Chapter 9
Adivasi and Nomadic and De-Notified Tribes

9.1 Introduction

This chapter focused the writings of Thorat on the issue of Adivasi and Nomadic and de-Notified Tribes. In this chapter we have include the points, Tribals access to capital assets, their status of employment, and education and also explain poverty among them. The Scheduled Tribes (STs) constitute the second largest social group, accounting for about 8 per cent of India’s population and are closer to the SCs in term of exclusion and deprivation. Historically, ethnicity of tribal is different from the mainstream Indian society with a distinct culture, language, social organization, and economy- practicing hunting, food gathering, and shifting cultivation, and also habitat of their own in the river valleys and forest region. They suffer from isolation, neglect, and exclusion, which cause considerable deprivation and poverty among them.

The problems of ST in India are the manifestation of their relatively weak position vis-à-vis the rest of the population for historical reasons. The magnitude and intensity of social and economic deprivation measured by any indicator of human development insofar more intense in the case of ST, more than 90 per cent of the ST live in geographically negative rural areas which itself implies a lot of deprivation, with respect to the access to capital assets, level of technology adopted and the level of development of human resources capabilities, they are far behind the other section of Indian population. Land and forest are the two major productive assets that STs possess. Since most of the areas are hilly and undulating, the size of land holding are small which are suited neither for extensive nor for intensive cultivation. The occupational patterns of STs is still traditional and lacks in diversification. A large proportion of workers fall under the category of marginal workers. All these factors result in low income and high poverty among STs. Besides, the ST also faces the problems of relative isolation and exploitation by outsiders. They have been displaced by the mega development projects. Moreover, the STs are also subjected to crimes atrocities of various degrees. All these factors are lead to extremism and unrest among the STs, which could be seen in the form of growing Naxalite activities.

9.2 Distribution of Tribals in India

According to the 2001 population census, the numerical strength of STs was 85 million, which accounted for 8.20 per cent of total population of the country. The important areas of Tribal
concentration are the central India and the north-eastern states. In the central India, the Tribal belt extends in a straiten from Gujarat and Rajasthan in the west to Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh in the middle to Jhakhand, Orissa and West Bengal in the East. The belt accounts for about 86 per cent of the total ST population of the country. Another area of tribal concentration is the north-eastern states including Sikkim comprising of 9 percent of the ST population. In the rest of India, the STs account for a little less than five per cent of the total ST population. It is important to note that in all the states of the central tribal belt the proportion of ST population is less than 32 per cent (Chhattisgarh) but more than 5 per cent of the total population of the respective states. On the other hand except Assam (12.4 per cent), the proportion of ST population is more than 20 per cent in all the north-eastern states. The STs account for more than 85 per cent of total population in Mizoram (94.5 per cent), Nagaland (89.2 per cent) and Meghalaya (85.9 per cent) (Thorat 2008).

9.3 Economic Capability of Tribals in India

In this section, we examine the economic capability of tribal communities in India in terms of access to capital assets to tribal communities. In this respect, we examine the issues discussed by Thorat in his research on tribal, nomadic and de-notified communities.

9.3.1 Land Assets: Landownership Status

We begin with understanding the share of ST households having operational land holding, land owned by ST households and disparities existing between different social groups. We find that, a sufficiently high proportion (about 93) of ST household in 1999-00 were having access to operational holding in India. Thorat finds that, the proportion of land owning households in the central tribal belt varies from state to state with 78 in Maharashtra to 100 in Orissa. Rajasthan, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh are the state where the proportion is more than 95. The proportion of landowning households is relatively more in the north-eastern states. In six out of the eight states, more than 98 per cent of households have access to agricultural land. Sikkim is the only state, where the proportion is very low accounting 69 per cent (Thorat-2009). On the whole, despite being high proportion of Tribal population and economically developed state in the country, substantially lower proportion of tribal households possess agricultural land indicating more vulnerability to access livelihood.
While comparing landownership pattern between the ST and the non-SC/ST, Thorat finds no difference at all India and State level. Though the proportion of landholding households is more than 90 per cent, the proportion of households operating more than one hectare of land is only 29 in India. In the central tribal belt, the proportion varied from 12 in West Bengal to 39 in Madhya Pradesh. In rest of the states the proportion lies between 20 and 30. In the north-eastern states, the proportion of households operating more than one hectare is relatively high. The proportion is very high in Nagaland (76) and Arunachal Pradesh (56). It is more than 40 per cent in Assam and Meghalaya. Tripura is an exception in this respect where the proportion is only 9.

Like ST, the proportion of non-SC/ST household having more than one hectare is also low (29) at all India level. The non-SC/STs of the Central belt are in a better position in this respect. In Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh the proportion is as high as 62 and 55 respectively. The proportion is however very low in West Bengal (9) and Orissa (17). In the north-eastern region, Mizoram (43) and Meghalaya (33) have relatively highly proportion. In rest of the states, the proportion is less than 21 per cent. It is as low as 6 per cent in Tripura.

On the whole, there is hardly any difference between these two groups in this respect at all India level. But in the states of Central belt, the access of land is more to the non-SC/ST and in the north-eastern states, the access of land to ST is more.

### 9.3.2 Land Assets: Self-Employed in Agriculture

Land is an important income earning assets owned by rural people. The status of self-employed in agriculture clarifies two things, viz., people have access to a significant size of land and the productivity is sufficient size of land and the productivity is sufficient enough to provide them the status of self-employed. Thorat provides a clear picture on this issue (Thorat-2009).

At all India level, about 36 per cent of ST households were self-employed in agriculture in 1999-00. In the central tribal belt, the proportion of self-employed in agriculture is relatively high in Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. On the other hand, in Maharashtra, Orissa and West Bengal, the proportion is low. The STs of the north-eastern states are better off than those of the STs in central belt, in terms of the access to land assets. The proportion of self-employed in agriculture is as high as 78 in Manipur and 69 in Meghalaya. In all the states, except Tripura and
Sikkim, the proportion is more than 50 per cent. Thus, it can be said that the north-eastern states are better placed in terms of their status as self-employed in agriculture.

About 41 per cent of non-SC/ST household were self-employed in agriculture at all India level. In the central belt, the proportion varied from 23 in West Bengal to 57 in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. West Bengal, Bihar and Gujarat are the other states with relatively high proportion of self-employed in agriculture. In the north-eastern states, the proportion is as high as 85 per cent in Mizoram. Manipur and Meghalaya are the other states with a relatively high proportion of self-employed in agriculture.

The comparison of STs and non-SC/ST shows that the incidence of self-employment in agriculture is slightly more among the non-SC/ST, at all India level. The same pattern is visible in most states of the central tribal belt. The disparity ratio is less than 0.7 in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. But in the north-eastern states, the STs are better placed viz-a-viz the non-SC/ST. Except in Mizoram and Tripura in all the states the self-employed in agriculture is more among the ST. In states like Assam, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim the STs in the self-employed in agriculture category is about one and half times more.

A little more than half of the ST workers were recorded as cultivators in India in 2001. In the central tribal belt, the proportion of cultivators is high in Rajasthan (75), Madhya Pradesh (59) and Bihar (58). On the other hand, the proportion of cultivators is low in West Bengal (24) and Maharashtra (34). The proportion of cultivators is even higher in the north-eastern states. It is more than 70 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Assam and Manipur. Except Tripura (46 per cent) in all the other states, cultivators constitute more than 50 per cent of the workers.

About one third of the non-SC/ST workers were engaged as cultivators in 2001 at all India level. In the central tribal belt, the proportion of cultivators varied from 19 per cent in West Bengal to 53 per cent in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa are the other states where the proportion of cultivator is more than the national average. In the north-eastern region, Sikkim had maximum proportion of cultivators is very low.

The proportion of cultivators is about one and half times more among the ST at all India level. The Workers engaged as cultivators is more among the ST in all the states. The difference between the two social groups is high in the central tribal belt and very high in the north-eastern...
states. In Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya the share of cultivators is about four to seven times high among the ST.

9.3.3 Non Land Assets: Self employed in non-Agriculture

At all India level, only about 5 per cent ST households were recorded as self-employed in non-agriculture in 1999-00. the proportion pies between 3 and 6 in majority of the states and it does not exceed 9 per cent in any states. in the central tribal belt the proportion is minimum in Gujarat (3.2) and Maximum in Andhra Pradesh (7.4). Similarly in the north east in varies from 1.9 per cent in Sikkim to (8.6) per cent in Arunachal Pradesh. Therefore, we can be said that a very low proportion of households fell in the category of self-employed in non-agriculture and there is hardly any regional or interstate variation in this respect.

About 15 per cent of households were self-employed in non-agricultural among the non-SC/ST, at all India level. In the central tribal belt, the proportion varies from 11 to 16 in all the states except West Bengal where it is high as 24. The inter-state variation is relatively more in the north-eastern states. The proportion is exceptionally high in Nagaland (38) but low in Meghalaya (5) and Arunachal Pradesh (9). In rest of the states, the proportion varies between 11 and 18.

There exists a large inter group disparity with respect to the access of non-land assets. At all India level, the access to non-SC/ST to this asset is about three times more. In the central belt, the disparity is about 5 times in West Bengal and more than 3 times in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Bihar and Rajasthan. In rest of the states it is between 2 and 3 times. In the north-eastern region, Arunachal Pradesh and Meghalaya have insignificant inter-group disparity, on the other hand in Nagaland, Sikkim, the access to non-land assets is about ten times more among the non-SC/ST.

The proportion of workers in non-agriculture sector (i.e. household industry and others) they have been taken to look into the level of employment diversification away from the traditional sector. At all India level, only about 21 per cent of workers were engaged in non agriculture sector in 2001. In the central tribal belt the proportion varied from 12 in Madhya Pradesh to 31 in West Bengal. In rest of the states, the non-farm employment is in the vicinity of all India average. In the north –western states, the share of non-farm employment is relatively high. It is more than one fourth in five out of the eight states and as high as 42 and 37 per cent Sikkim and Mizoram respectively.
About 51 per cent of non-SC/ST workers were working in non-farm sector in India. In the central tribal belt, the share of non-farm sector is maximum in West Bengal (67) and maximum in Bihar (32). Gujarat, Maharashtra and Orissa are the other states with a relatively high share of non-farm sector it is high in all the north-Western states and very high in Mizoram (87), Nagaland (86) and Meghalaya (78).

There is a great inter-group disparity between ST and the non-SC/ST in terms of employment diversification. At all India level the non-farm employment among ST is less than half of the non-SC/ST. The disparity is found equally in both the region and in all the states. The extent of job diversification among the ST is less than half of the non-SC/ST in all the state except Sikkim and Bihar where the value of disparity ratio is 0.8 and 0.6 respectively.

9.4 Status of Employment, Rural labour, and Education

In this, we shall try to examine the writings of Thorat related to quality of employment of STs, Rural labour, their employment situation, and their literacy rate.

9.4.1 Quality of Employment

Here Thorat writes about main and marginal workers of STs and their disparity ratio. And also writes about rural labour households of STs (Thorat-2009).

At all India level, the proportion of main and marginal workers among ST were 68 and 32 per cent respectively in 2001. In the Central tribal belt, Orissa and Bihar are the states with a high proportion of marginal workers (>40 per cent). In Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra the share of marginal workers is comparatively low (<25 per cent). In rest of the states, the ratio of marginal worker is close to the national average. In the north-eastern states, the extent of marginalization is relatively low. In Arunachal Pradesh marginal workers constitute only 16 per cent of total workers. Nagaland and Mizoram also have low proportion of marginal workers. Assam with 36 per cent is the only state where the proportion of marginal workers is more than the all India average.

Among the non-SC/ST the share of main and marginal workers was 74 and 26 per cent respectively at all India level. In the central belt the proportion of marginal workers was maximum in Bihar (40) and followed by Orissa (36). Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have low proportion
of marginal workers. In all the north-eastern states, except Manipur and Assam the ratio of marginal workers is less than the all India average.

The comparatively we shows that, the extent of marginalization is more among the STs. The disparity ratio is adverse to ST at all India level and in all the states of both the regions except only Manipur. In the central belt, the disparity is maximum in West Bengal and minimum in Bihar. Except Tripura and Assam, in all the north-eastern states the disparity level is low.

The analysis of main and marginal workers bring out that the high poverty states (Orissa and Bihar) are associated with low proportion of main workers and greater degree of marginalization.

9.4.2 Rural Labour Household and Rural Labour Household with Land

In 1999-00, at all India level, about half of the rural households are recorded as rural labour that varies from a maximum of 63 per cent in West Bengal to 3 per cent in Nagaland. The proportion of rural labour household is very high in the central tribal belt. West Bengal, Orissa, and Maharashtra are the states where the proportion of rural labour is more than 60 per cent. On the other hand, Bihar, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh have relatively low proportion of rural labour. In all the north-eastern states the proportion of rural level households is less than the all India level. In Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram the proportion is less than 10 and in another three states it is between 10 and 20. In Tripura, the proportion is relatively high (43).

At all India level, the proportion of rural labour household is 32 per cent. In the central tribal belt, the proportion of rural labour is more than 40 in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. But it is only 13 per cent in Rajasthan. In rest of the states it varies between 30 and 40 per cent. In the north-eastern states the incidence of rural is relatively low. However, in Mizoram and Nagaland there is no rural labour. Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh are the other states with relatively low proportion of rural labour. However, Tripura has maximum proportion (37) followed by Meghalaya and Assam.

At all India level the incidence of rural labour household is 1.5 times more among the STs. In all the states of central belt, the incidence of rural labour is high among the ST. in Rajasthan the proportion of ST rural labour is about three times the non-SC/ST level. The disparity is higher than
the all India level in West Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh. The pattern shows an opposite picture for the north-eastern states. In all the states, except Tripura, the disparity ratio is less than one which means a higher incidence of rural labour among the non-SC/STs. In five out of the eight states, the proportion of ST rural labour is less than half of the non-SC/ST rural labour.

The proportion of rural labour household is significantly high among the ST at all India level and the pattern is also true for the all the central Indian states. But, the situation is opposite in case of the north-eastern states. The rural labour households with land are those rural households who possess land but there status is that of a wage labour.

In 1999-00, at all India level about 53 per cent of the rural households possessed land. The proportion of households with land was maximum in Rajasthan (84) and minimum in Tripura (15). In the central belt Rajasthan, Bihar and Orissa have more than 60 per cent of rural households with land is less than 40. In the north-east, in five out of eight states the proportion of households with land is more than 60 and it is maximum in Arunachal Pradesh (73 per cent). In Tripura, Sikkim and Manipur the land possessing households is less than 40 per cent.

A significant proportion of ST rural labour household possess land but there status is that of wage labour and not of self-employment in agriculture. It may be because of two factors i.e. either the size of land possessed is small/marginal or the level of farm productivity is low.

Among the non-SC/ST, the proportion of rural labour household with land was 42 at all India level. In the central belt Madhya Pradesh (58), Orissa (54) and Rajasthan (32) have higher proportion of rural households with land. West Bengal however, has only 34 per cent of rural household with land. In three out of five north-eastern states the proportion of rural labour households is more than 50. It is only 30 per cent in Tripura.

At all India level, more of the ST rural labour households are possessing land. The pattern is true in all the states of the central tribal belt except Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. The ST labour households of Bihar and Rajasthan are having more than 1.5 times land than their counterparts. In the north-eastern states, the situation is favourable to the ST rural labour only in Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.
9.4.3 Employment Situation of Tribals

Thorat also writes about the employment situation of tribals. In their analysis they adopted the current weekly status (CWS) concept to measure the extent of employment among the ST and the non-SC/ST.

The level of employment among the ST male is about 54 per cent in 1999-00 as a whole in India. In the central tribal belt, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat have relatively high employment rate. In rest of the states the rate varies from 49 per cent in West Bengal to 55 in Bihar. On an average, the employment rate is relatively low in the north-eastern states. the rate is only 35 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh and less than in Tripura, Sikkim and Manipur. Meghalaya and Mizoram are the only states where the employment rate is a little more than the all India level (Thorat, 2008).

The employment rate is about 50 per cent among the non-SC/ST at all India level. In the central tribal belt the rate is more in Andhra Pradesh (59), Gujarat (56) and Maharashtra (53). Bihar with 45 per cent, has the least employment rate. In the north-eastern region the rate of employment is exceptionally high in Nagaland (72) per cent and exceptionally low in Mizoram 36 per cent. In rest of the states it is in the vicinity of all India figure.

The rate of employment is slightly higher among the STs, at all India level. It is also true for the central tribal belt with the only exception of Maharashtra. In the north-eastern region, the employment rate is more among the STs only in half of the states. At all India level, the employment rate among the female was 38 per cent in 1999-00. In the central tribal belt, Andhra Pradesh (51) has maximum female employment rate, followed by Rajasthan and Maharashtra. The employment rate is very low in Bihar (27) and West Bengal (29). As compared to central belt, the level of female employment is slightly low in the north-eastern states. It is less than 20 per cent in Tripura, Assam and Sikkim. However, in Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya the rate of employment varies between 40 and 45.

Only about 19 per cent of non-SC/ST females are employed at all India level. The phenomenon of low female employment is valid for both the regions. In the central belt, the employment rate is about 33 per cent in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. On the other hand, the employment rate is less than ten per cent in Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar. In the north-eastern states the employment rate is very low in Tripura (6), Assam (11) and Manipur (17). In Mizoram and Meghalaya the rate is about 32 per cent.
There is large inter-group disparity in terms of female employment. At all India level, the employment rate is about twice among the STs. In Orissa, West Bengal and Bihar, the employment rate among the ST female is three to four times more than the non-SC/ST female. Gujarat and Maharashtra are the states with relatively low inter-group disparity in female employment. In the north-eastern states, Nagaland had maximum inter-group disparity. Sikkim is the only state in both the regions where the employment rate is slightly low among the ST females. On the whole, it is important that the inter-group disparity is more than in the states where the overall employment rate is low and it is less in the states with relatively high employment rate.

The unemployment rate of STs by current weekly status and disparity ratio in 1999-00 indicates that about 1.5 per cent of ST males were unemployed by current weekly status in India. The rate of unemployment is marginally high in the central tribal belt where it varied from 0.9 in Rajasthan to 3.1 in West Bengal and 3.4 in Bihar. In rest of the states of the central belt it is about one per cent. In the north-eastern region, Tripura, Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh have unemployment rate less than 0.5 per cent. Sikkim is the only state in the region with more than 2 per cent unemployment rate.

At all India level, 2.5 per cent of non-SC/ST male were unemployed by current weekly status. The rate of unemployment is particularly high in the central tribal belt. In West Bengal about 6 per cent of non-SC/ST male are unemployed. Orissa, Bihar, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh also have high unemployment rates. In the north-eastern region zero or nearly zero unemployment has been recorded in four out of eight states. It is less than 0.5 in other two states. However, in Assam the rate is as high as 2.7 per cent.

The rate of unemployment is more among the non-SC/ST. The value of the inter-group disparity ratio is 0.6 at all India level. In the central tribal belt, Bihar is the only states where the unemployment among the ST is more. In most of the north-eastern states the rate of unemployment is more among the STs though the overall unemployment is low for both the groups.

Thus, in the central tribal belt, the overall unemployment rate is high and it is higher among the non-SC/ST. In the north-eastern states the overall unemployment is relatively low but it is lower among the ST. In the case of female, less than one per cent of ST female were unemployed by current weekly status at the all India level. The female unemployment rate is insignificant or very low in most of the states in general and the north-eastern states in particular. In the central
tribal belt the rate is less than 0.5 per cent in Rajasthan, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. On the other hand, in Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal the rate is more than 2.0 per cent. The female unemployment rate is either zero or less than 0.5 in most of the north-eastern and it is less than 0.7 in all the states.

Among then non-SC/ST female, 1.2 per cent were unemployed by current weekly status in 1999-00. in the central tribal belt, less than 0.5 per cent females are unemployed in Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. In West Bengal unemployment rate is as high as 3.6. In all the north-eastern states except Nagaland, Sikkim and Assam the level of unemployment is nil. Nagaland has exceptionally high (8.0 per cent) female unemployment rate.

Like males, in female also, the unemployment rate is low among the ST (with the value of disparity ratio of 0.67). Since, the unemployment rates for both the groups is very low, much can not be said about the inter group disparity. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Gujarat are the only states in both the region where the female unemployment rate is high among the STs.

### 9.4.4 Education

At all India level, 59 per cent of ST males are literate. In the central tribal belt, the rate is maximum in Andhra Pradesh (48). Orissa and Bihar are the other states with relatively low literacy rates. Maharashtra (67) has the maximum proportion of literates followed by Rajasthan. In rest of the states, the literacy rate is about 60 per cent (Thorat, 2008).

In the north-eastern states, the male literacy rate varies from 59 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh to 92 per cent in Mizoram. Thus, in all the states it is more than the all India level. Meghalaya (64) and Tripura (68) are the other states where the literacy rate can be termed as low if compared with other north-eastern states. in rest of the states, the literacy rate is varies between 70 and 75 per cent.

The regional pattern of literacy among ST males’ shows that the level is substantially high in most of the north-eastern states, where as it is quite low in most of the states of the central tribal belt.

About 79 per cent of the non-SC/ST males are literate at all India level. In the central tribal belt, Bihar (66) has the maximum literacy followed by Andhra Pradesh (74). In rest of the states,
the literacy rate is more than 80 per cent and it is as high as 88 per cent in Maharashtra. In the north-eastern states, the literacy rate varies from 71 per cent in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh to 88 per cent in Tripura. Manipur (84) and Mizoram (80) are the other states with a relatively high literacy rate. Thus, at the regional level, there is not much difference between the two regions in terms of the non-SC/ST literacy.

The disparity ratio of 0.8 indicates that the all India level, only 8 ST male are literate per 10 non-SC/ST males. The ratio is less than or equal to the all India value in all the states of the central belt. The level of disparity is maximum in Orissa and Andhra Pradesh. The north-eastern states have very low inter-group disparity. The ratio is adverse to the non-SC/ST in Mizoram and in Assam and Sikkim the ratio is equal to 1. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura record a disparity ratio equal to the all India level.

Among the ST females only 35 per cent are literates at the all India level. All the states of the central tribal belt are characterized by very low level of female literacy. The rate is lowest in Orissa (23 per cent) and as low as 26 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan. Maharashtra with 43 per cent, records the maximum female literacy. In the north-eastern states the literacy rate varies from 41 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh to 87 per cent in Mizoram. Except Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura, in all the states, the literacy rate is more than 50 per cent. In Nagaland and Sikkim, the rate is even more than 60 per cent.

The gender gap in literacy is more among the STs of the central tribal belt confront with the twin disadvantages of low literacy and high gender gap.

The literacy rate is 58 per cent among the non-SC/ST females at all India level. In the central tribal belt the female literacy is lowest in Bihar (39 per cent). Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh are the other states where it is less than the all India level. The literacy rate is maximum in Maharashtra (71 per cent) and in Orissa, Gujarat and Karnataka it is more than 60 per cent. In the north-eastern states Mizoram has the maximum female literacy rate (80 per cent) followed by Tripura. Arunachal Pradesh and Assam are the only states with less than the all India literacy rate.

The inter-group disparity in literacy is more among the females as the value of the disparity ratio is 0.6 at the all India level. The extent of group disparity is particularly high in the states of the central tribal belt. The disparity is more than 100 per cent in Orissa and West Bengal and 100
per cent in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. Bihar is the only state where the disparity is less than the all India level. In the north-eastern states, the inter-group is very low Tripura (0.6) records the maximum disparity followed by Arunachal Pradesh (0.8). In Mizoram the ST females are better off than their counterparts. In rest of the states, the disparity is only marginal.

9.4.5 Poverty

In their writings Thorat has been taken head count ratio (HCR) for measure of poverty among Scheduled Tribes (Thorat-Poverty, Atrocities…). In 1999-00, at the all India level, about 46 per cent of STs were identified poor. There is a wide regional variation in the incidence of poverty. The level of poverty is high in the states of the central tribal belt. The proportion of tribal poor is highest in Orissa (74) followed by Bihar (60), Madhya Pradesh (56) and West Bengal (50). The level of poverty is relatively low in Andhra Pradesh (24) and Rajasthan (25). On the other hand, the level of poverty is low in the north-eastern states. The poverty ratio is very low in Nagaland, Mizoram (2) and Meghalaya (6). It is important to note that in all the three least poverty states the proportion of tribal population is more than 85. The proportion of poor is relatively high in Assam (39) and Tripura (34). In both the states the proportion of tribal population is relatively low.

The study of the levels of tribal poverty brings out three points; First, the level of poverty is very high in the states of central tribal belt. Second, the level of tribal poverty is very low in the north-eastern states as in none of the eight states the proportion is higher than the national level. Third, the poverty ratio is insignificant in three north-eastern states with predominantly tribal population.

In case of non-SC/ST the proportion of poor was 22 per cent at the all India level. In the central belt the level of poverty varied from 8 per cent in Andhra Pradesh to 38 per cent in Bihar. Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh are the other state with poverty ratio higher than the national average. The poverty ratio is less than 10 per cent in Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan. In the north-eastern states, the poverty is nil in Mizoram and Nagaland and it is less than 10 per cent in Meghalaya and Manipur. Assam turns out to be the highest poverty state in both the regions. The other states with high poverty are Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

The comparison of poverty ratio of ST and non-SC/ST shows a wide disparity between the two groups. In 1999-00, at all India level, ST poverty was 2.1 times more than the non-SC/ST
poverty. In all the states of central tribal belt the level of tribal poverty is more than the poverty of non-SC/ST. The group disparity ratio is highest in Gujarat (3.5) and varies between 3.0 to 3.5 in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The tribal poverty is more than twice in Maharashtra, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Even in the remaining two states of the central belt the disparity ratio is more than 1.5. In the north-eastern states the comparison of the ST and non-SC/ST poverty shows a different picture. In Nagaland and Mizoram, the level of poverty is nil for both the groups and so there exists no disparity. But in Assam, Meghalaya and Sikkim, the Disparity ratio is less than one which means a low poverty among the STs. Manipur and Tripura are the exceptions in the region where the poverty of the STs is twice as that of the non-SC/ST.

The analysis shows that the level of disparity in poverty between the ST and Non-SC/ST is very high particularly in the central tribal belt. The above pattern of poverty brings out that the tribals of central India suffers from the twin disadvantages of high poverty and high disparity. The situation is just opposite in majority of the north-eastern states.

9.5 Summary

Thorat provides a clear analysis of economic deprivation among tribal communities in terms of lack of productive assets leading to higher level of poverty. The regional distribution of poverty among tribal shows that the STs of the central tribal belt are more poor than the STs of the north-eastern states. Except Assam and Tripura, the poverty ratio is in the north eastern states is very low and in many cases it is lower than the other sections of the society. The tribal poverty is typical of the states of the central and eastern Indian. Within this region, Orissa, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh have Maximum poverty. The Poverty is relatively low in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Karnataka and Gujarat.

The STs have low access to income earning, particularly non-land, assets. The workforce structure shows a high degree of marginalization and engagement in low quality employment. They have a high proportion of rural labour households. Their employment greatly lacks in diversification away from the farm sector. The employment- unemployment situation of the STs, by current weekly status, is also not satisfactory. The STs also suffer from low literacy (both male and female).
Reference
