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The Challenges of Tribal Development

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Abstract

Today on the eve of 21st Century while we are demanding ourselves as the most growing fastest economic country and undoubtedly we are proud of that, but real scenario speaks something different while a major part (almost 8.6 percent) of our tribal population is leading their lives with grave misery and impoverishment. We, the civilized people do not have any time to think over their issues. But they are the human being like you and me. They are facing the problems in terms of poverty, unemployment, malnutrition illiteracy etc. But somehow the mainstream Medias have overlooked their issues. Their basic problems are not addressed till the day. Through this article an in-depth analysis has been made with the help of statistical data and the challenges addressed by the economist like Amartya Sen.

Keywords: Autochthones, capability deprivation, exclusion, *Panchsheel*, crossroad connection

Introduction

The tribals are called aboriginal or Autochthones. There is no consensus regarding the definition of tribal. But the scholars have developed an operational understanding to define tribal. Sometimes they are called indigenous (*Adibasi, Banabasi, Mulbasi* etc.) It is said that the tribals are the original inhabitants of our Country. The major tribal groups in India are Santal, Munda, Oraon, Kharia, Ho, Gond, Bhil, Meena and Lodha.

Generally they live in remote villages and they depend on the primitive occupation. They have their own culture and life style. They are no more Hindus or Muslims. They bear a distinct religions pattern which is different from the dominant religious domain. In most of cases they are marginal in terms of economy, culture, life style etc.

Due to the geographical marginality and multifaceted deprivation the tribal community becomes more vulnerable where their existence is a great threat. Sometimes to get recognition from the neighboring people and to shed off their old age stigma local people try to imitate the dominant cultural traits. So a cultural fusion is noticed among the tribals. And the tribal culture becomes vulnerable. On the other hand some numerically dominant tribal groups like Santals try to maintain their autonomy and culture. They never compromise with their culture and if it is necessary they resist in their own way.

The tribals are facing different types of problems which vary from community to community and region to region.

To express the indigenusness of the tribal community Virginious Xaxa (1999) opined that the notion of indigenusness is a political construction.

In the same line Kujur (2010) ^[2] observed: "The Adivasis' consciousness has come about to promote their rights and privileges because their very survival is at stake. They are the victims of exploitation and alienation at all levels. Hence in the absence of a mechanism or power to safeguard their interest, a new form of identity or indignity is crystallizing among the tribes across India. The people use the notion of indigenusness to identify and define themselves in differentiation from the non tribal population."

The nature of tribal development varies from community to community depending upon its location, population, education ratio etc. While we talk about tribal development we should make it clear the real meaning of development. Development, not necessarily means the infrastructural development, rather it has a wider connotation which deals with the various aspects. Development can be defined from the conceptual perspective - as an all-round development of a community which nurtures their socio cultural and religious aspiration.

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As tribal people lead a distinct socio cultural life so for the survival of their distinctiveness we have to take special care of that.

According to the Census of 2011 the total number of tribal

population in India, is 10, 42, 81, 034, which is about 8.6 percent of total population. The demographic profile till the last census has been shown in the following table (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1: Demographic Profile of Tribal Population from 1951 to 2011

Year	Tribal Population	Percentage to Total Population	Decadal Growth Rate
1951	19111498	5.29	41.19
1961	30130148	6.86	33.84
1971	38015162	6.94	24.80
1981	51628638	7.83	24.69
1991	67658638	8.08	23.79
2001	84326240	8.20	22.70
2011	104281034	8.61	23.70

Source: www.tribal.nic.in

Due to the establishment of mega development projects some tribals have been evicted from their home land without proper rehabilitation programmes. They have lost their homes, occupation and livelihoods. One of the major cases in this regard—*Sardar Sarovar* Project can be cited.

Various strategies have been taken for the tribal development but it needs a planned strategy which should be made considering the ground reality of that particular tribe. No over emphasis intervention will be required nor should they be completely segregated. In regard to this, former Prime Minister Jawharlal Nehru prescribes some principles which are known as '*Panchsheel*'. Manna and Patra (2017) ^[1] mentioned this principle.

1. Nothing should be imposed on the tribal people;
2. Traditional rights of the tribals on land and forest should be respected;
3. Attempt should be made to train and form a group of their own people to develop them on the lines of the own genius;
4. Caution should be taken against the over administration of tribal areas; and
5. Results should be judged not by statistics but by the actual improvement of the quality of life.

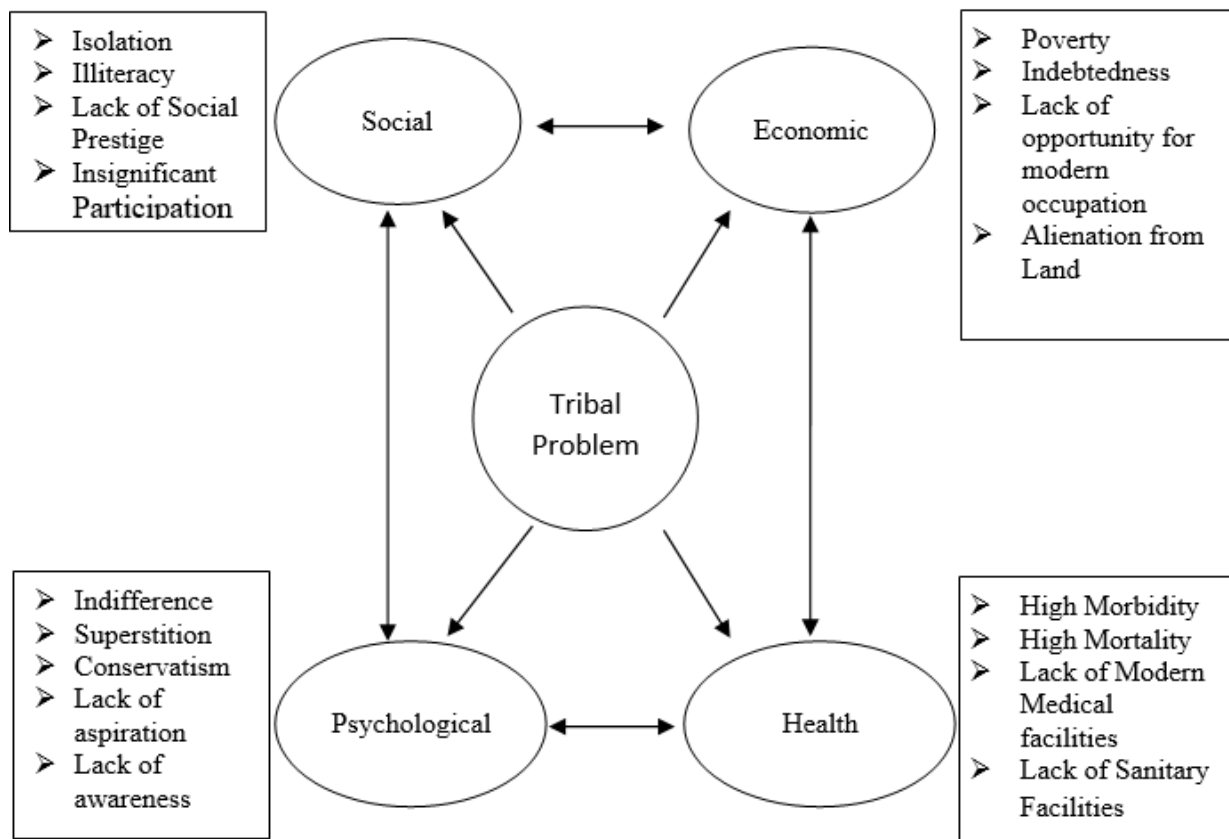
As the tribal economy mainly depends on the traditional form of occupation like cultivation, collecting forest produces and other forms of primitive occupation like rope making, hunting etc, so a special drive should be taken in order to maintain their traditional way of livelihood as well as a balance between the modern needs of market economy. The tribals are facing a multifaceted problems-- social, economic, psychological and health related issues. So, a holistic approach is necessary to deal with this multi dimensional issues. Only through the structural development these issues cannot be addressed. A forceful inclusion

cannot be a way of tribal development rather they should be given an autonomous space where they can flourish themselves in their own way. In this regard, Amartya Sen (2004) ^[5] observed that sometimes 'unfavourable' inclusion creates a lot of problems which ultimately creates an unhealthy situation for the people those who have been forcefully included. Simultaneously unfavorable exclusion also creates same problem. So a balancing attitude is required to deal with the deprived section. In his classic approach 'Capability Approach' he wanted to say that the scarcity of resources is not only the cause of poverty, rather lack of capability i.e. the inability to transform the resources into wealth, so a special care should be taken for the person who deserve special assistances. In case of tribal development also mere assistance cannot be a solution of their problem rather they should be provided technical assistance, training which are commensurate with their situation. In order to understand their real problem we have to realize their basic problem, the root of their underdevelopment. Through the "Top down" approach this issues cannot be redressed. We have to consider that they are people like you and me.

As we mentioned the problems of tribals communities vary from community to community and on the basis of their geographical location in which region they belong to. But in general some common problems are there which are found irrespective of communities and their geographical locations. Generally their problems are not addressed. Even while they are victimized and exploited by their fellow neighbor they do not get justice. They are treated unclean and stigmatized. Sometimes their complains are not lodged as FIR, rather a simple GD is enlisted while they approach before the Police Station.

The nature of tribals' problem can be understood from the following diagram.

Tribal Problems: Some General Features



Source: Manna & Patra (2017) ^[1]

For the down trodden and marginalized tribal community so many development programmes have been initiated, but the fruits of development are not reached to them. Manna (2000) ^[3] is in the opinion: But it has been found that the amount of real changes in the life styles of the tribal people has been very insignificant. Till now they are the most under privileged section of the society and have been suffering illiteracy, poverty, health problems, housing problem and a number of allied problems at every moment of life. Tribals are exploited and deprived since the British Colonial rule. Owing to the differentiate principles adopted by the colonial government the tribals were isolated from the mainstream of civilization. In this regard Patra (1998) ^[7] observed that due

to the absence of administration tribals were separated from the mainstream population thus they became isolated and as a consequence they were debarred from enjoying the fruits of modernization which forced them to lead a segregated life.

In comparison with other people of the society the tribals have the low literacy rate. Though there are various reasons behind this low literacy. In some cases social taboo plays a role also where the girl’s children of their community are not permitted to attend the school. But most of cases they could send their children due to the extreme financial crunch while spending for education purpose is luxury to them.

Table 1.2: Comparative Literacy Rates of STs and Total Population (in per cent)

Category/Census Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Total Population	28.30	34.45	43.57	52.21	64.84	72.99
Scheduled Tribes	8.53	11.30	16.35	29.60	47.10	58.96
Gap	19.77	23.15	27.22	22.61	17.74	14.03

Source: www.tribal.nic.in

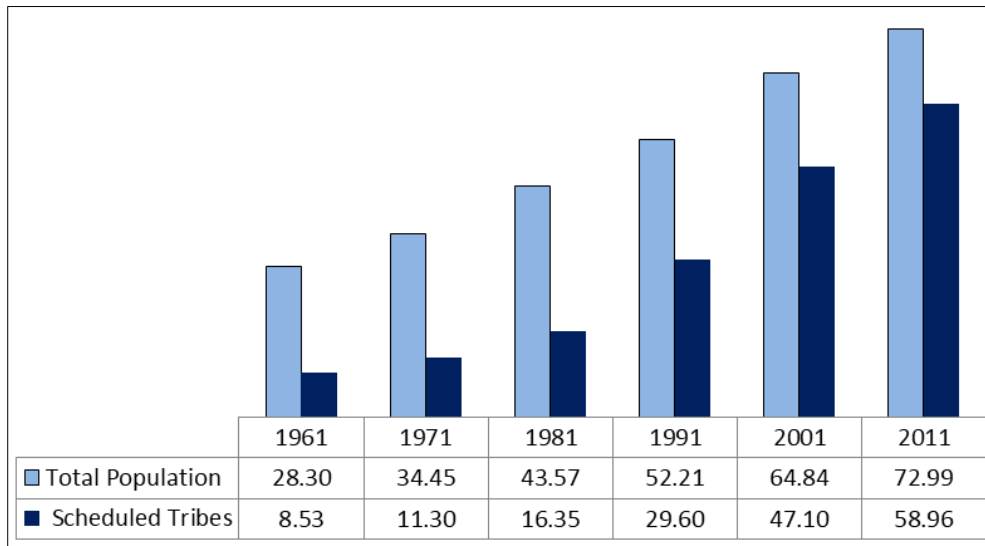


Fig 1.1: Total population' literacy and STs' literacy (in per cent)

It is noticed in various reports that a major part of tribal population belongs to the below poverty line. Most of them depend on the primitive occupations. The tribals who live in the urban areas are comparatively affluent. As in the rural

areas no other occupational alternative is there the tribal people living on those areas are economically very backward. A comparative picture of their poverty has been depicted in the following table (Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Poverty among the Total Population and STs – Rural & Urban India (1983-84, 1993-94, 1999-2000, 2004-05 & 2009-10) (in per cent)

Year	Total		ST	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
1983-84	45.60	42.20	63.80	54.20
1993-94	37.10	33.70	52.20	42.40
1999-2000	27.10	23.70	45.90	34.80
2004-2005	41.80	25.70	61.90	35.00
2009-2010	33.80	20.90	47.10	28.80

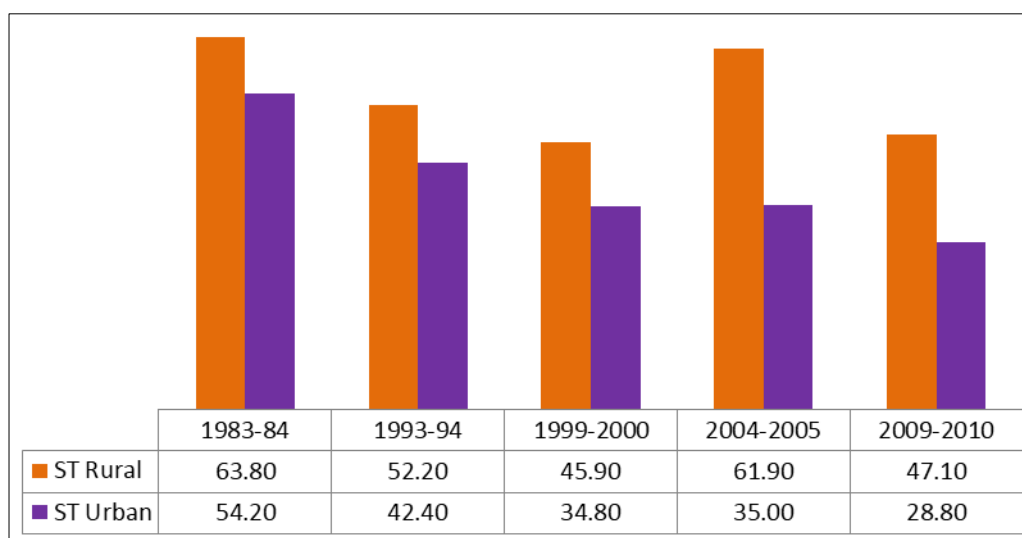


Fig 1.2: Poverty among the Total Population and STs - Rural & Urban India (in per cent)

The vulnerability of tribals motivated them to think a stereotype image about the present state and society. A false consciousness has been developed among the marginalized tribals who think that the state machinery is responsible for their impoverishment. They are convinced that the elites, politicians and bureaucrats are doing nothing for them. A sense of political apathy is developed among them. Some sections of these communities joined with the cross road connectivity. The extremist movements in our Country are

the spontaneous outburst of these helpless, victimized people. Their fight for 'Jal-Jamin-Jungle' has added a new dimension to the extremist politics in our Country. Their relentless condition again reminds us what type of development has been done for this helpless people. So today time has come to re-think their issues not only for the betterment of these exploited people rather for the greatest interest of the society and the country we have to consider their issue.

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