

## SIXTH SEMESTER (HONS)

### PAPER: DSE3T/ UNIT-I

# TRIBES IN INDIA

## Brief History:

The tribal population is found in almost all parts of the world. India is one of the two largest concentrations of tribal population. The tribal community constitutes an important part of Indian social structure. Tribes are earliest communities as they are the first settlers. The tribal are said to be the original inhabitants of this land. These groups are still in primitive stage and often referred to as *Primitive* or *Adavasis*, *Aborigines* or *Girijans* and so on. The tribal population in India, according to 2011 census is 8.6%. At present India has the second largest population in the world next to Africa. Our most of the tribal population is concentrated in the eastern (*West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Jharkhand*) and central (*Madhya Pradesh, Chhattishgarh, Andhra Pradesh*) tribal belt. Among the major tribes, the population of *Bhil* is about six million followed by the *Gond* (about 5 million), the *Santal* (about 4 million), and the *Oraon* (about 2 million).

Tribals are called variously in different countries. For instance, in the United States of America, they are known as '*Red Indians*', in Australia as '*Aborigines*', in the European countries as '*Gypsies*', in the African and Asian countries as '*Tribals*'. The term '*tribes*' in the Indian context today are referred as '*Scheduled Tribes*'. These communities are regarded as the *earliest* among the present *inhabitants of India*. And it is considered that they have survived here with their unchanging ways of life for centuries. Many of the tribals are still in a primitive stage and far from the impact of modern civilization.

## Definition of Tribe:

The term *Scheduled Tribe (ST)* has become explained variously. To the ordinary people the word suggests *aborigines who live in hills and forests*, to administrators it means *a group of citizens those who have some privileges supported by constitutions*, to an *Anthropologists* it indicates *a special field for study of a social phenomenon*. Risley, Verrier Elwin and others used the word '*Aboriginals*' to refer tribals. Sir Baines, a British census officer called the tribal community '*Hill Tribes*' or '*Forest Tribe*', Hutton preferred to use the term '*Primitive Tribes*', Mahatma Gandhi popularized the word '*Girijans*', G. S. Ghurye as '*Backward Hindus*', R. K. Das and S. R. Das as '*Submerged Humanity*'. The constitution of India has accepted to use the

term '*Scheduled Tribe*', which was introduced for the first time by *Simon Commission in 1928*. Tribes are also known as '*Vanavasis*', '*Aranyavasis*', '*Vanyajatis*' etc. but the term tribe is nowhere defined in the constitution. *Article 366(25)* of the constitution says that '*Scheduled Tribes are tribes or tribal communities or parts of groups with in such tribes or tribal communities which the Indian president may specify by public notification under article 342(1)*'.

There are limitations in defining tribes anthropologically. *Andre Beteille* points out the following limitation:

- There is no separate political boundary, in several instances, the boundaries of different states cut across the tribal division.
- Linguistic boundary has also been gradually changing.
- Cultural boundary of the tribe is not explicit. There are many elements of continuity with the regional cultures. It cannot be considered distinctive in a rigid ways.
- Homogenous nature of the tribal society is almost lost. Some elements of stratification have been observed among some tribes, and homogeneity among the tribes cannot be mentioned as a special feature of tribes.

Distinction between the tribals and the non tribals is vague in many ways. And there is no common agreement among social scientists regarding the definition of the term '*Tribe*'. Some of the definitions are given below:

**W. J. Perry** : A group speaking a common dialect and inhabiting a common territory.

**W. H. R. Rivers** : A social group of simple kinds, the members of which speak a common dialect and act together in such common purpose as welfare.

**T. N. Madan** : A group of simple minds, occupying a concentrated area, having a common language, a common government, a common action in warfare.

**D. N. Majumdar** : A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation.

**S. C. Dube** : Tribes is an ethnic category defined by real or putative descent and characterized by a corporate identity and a wide range of commonly shared traits of culture.

**Gillin & Gillin** : A tribe is a group of local communities, which lives in a common area, speaks a common dialect and follows a common culture.

**Oxford Dictionary** : A tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarious stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor.

In this context **T.B Naik** has given the following features of tribes in Indian perspective:

- A tribe should have least functional interdependence within the community.
- It should be economically backward (i.e. primitive means of exploiting natural resources, tribal economy should be at an underdeveloped stage and it should have multifarious economic pursuits).
- There should be a comparative geographical isolation of its people.
- They should have a common dialect.
- Tribes should be politically organized and community panchayat should be influential.
- A tribe should have customary laws.

From the definitions it can be concluded that tribe is nothing but *a group of families which have a common ancestor and descent*. They have blood relationship and related closely with each other. They have a feeling of unity and oneness in general. They speak a common language and due to a common cultural heritage their traditions are more or less same. They live in some geographical area in group.

Tribes are generally *a social group in which there are many clans, nomadic bands, village or other subgroups which usually have a definite territorial area, a separate language and a distinct culture either a common political organization or at least a feeling of common determination against outsiders*. Tribes are considered as a group of people who live in a particular area, who keep a separate identity in their life pattern of culture. Generally even though expectations are there, a tribe can be mentioned as a homogenous unit with certain common territory and common ancestor. They are isolated from the main stream and very often preliterate and backward in technology by observing social and political custom based on kinship. Even though some tribes are changed in their distinctive characteristics, some of them are still relevant.

Tribal communities live, in various ecological and geo-climatic conditions ranging from plains and forests to hills and inaccessible areas. Tribal groups are at different stages of social, economic and educational development. While some tribal communities have adopted a mainstream way of life, at the other end of the spectrum, there are certain Scheduled Tribes, 75 in number known as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs), who are characterized by:-

- pre-agriculture level of technology;
- stagnant or declining population;
- extremely low literacy; and
- subsistence level of economy.

### **Characteristics of Tribes:**

Tribes generally reveal some characteristics mention in the following paragraphs-

- 1. Definite Common Territory:** A tribe is a territorial community. It means the group has a definite territory in which its members reside.
- 2. Collection of Families:** Tribals constitutes a collection of families. These families have blood relationships. They can be matrilineal or matrilineal.
- 3. Common Name:** every tribe has its own name. a tribe in known to others by its distinctive name.
- 4. Common Language:** Tribals in their group speak a common language. This language differs from the language of other communities including nearby tribes.
- 5. Common Ancestor:** Almost all tribes claim a common ancestor. Their sense of *we feeling* is developed out of the blood relationship through a common ancestor. They are bound by kinship bounds.
- 6. Simple Technology:** They bear simple technology in respect of their agriculture, hunting and handicrafts etc. They are more lagging behind the modern technology.
- 7. Slower Innovation:** Capacity of innovation by the tribes are slower than any other section of the country.
- 8. Common Religion:** Tribals usually worship a common ancestor and follow one religion. The tribal social and political organizations are based on the religion participation in religious rituals is creating *unity of the group*.
- 9. Common Culture:** tribes have a way of life of its own. They practice a common culture that includes same customs, traditions, morals and rituals. The special features of the tribe develop a distinctive culture.

- 10. Common Political Organization:** The head of the community exercises authority. The chieftainship is hereditary. They do have a tribal council or judicial system.
- 11. We Feeling:** The members of a tribe feel that they are united. The feeling is essential to retain and maintain their identity.
- 12. Endogamy:** The tribes usually practice endogamy, marrying with in one's own group to maintain the purity of blood.
- 13. Common Economic Organization:** Majority of tribals are agriculturist or engaged in its allied activities. So their economic life is based on agriculture. They traditionally practice reciprocal exchange system rather than market exchange.
- 14. Simplicity and Self Sufficiency:** A tribe is simple in its character and operation. They do not possess or enjoy the facilities of the modern society.
- 15. Division of Labour:** In tribal societies, specialized division of labour is absence.
- 16. Illiteracy:** The tribals are pre-literate. Illiteracy is their one of the major characteristics.
- 17. Clan Organization:** Tribal beliefs and practices on Animistic clan organization (belief on living organism from where they originated) which is considered by them as their ancestor. This belief maintains their group solidarity. They practice clan endogamy.

### **Demography of Tribal Population: Indian and West Bengal**

The Scheduled Tribes are notified in 30 States/UTs and the number of individual ethnic groups, etc. notified as Scheduled Tribes is 705. The tribal population of the country, as per 2011 census, is 10.43 crore, constituting 8.6% of the total population. 89.97% of them live in rural areas and 10.03% in urban areas. The decadal population growth of the tribal's from Census 2001 to 2011 has been 23.66% against the 17.69% of the entire population. The sex ratio for the overall population is 940 females per 1000 males and that of Scheduled Tribes 990 females per thousand males.

Broadly the STs inhabit two distinct geographical area – the Central India and the North-Eastern Area. More than half of the Scheduled Tribe population is concentrated in Central India, i.e., Madhya Pradesh (14.69%), Chhattisgarh (7.5%), Jharkhand (8.29%), Andhra Pradesh (5.7%), Maharashtra (10.08%), Orissa (9.2%), Gujarat (8.55%) and Rajasthan (8.86%). The other distinct area is the North East (Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Tripura, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh).

Population distribution in Indian and West Bengal are given in the following tables respectively-

**Table 1: State-wise Distribution of Scheduled Tribes, Census 2011**

Name of the State/UT	Population (Total)	Scheduled Tribe (Total)	ST % to total population of India/State	% to total ST population of the India
INDIA	1210569573	104281034	8.61	100.00
JAMMU & KASHMIR	12541302	1493299	11.91	1.43
HIMACHAL PRADESH	6864602	392126	5.71	0.38
PUNJAB	27743338	0	0.00	0.00
CHANDIGARH	1055450	0	0.00	0.00
UTTARAKHAND	10086292	291903	2.89	0.28
HARYANA	25351462	0	0.00	0.00
NCT OF DELHI	16787941	0	0.00	0.00
RAJASTHAN	68548437	9238534	13.48	8.86
UTTAR PRADESH	199812341	1134273	0.57	1.09
BIHAR	104099452	1336573	1.28	1.28
SIKKIM	610577	206360	33.80	0.20
ARUNACHAL PRADESH	1383727	951821	68.79	0.91
NAGALAND	1978502	1710973	86.48	1.64
MANIPUR	2570390	902740	35.12	0.87
MIZORAM	1097206	1036115	94.43	0.99
TRIPURA	3673917	1166813	31.76	1.12
MEGHALAYA	2966889	2555861	86.15	2.45
ASSAM	31205576	3884371	12.45	3.72
WEST BENGAL	91276115	5296953	5.80	5.08
JHARKHAND	32988134	8645042	26.21	8.29
ODISHA	41974218	9590756	22.85	9.20
CHHATTISGARH	25545198	7822902	30.62	7.50
MADHYA PRADESH	72626809	15316784	21.09	14.69
GUJARAT	60439692	8917174	14.75	8.55
DAMAN & DIU	243247	15363	6.32	0.01
DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI	343709	178564	51.95	0.17
MAHARASHTRA	112374333	10510213	9.35	10.08
ANDHRA PRADESH	84580777	5918073	7.00	5.68
KARNATAKA	61095297	4248987	6.95	4.07
GOA	1458545	149275	10.23	0.14
LAKSHADWEEP	64473	61120	94.80	0.06
KERALA	33406061	484839	1.45	0.46
TAMIL NADU	72147030	794697	1.10	0.76
PUDUCHERRY	1247953	0	0.00	0.00
ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS	380581	28530	7.50	0.03

**Table 2: District-wise Distribution of Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal, Census 2011**

Districts	Total Household	Total Population	Scheduled Tribe Population	ST % to total population of State/ District	% to total ST population of the State
WEST BENGAL	20380315	91276115	5296953	5.80	100.00
DARJILING	391234	1846823	397389	21.52	7.50
JALPAIGURI	868326	3872846	731704	18.89	13.81
KOCH BIHAR	665720	2819086	18125	0.64	0.34
UTTAR DINAJPUR	605674	3007134	162816	5.41	3.07
DAKSHIN DINAJPUR	396406	1676276	275366	16.43	5.20
MALDAH	846991	3988845	313984	7.87	5.93
MURSHIDABAD	1570759	7103807	91035	1.28	1.72
BIRBHUM	817899	3502404	242484	6.92	4.58
BARDDHAMAN	1730927	7717563	489447	6.34	9.24
NADIA	1232282	5167600	140700	2.72	2.66
NORTH TWENTY FOUR PARGANAS	2348683	10009781	264597	2.64	5.00
HUGLI	1287423	5519145	229243	4.15	4.33
BANKURA	766902	3596674	368690	10.25	6.96
PURULIYA	567824	2930115	540652	18.45	10.21
HAORA	1061336	4850029	15094	0.31	0.28
KOLKATA	1024928	4496694	10684	0.24	0.20
SOUTH TWENTY FOUR PARGANAS	1781221	8161961	96976	1.19	1.83
PASCHIM MEDINIPUR	1301610	5913457	880015	14.88	16.61
PURBA MEDINIPUR	1114170	5095875	27952	0.55	0.53

**Table 3: List of Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal, Census 2001**

1.	ASUR	21.	KORWA
2.	BAIGA	22.	LEPCHA
3.	BEDIA, BEDIYA	23.	<b>LODHA</b> , KHERIA, KHAIRA
4.	BHUMIJ	24.	LOHARA, LOHRA
5.	BHUTIA, SHERPA, <b>TOTO</b> , DUKPA, KAGATAY, TIBETAN, YOLMO	25.	MAGH
6.	<b>BIRHOR</b>	26.	MAHALI
7.	BIRJIA	27.	MAHLI
8.	CHAKMA	28.	MAL PAHARIYA
9.	CHERO	29.	MECH
10.	CHIK BARAIK	30.	MRU
11.	GARO	31.	MUNDA
12.	GOND	32.	NAGESIA
13.	GORAIT	33.	ORAON
14.	HAJANG	34.	PAHARIYA
15.	HO	35.	RABHA
16.	KARMALI	36.	SANTAL
17.	KHARWAR	37.	SAURIA PAHARIA
18.	KHOND	38.	SAVAR
19.	KISAN	39.	LIMBU
20.	KORA	40.	TAMANG

**Table 4: District wise distribution of Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal, Census 2011**

Name of the District	Name of the Scheduled Tribes
Darjeeling	Asur, Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Jalpaiguri	Asur, Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, <b>Toto</b> , Generic Tribes etc.
Dakshin Dinajpur	Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., Chero, Garo, Gond, Hajang, Karmali, Khond, Kora, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Maldah	Baiga, Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Birbhum	Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Chero, Chik Baraik, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Kharwar, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Generic Tribes etc.
North Twenty Four Parganas	Asur, Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc. Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc.,
Bankura	Bedia etc., Bhumij, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gorait, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Kora, Korwa, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Santal, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Puruliya	Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Chero, Chik Baraik, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Kora, Korwa, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Oraon, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Paschim Medinipur	Asur, Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Purba Medinipur	Bhumij, Kheria, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Mahali, Munda, Oraon, Santal, Savar
South Twenty Four Parganas	Asur, Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Kolkata	Asur, Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Haora	Asur, Baiga, Bhumij, Bedia etc., Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Hugli	Asur, Baiga, Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Nadia	Baiga, Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar etc., Generic Tribes

Name of the District	Name of the Scheduled Tribes
Bardhaman	Asur, Baiga, Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Murshidabad	Baiga, Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Kisan, Kora, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Oraon, Parhaiya, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Sa Generic Tribes etc.
Uttar Dinajpur	Asur, Baiga, Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Birjia, Chakma, Chero, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, Gorait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Khond, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Mru, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, Rabha, Santal, Sauria Paharia, Savar, Generic Tribes etc.
Koch Bihar	Asur, Bedia etc., Bhumij, Bhutia etc., <b>Birhor</b> , Chakma, Chik Baraik, Garo, Gond, orait, Hajang, Ho, Karmali, Kharwar, Kisan, Kora, Korwa, Lepcha, <b>Lodha</b> etc., Lohara etc., Magh, Mahali, Mahli, Mal Pahariya, Mech, Munda, Nagesia, Oraon, Parhaiya, abha, Santal, Generic Tribes etc.

## Problems of Indian Tribes:

After independence, tribal problems and tribal unrest have become politicized. Articulate and effective political elite have emerged in several tribal areas. These elite are conscious of tribal rights and are capable of making calculated moves to gain their acceptance. In general, the main problems of the tribals are poverty, indebtedness, illiteracy, bondage, exploitation, disease and unemployment, displacement and land alienation etc. Many of these problems are arised out of the following reasons:

- Exploitation by outsiders
- Contact and influence with outsiders
- British and Indian policies of administration
- Missionary interventions
- Due to the unscientific programmes implemented

However, the major problems faced by the tribal population of India are described one by one in the following paragraphs-

### 1. Loss of Control over Natural Resources:

Before the coming of the British, the tribals enjoyed unhindered rights of ownership and management over natural resources like land, forests, wildlife, water, soil, fish, etc. With the advent of industrialization in India and the discovery of mineral and other resources in tribal inhabited areas, these pockets were thrown open to outsiders and state control replaced tribal control. Thus began the story of unending miseries for the tribals. With the impetus to the development process after independence, pressure on land and forests increased. This resulted in

loss of ownership rights over land, owing to chronic indebtedness, unscrupulous landlords, moneylenders, contractors and officials. With the concepts of protected forests and national forests gaining currency, the tribals felt themselves uprooted from their cultural moorings and with no secure means of livelihood.

The Government started reserving teak, Sal and deodar forests for the manufacture of railway sleepers. Forest land and its resources provide the best means of livelihood for the tribal people and many tribes including the women engage in agriculture, food gathering and hunting they are heavily dependent on the products of the forest. Therefore when outsiders exploit the tribe's land and its resources the natural life cycle of tribal ecology and tribal life is greatly disturbed.

## **2. Geographic Separation:**

Tribes are separated largely from main stream. Some of them are living in the unapproachable physical area such as deep forests, valleys or hills. It is difficult for them to mingle with others. Socially they are away from developed society. Social isolation has caused for social retardation severely. The developmental programmes never touch tribals because of geographical isolation. Tribals need to be protected from the effects of isolation.

## **3. Displacement and Rehabilitation:**

After independence, the focus of the development process was on heavy industries and the core sector. As a result huge steel plants, power projects and large dams came up—most of them in the tribal inhabited areas. The mining activities were also accelerated in these areas. Acquisition of tribal land by the government for these projects led to large scale displacement of the tribal population. The tribal pockets of Chhotanagpur region, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh suffered the most. The cash compensation provided by the government was frittered away on wasteful expenditure. No settlements were provided for the displaced tribals within the industrial areas, who were forced to live in peripheries in slums or to migrate to adjoining states to work as unskilled workers in conditions of poverty. The migration of these tribals to the urban areas causes psychological problems for them as they are not able to adjust well to the urban lifestyle and values.

## **4. Land Alienation:**

The history of land alienation among the tribes began during British colonialism in India when the British interfered in the tribal region for the purpose of exploiting the tribal natural resources. Coupled with this tribal lands were occupied by moneylenders, zamindars and traders by advancing them loans etc. Opening of mines in the heart of tribal habitat and even a few

factories provided wage labor as well as opportunities for factory employment. But this brought increasing destitution and displacement. After the British came to power, the Forest policy of the British Government was more inclined towards commercial considerations rather than human. Some forests were declared as reserved ones where only authorized contractors were allowed to cut the timber and the forest -dwellers were kept isolated deliberately within their habitat without any effort to ameliorate their economic and educational standards. The expansion of railway in India heavily devastated the forest resources in India.

### **5. Gender Issues:**

The degradation of the natural environment, particularly through the destruction of forests and a rapidly shrinking resource base, has had its impact on the status of women. The opening of the tribal belts to mining, industries and commercialization has exposed tribal men and women to the ruthless operations of the market economy, giving rise to consumerism and to commoditization of women.

### **6. Poverty and Indebtedness:**

Majority tribes live under poverty line. The tribes follow many simple occupations based on simple technology. Most of the occupation falls into the primary occupations such as hunting, gathering, and agriculture. The technology they use for these purposes belong to the most primitive kind. There is no profit and surplus making in such economy. Hence there per capita income is very meager much lesser than the Indian average. Most of them live under abject poverty and are in debt in the hands of local moneylenders and Zamindars. In order to repay the debt they often mortgage or sell their land to the moneylenders. Indebtedness is almost inevitable since heavy interest is to be paid to these moneylenders.

On the other hand, banking facilities in the tribal areas are so inadequate that the tribals have to depend mainly on moneylenders. Being miserably bogged down in indebtedness, tribals demand that Agricultural Indebtedness Relief Acts should be enacted so that they may get back their mortgaged land. The British policy had led to ruthless exploitation of the tribals in various ways as it favoured the zamindars, landlords, moneylenders, forest contractors, and excise, revenue and police officials.

### **7. Health and Nutrition:**

In all parts of India, tribal population suffers from chronic infections and diseases out of which water borne diseases are lives threatening. They also suffer from deficiency diseases. The Himalayan tribes suffer from goiter due to lack of iodine. Leprosy and tuberculosis are also common among them. Infant mortality was found to be very high among some of the tribes.

Malnutrition is common and has affected the general health of the tribal children as it lowers the ability to resist infection, leads to chronic illness and sometimes leads to brain impairment. The ecological imbalance like cutting of trees have increased the distances between villages and the forest areas thus forcing tribal women to walk longer distances in search of forest produce and firewood.

In brief, because of economic backwardness and insecure livelihood, the tribals face health problems, such as prevalence of disease, like malaria, cholera, tuberculosis, diarrhea and jaundice, problems associated with malnutrition like iron deficiency and anemia, high infant mortality rates, low levels of life expectancy, etc. Alcoholism is a common problem seen among many tribes. The low self esteem, exploitation of outsiders through making available the illicit liquors and social environment cause for more alcoholics and as a disease alcoholism is wide spread among most of the tribes.

### **8. Illiteracy:**

Educationally the tribal population is at different levels of development but overall the formal education has made very little impact on tribal groups. Earlier Government had no direct programme for their education. But in the subsequent years the reservation policy has made some changes. There are many reasons for low level of education among the tribal people: Formal education is not considered necessary to discharge their social obligations. Superstitions and myths play an important role in rejecting education. Most tribes live in abject poverty. It is not easy for them to send their children to schools, as they are considered extra helping hands. The formal schools do not hold any special interest for the children. Most of the tribes are located in interior and remote areas where teachers would not like to go from outside.

### **9. Cultural Problems:**

Due to contact with other cultures, the tribal culture is undergoing a revolutionary change. Due to influence of Christian missionaries the problem of bilingualism has developed which led to indifference towards tribal language. The tribal people are imitating western culture in different aspects of their social life and leaving their own culture. It has led to degeneration of tribal life and tribal arts such as dance, music and different types of craft.

The tribals are exploited by Christian missionaries. In several tribal areas, mass conversion to Christianity had taken place during the British period. While the missionaries have been pioneers in education and opened hospitals in tribal areas, they have also been responsible for alienating the tribals from their culture. Tribal religion makes them believe that many of their spirits live in trees and forests. Their folk-tales often speak of the relations of human beings and

the spirits. Because of such physical and emotional attachment to forests, tribals have reacted sharply to restrictions imposed by the government on their traditional forest rights.

### **10.Erosion of Identity:**

Increasingly, the traditional institutions and laws of tribals are coming into conflict with modern institutions which create apprehensions among the tribals about preserving their identity. Extinction of tribal dialects and languages is another cause of concern as it indicates an erosion of tribal identity in certain areas.

\*\*\*\*\*

M. C. DOLAN