of early sex discrimination. The age wise break-up is comparable with whole population; with 54% in the productive age group while a larger share 40% are children. The mean age is 24.3 years, less compared to their mean in total population. By religion Hindus are majority among tribal people also but Christians constitute a sizable 8% compared to 2% in total population. Seven percent of women belong to female headed households slightly less than 9.5 of the population total. The educational disadvantage is evident from the illiteracy statistics. More than 25% of women belong to completely illiterate households and nearly 50% in households in which no female is literate. These ratios are much higher than total population highlighting the greater illiteracy problem of tribal people. The worker population ratio brings home the fact that the tribal woman is far more participative in economic life than others and 37% joins the men in the work for a living compared to an overall total of 23%. While that of the working age females (between 15 to 59 years age) is very high at 61%, the participation rate is high among senior women too. However, in spite of their active role not only considerably higher proportion (43%) of tribal women belongs to very low expenditure classes of households than overall women, the share is higher than for tribal men indicating greater concentration of women in poor households and possibly also reflecting their poor economic empowerment.

#### **Conclusion:**

The socio-economic conditions of the tribal people residing in naxalite prone villages clearly indicate that the naxalism is an upshot of deprivation. It can be unmistakably said that there is prevalence of naxalism in these areas because these is no development. Underdevelopment,

Traditionalism and physical detachment from the main stream has promoted growth of naxalism in these areas. From this study it can be concluded that socio-economic backwardness and persistent deprivation of human rights has given rise to naxalism in these villages, where one outsider cannot really distinguish who is a naxalite and who is not. As it is a social, cultural and economic problem, inherent to the tribal society, it should be solved through social and economic anesthesia.

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