Chapter I

Introduction
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Indian Tribal Scenario

In the pre-independence era, tribals were differently termed in various censuses conducted at different points of time, such as (a) people having tribal form of religion (1891), (b) Animists (1901), (c) Tribal Animists (1911) and (d) Aboriginals, Adivasis, hill tribes and primitive included under the head of ‘Depressed Classes’ (1919), (e) Primitive tribes (1931), (f) Tribes (1941) and (g) Scheduled tribes (1951, 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1991).1

Various authorities have described them by different names. Herbert Risley, Lacey, Elwin and Thakar called them ‘aboriginals’. Baines included them under the category of ‘hill tribes’. Gringson regarded them as “hill tribes or wilder aboriginals”, while Shoobert called them ‘aboriginals’. They have been regarded as ‘animists’, by Tallents, Sedgwick, Martin while Hutton called them as “primitive tribes”. Baines called them ‘jungle people, forest tribes or folk’. According to Elwin the Baigas were the ‘original owners of the country’.2

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The tribal population in India, according to the 1991 census, was 67.76 million. This was almost equal to the population of the United Kingdom. The tribals constituted 8.08 per cent, of the country's total population. At present, India has the second largest tribal population in the world, next to Africa. The tribes in India are spread over the length and breadth of the country.\(^3\)

Indian tribal life has contributed to the Indian heritage.\(^4\) In India there are 227 ethnic groups comprising more than 550 tribal communities of which only 427 communities are officially recognised. They speak more than 116 different dialects and 227 subsidiary dialects. Each community with a distinct social and cultural identity of its own, has different economic pursuits ranging from hunting to settled agriculture and urban or industrial callings.\(^5\)

A good section of the tribes are food-gatherers, hunters, forest-land cultivators, shifting cultivators and minor forest produce collectors.\(^6\) Minor forest produce includes produce items, which are obtained without the felling of trees. For the scheduled tribes, however, it is the major avenue of employment and income.\(^7\)

According to Nadeem Hasnain, a tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with the specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or

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\(^3\) Ram Ahuja, *Society in India*, Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 1999, p.274.


castes, without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration.

Attributes of a Tribal Social System

The term tribe commonly signifies a group of people speaking a common language, observing uniform rules of social organisation, and working together for common purpose. The other typical characteristics of a tribe include a common name, a continuous territory, a relatively uniform culture or way of life and a tradition of common descent. According to another contention tribe is generally, used to denote group of primitive or barbarous clans under recognised chiefs.

The term 'tribe' for an anthropologist has a variety of meanings. In general, it referred to people who were considered primitive, lived in backward area, and did not know the use of writing. Sometimes, it was considered synonymous with the term 'race', which in scientific use, has an entirely different meaning. In the beginning, nobody bothered to give a precise meaning to the term tribe. This did not create much confusion so long as the groups which were dealt with could be easily located and differentiated from groups of other types. By and large, this was the case in Australia, Malenesia and North America, the regions which were first studied by the anthropologists.

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In India, and also to a certain extent in Africa, the situation is conspicuously different. In this country, groups, which correspond closely to the anthropologist's conception of tribe, have lived in long association with communities of an entirely different type. Except in a few areas, it is very difficult to come across communities, which retain all their primitive tribal characters. In fact, most of the tribal groups show in varying degrees the same elements of community as that of the society at large in India. It becomes necessary, therefore, to have a set of attributes in terms of which the tribal groups can be distinguished from other communities.

Let one first take the definition of tribe on a purely theoretical level. Such a definition should be based on the empirical characteristics of a particular mode of human grouping found in different parts of the world. It should also take into account the fact that such a mode of grouping represents a particular historical stage in social evolution. The concept has to be defined in such manner as to include all human groups of a particular type, irrespective of conditions of time and place.

A tribe is, in an ideal state, a self-contained unit. It constitutes a society in itself. This has to be explained a little further. The anthropologist, Nadel, defines a society in this way, "... Societies are made of people; societies have boundaries, people either belonging to them or not; and people belong to a society in virtue of rules under which they stand, and which impose on them regular determinate ways of acting towards and in regard to one another".
One has to undertake to outline the characteristics of a tribe as a society and then proceed to differentiate between tribes and societies of other types.

In the definition of society given by Nadel, a very important point is that which relates to its boundaries. It should be noted that a society includes within it various sub-systems and is not itself subsumed under any wider category. In other words, a society is a self-contained unit and its boundaries demarcate certain limits of inter-action in legal, political, economic and other spheres. This, of course, does not mean that no interaction takes place across the boundaries of different societies. Each society, however, is of a separate character. The boundaries of the tribe as a society have been defined politically, linguistically and culturally by various authors. To take the first point, it is frequently said that the tribe is a society, the members of which have a common government which sets the frame for legal action within the society and for political action with other societies. The boundary maintaining functions of a government are significant and deserve consideration. In fact, a society might be defined simply in terms of its political boundaries.

Most societies are characterised by the presence of a government whose form and functions may be objectively ascertained. This, however, is not true of all societies, particularly certain tribal societies. Many people conceive of tribal societies as being in a state of total anarchy. In reality, this is far from the truth, and many tribal societies have well established systems of government. On the other hand, there are certain tribal societies which do lack government in the ordinary sense of the term and they exist in a state of anarchy. Such societies which 'lack government' have been studied in detail in
certain parts of Africa. In the language of social anthropology, they are spoken of as having segmentary political systems. Examples of such societies are provided by a few workers. Societies of this type have a fairly wide distribution in the world. Now, the peculiar thing about segmentary systems is that there is neither any centralised authority nor any clearly defined area or group which can be considered as constituting a fixed political unit. The social system is maintained by a balance of powers and by other institutional mechanisms. In such cases, therefore, the political boundary—which is vague and very relative cannot be used as a decisive criterion in delineating a tribal society.

Finally, one can define a tribe as collection of individuals sharing a common culture. This definition has been accepted either explicitly or implicitly, by a wide range of anthropologists. "The conception of a culture and of the tribes as its social correlate, coincides very closely with actual anthropological usage as this has developed through general consensus rather than explicit definition.

Summing up what has been said so far, one can state: the tribe is a society having a clear linguistic boundary and generally a well-defined political boundary. It is within the latter that 'regular determinate ways of acting' are imposed on its members. The tribals also have a cultural boundary, much less well-defined, and this is the general frame for the formal and informal interactions of these members.
However, the purest of the tribal groups which have been resisting acculturation or absorption, possess certain features which can be considered as common features possessed by all the tribal groups. They are as follows:

i. They live away from the civilised world in the most inaccessible part of both forests and hills.

ii. They follow primitive occupations such as gleaming, hunting and gathering of forest produce.

iii. They belong either to one of the three stocks – Negritos, Austroloids or Mongoloids.

iv. They have nomadic habits and a love for drinking and dancing.

v. They speak the same tribal dialect.

vi. They profess a primitive religion known as ‘Animism’ in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element.

vii. They are largely carnivorous or flesh or meat eaters.

viii. They live either naked, semi-naked using tree barks and leaves for clothing.

Further, the Tribal Communities Consultation held at Shillong in 1962 declares, “A tribe is an indigenous, homogeneous unit speaking a common language, claiming a common descent living in a particular geographical area, backward technology, loyally observing social and political customs based on kinship”.
Tribes in India

The Constitution of India has defined "Scheduled Tribes" as such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this Constitution. The 212 tribes declared by the President of India in exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 342 of the Constitution of India in the different States of India, constitute 5.36 per cent of the total population of the country in early fifties.

The tribal habitation in India can be demarcated into three tribal zones: North-eastern, Central and Southern. The north-eastern zone consists of sub-Himalayan region and the mountain ranges of north-eastern India. This zone is inhabited by tribes like the Gurung, Limbu, Lepeha, Garo, Khasi, Naga and others. The central zone consists of the plateaus and mountainous belts between the Indo-Gangetic Basin to the north and Krishna river in the south. The main tribes found in this zone are the Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Ho, Bhil, etc. The southern zone consists of the peninsular India, south of the river Krishna. Tribes like Chanchu, Kota, Toda, Malayalam, etc., inhabit in this zone.

The tribes sometimes called aboriginals because of their being the earliest inhabitants of this country, not only belong to different stages of culture, but they vary from area to area in different stages of culture, but they vary from area to area in regard to size of the population, language, racial types, socio-economic organisation, etc.
The impact of migration and resettlement on the growth rate of the States like Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Tripura, Nagaland and Lakshadweep during 1951-61 is almost obvious. A large scale migration of the tribal people from one State to another seems to have occurred as a result of distress, growing poverty and allied factors (the so called push factors). It might have also occurred on account of better opportunities in other States and abroad (the so called pull factors). But the decreasing trend in general population of the Indian tribes is, certainly surprising and draws the attention of the demographers, planners and policy-makers. The growth rates of the tribal people of Bihar during the years 1961-71 and 1971-81 are 17.31 and 17.80 per cent respectively.

What Constitutes a Tribe?

When we talk about the tribals, it will not be out of place to begin with delineating the concept of a tribe. There exists a controversy as regards what really constitute a tribe. But by and large, in its widest anthropological sense, the term denotes those traditional beliefs, arts and practices which an individual acquires as the member of a particular society. It is a homogeneous ethnic group with a specific sense of identity based on common language and culture. It is large enough to be a viable group and small enough to be mobilised for common action. It also implies a primitive level of technology, absence of the system of writing and lack of a highly specialised division of labour. It is generally associated with a definite territory and has a well-defined political boundary. A tribe is a group usually isolated in jungles and hills. As such, it is cut off
from the main stream of Indian life and to use the anthropological jargon possesses 'local' or 'little' traditions which are generally parochial in nature.

If any group of people are historically more disadvantageous, non-integrated to the main stream of society and less participative in the opportunity structure of the society, they are the large tribal population in India. They flourish despairingly in the vast socio-economic inequalities of our country. If the hierarchy of castes is a two-person zero-sum game on the one side of the spectrum the 'superior' priestly, land lord and merchant classes are represented, and on the other important side the scheduled caste-scheduled tribe (SC-ST) "out casts" are represented. In the persistent socio-economic hostility, the game always favours the "superior" castes.

Though, there is no specific definition as to the concept of tribal population, on the basis of certain characteristics, a given community can be called as the tribal community. They are (i) their roots in the soil date back to a very early period. (ii) they live in relative isolation from the main-stream of the society. (iii) their civilisation flourishes in the hills and forests (iv) their history is shallow in the sense that after some generations, the remembered history tends to shade off into mythology (v) they have a low-level of techno-economic development (vi) even if they are not egalitarian they are at least non-hierarchic and undifferentiated. Taking into consideration of these characteristics, the Government of India has specified 427 communities and has listed them as the scheduled tribes. The most important tribes are the Gonds, the Bhils, The Santals, the Minhas, the Mundas, the Oraons, the Hos, the Konds, the Kolos, the
The smallest tribal community is the Great Andamanese whose numerical strength was only 18 in the 1971 census.

The census-wise tribal population in India and their percentage share in total population is furnished in Table 1.1

### Table 1.1
**CENSUS-WISE TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Census year</th>
<th>Total population (in millions)</th>
<th>Total tribal population (in millions)</th>
<th>Percentage of tribal population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>361.0</td>
<td>19.17</td>
<td>5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961*</td>
<td>439.0</td>
<td>29.88</td>
<td>6.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>548.2</td>
<td>38.015</td>
<td>6.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981**</td>
<td>684.2</td>
<td>51.628</td>
<td>7.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>843.9</td>
<td>68.114</td>
<td>8.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>1028.6</td>
<td>84.326</td>
<td>8.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary Census Abstract: Census of India, 2001

* Excludes the Tribal Population of Arunachal Pradesh
** Excludes the Tribal Population of Assam

Table 1.2 provides state-wise break up details of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population as per the 2001 Census. The Table 1.2 also provides the SC and ST populations of the country.
## Table 1.2

**SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES**

**POPULATION 2001 - CENSUS - INDIA, STATES AND UNION TERRITORIES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Scheduled Caste</th>
<th>% of SC Population to Total Population</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribes</th>
<th>% of ST Population to Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>INDIA</strong></td>
<td><strong>1665.76</strong></td>
<td><strong>16.20</strong></td>
<td><strong>835.80</strong></td>
<td><strong>8.10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>STATES</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>123.39</td>
<td>16.20</td>
<td>50.24</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>64.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Assam</td>
<td>18.25</td>
<td>6.90</td>
<td>33.08</td>
<td>12.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bihar</td>
<td>130.48</td>
<td>15.70</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Goa</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Gujarat</td>
<td>35.93</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>74.81</td>
<td>14.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Haryana</td>
<td>40.91</td>
<td>19.30</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>15.02</td>
<td>24.70</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Karnataka</td>
<td>85.63</td>
<td>16.20</td>
<td>34.63</td>
<td>6.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Kerala</td>
<td>31.23</td>
<td>9.80</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>91.55</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>122.33</td>
<td>20.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Maharashtra</td>
<td>98.82</td>
<td>10.20</td>
<td>85.77</td>
<td>8.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Manipur</td>
<td>0.37</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>6.32</td>
<td>34.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Meghalaya</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>19.92</td>
<td>85.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Mizoram</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>83.90</td>
<td>94.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Nagaland</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>17.69</td>
<td>88.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Orissa</td>
<td>60.82</td>
<td>16.50</td>
<td>84.45</td>
<td>22.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Punjab</td>
<td>70.28</td>
<td>28.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Rajasthan</td>
<td>96.94</td>
<td>17.20</td>
<td>70.97</td>
<td>12.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Sikkim</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>20.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Tamilnadu</td>
<td>118.57</td>
<td>19.00</td>
<td>6.51</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Tripura</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>17.40</td>
<td>9.93</td>
<td>31.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>351.48</td>
<td>21.10</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. West Bengal</td>
<td>184.52</td>
<td>23.00</td>
<td>44.06</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>7.70</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>11.05</td>
<td>10.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Uttranchal</td>
<td>15.317</td>
<td>17.90</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Jharkhand</td>
<td>31.89</td>
<td>11.80</td>
<td>70.87</td>
<td>26.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Chattisgarh</td>
<td>24.18</td>
<td>11.60</td>
<td>66.13</td>
<td>31.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Scheduled Caste</td>
<td>% of SC Population to Total Population</td>
<td>Scheduled Tribes</td>
<td>% of ST Population to Total Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNION TERRITORIES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. A &amp; N Islands</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>8.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Chandigarh</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>17.50</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. D &amp; N Haveli</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>62.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Daman and Diu</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>8.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Delhi</td>
<td>23.43</td>
<td>16.90</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Lakshadweep</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>94.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Pondicherry</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>16.20</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Population Profiles, Census of India 2001, RGI

**Tribal Communities of India**

Scheduled tribes have been divided into three groups based on their distribution in three well-defined zones, viz., the southern, the central, and the northern zones.

**Southern zone**

It consists of the part of the peninsular India, south of the River Krishna. Tribals living in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, Andaman and Nicobar islands, and part of Andhra Pradesh belong to the southern zone.

The tribals in this zone appear to be the most ancient inhabitants of India and are now represented by the Todas, Paniyans, Kurumbas, Kotas, Sholigas, Malayalees, Kadars, Kanikhars, Muthuans, Mannans, Uralis, Malapantarams, Koyas, Yendis, Yerevas, Chenchus etc. A Negrito strain is found among some of the more primitive and isolated tribes, like the Kadars, the Irulas, the Paniyans and the Uralis. Their life centres
around hunting and food gathering, and the village headman adjudicates the disputes. The structure of the society is on the matriarchial basis.\(^9\)

**Central Zone**

It has provided refuge for the aboriginal population from time immemorial and consists of the plateaus and mountain belts between the Indo-Gangetic Basin and the Krishna River in the south. The central zone comprises part of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Orissa, Rajasthan, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and part of Uttar Pradesh. The Juangs, Kharias, Hos, Santhals, Gonds, Bhils, Mudas, Orons, Birhors, Bhuiyas, Saoras, Khonds, Baigas and Kols are the major tribes found in this region. They confirm to the pattern of Austroloid characters. Shifting cultivation is the prevalent form of food production. Community life is organised with a village councils under a headman. Contact with people living on the plain and other non-tribal population of the surrounding areas has led to a considerable degree of assimilation of Indian ideas and religious rites among these tribes.

**Northern Zone**

It consists of the sub-Himalayan region and the hills and mountain ranges of north eastern India, of the Tista Valley and the Jammu – Padma portion of the Brahmaputra Valley. Tribal communities within Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, part of Uttar Pradesh and

\(^9\) Verma, M.M. *Tribal Development in India*, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p.9
part of West Bengal belong to the northern zone. The main tribes found in this zone are the Nagas, Khasis, Garos, Mishmis, Limbus, Lepchas, Daflas, Abors, Mikirs, Bodos and the Kukilushais. They show characteristic Mongoloid features and there is among them a sub-stratum of Megalithic culture with pronounced development of matriarchy.

Scheduled Tribe Population

As per census 2001, the Scheduled tribe population increased to 84.32 million excluding Jammu and Kashmir where the census was not held.

India is the second most populous country in the world next to China. According to 2001 census the total population of India was 102.8 crore\(^{10}\). The annual increase in the Indian population is almost equal to the Australian population\(^{11}\). Tamil Nadu is the seventh most populous and eleventh largest state in the Indian Union. The population of the Tamil Nadu State registered a growth of 14.94 per cent bringing the total population from the 48.4 million in 1981 to 55.6 million in 1991\(^{12}\). The total population of Tamil Nadu rose from 55.6 million in 1991 to 62.14 million in 2001\(^{13}\).

Cultural Identity and Code of Conduct of Scheduled Tribes

Tribal communities, with their traditionally high standards of honesty and trust and inexperience with a monetary economy, have been the easiest victims of outside

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\(^{10}\) Census of India, 2001, p.1.  
\(^{13}\) Ibid.
exploitation. This has impoverished them, as well as the forests providing them shelter and livelihood

India is the traditional home for about 350 main tribal communities and they are inhabiting almost all the States and Union Territories. According to Verma, “Every thirteenth Indian is a scheduled tribe person”. All the tribal communities not only possess rich cultural heritage but have evolved unique traditional system of social control. The traditional institutions exercise enormous social, moral, religious, economic and political control over these communities. Most of these communities preserve their own distinct cultural identify through their unwritten code of conduct and distinct traditional mechanism to enforce the codes. The customary laws are based on their mythologies, beliefs, values, traditions, perceptions of the universe and their transmitted social and cultural heritage. The customary codes or social codes are Sine Qua non for solidarity, prosperity and growth of each community as well as individuals. In the absence of this mechanism of control of human behaviour, there would be utter chaos in the society. The traditional village and inter-village councils enforce these unwritten codes among the tribal communities in order to maintain harmonious relations not only among different segments of the society but also to regulate inter personal relations.

Tribal Development Schemes

During the post-independence era, India has tried many experiments in the field of tribal development. The journey began with the strategy of community development

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14 Ajit Bhattacharjeea, *Tree and the Tribal in Bastar Story*, The New Indian Express, November, 17, 1999, p.8
blocks during the fifties and since then the tribal development blocks, area development approach, integrated rural development programmes, twenty point programmes, "tribal sub-plan strategy", etc. were evolved by mid-seventies. The panchayat raj system was also inducted in India's administrative structure simultaneously to ensure better and pragmatic execution of tribal development schemes at the local level. Since then much water has flown under the bridge and many development milestones of international repute have been achieved, but the tribal social groups still continue to face the basic problems of poverty, unemployment and above all the problem of poor quality of life.\(^\text{15}\)

Tribal isolation remained the main cause of social, economic and moral exploitation of tribals by the non-tribals. Poverty, indebtedness, exploitation, bondage, ill health, illiteracy and superstition mark the tribal scenario in India. Of the 32 States and Union Territories in the country, only six namely, Haryana, Punjab, Goa, Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry – have no scheduled tribe population.\(^\text{16}\)

Population of Tribals in Tamil Nadu

Only, certain tribes are treated as scheduled tribes, according to the Constitution of India. There are 36 such tribes in Tamil Nadu. Only these 36 tribes are treated as scheduled tribes in this State and they all belong to only one religion. There were 5,74,194 persons belonging to scheduled tribes in Tamil Nadu when compared to the total population of 5,58,58,946 in 1991. They constituted 1.03 per cent of the total

\(^{16}\) Society and Trends, Indian Tribals: An Exploited Lot, Competition Refresher, Vol.18(11), 2000, p.58.
population of the State in 1991. The corresponding proportion was 1.08 per cent in 1981. Though there is a drop in the ratio of scheduled tribes to total population in 1991, the actual scheduled tribe population had increased from 5,20,226 in 1981 to 5,74,194 in 1991, registering a growth rate of 10.37 per cent during the decade. While the scheduled tribe population in the rural areas of the State constitutes 1.37 per cent of rural population of the State, the scheduled tribes constitute a mere 0.36 per cent of the population in the urban areas. Among the districts, Nilgiris district has the highest tribal population where the ratio is 3.53 per cent. Salem and Thiruvannamalai districts are the other two districts with a comparatively higher population of scheduled tribes and the ratio in these districts is also more than 3 per cent. The tribal population ranges between 1 and 2 per cent in the four northern contiguous districts of the State, viz. Chengalpattu (1.24%), North Arcot (1.65%), Dharmapuri (1.96%) and South Arcot (1.19%). The distribution of scheduled tribe population in rural and urban areas reveals that nearly 88 per cent of the scheduled tribe population of the State lives in the rural areas. A comparison of the rural – urban composition of scheduled tribe population in Salem district, which accounts for the largest number of scheduled tribes in the State, reveals the highest proportion of scheduled tribe population (99.19 per cent) in its rural areas.\footnote{Census of India, Tamil Nadu Series-29, 1991, Part 11(B)(iii), pp.1-17.}

Large-sized Multi-Purpose Co-operative Society (LAMPS)

The basic premise behind the policy of co-operation during Fifth Plan period was that co-operative societies should be organised in the pattern recommended by the
Bawa Committee (1972). The Committee on Cooperative Structure recommended that a tribal should be served in respect of his various needs under one agency instead of his having to visit numerous agencies. The Large Sized Multipurpose Cooperative Societies (LAMPS) as suggested by the Committee were expected to extend production and consumption credit supply, agricultural inputs and distribute essential commodities at controlled prices, and purchase from the tribals their surplus farm and forest produce. They were linked to the district level, state level and central co-operatives. In order to bring all the tribal communities in the State under an institutional arrangement and to provide them financial and other economic support, the LAMPS have been organised in the hill areas since 1976-1977 onwards.

Problems of Tribals

Exclusively tribals are heavily concentrated on the primary sector of the occupational structure. Mainly tribals derive their livelihood from sources like collection from the forest, different types of agricultural produces. A small chunk of tribals, now-a-days are also engaged in the secondary and tertiary sectors. For a better understanding of tribal economic problems and prospects a sector-wise study is made in the following paragraphs.

Agriculture and Allied Occupation

In the different parts of the country, generally, three agricultural patterns are followed by the tribals. They include shifting cultivation, settled cultivation and

cultivation of plantation crops such as coconut, pineapple, etc. Shifting cultivation locally known as jhooming is a widely practised farming system in the hills of North East India. This type of farming system is also known as Podu Cultivation practised in parts of Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh in India. In North Eastern Hills region, about 4,92,000 families are involved in shifting cultivation in an area of 26,94,000 hectares. The disadvantages of jhooming cultivation are many. This system of cultivation is responsible for large scale soil erosion, siltation of reservoir, causing floods in the plains, loss of soil fertility resulting in low production, drying up of the natural stream, etc. It also affects the flora and fauna to a considerable extent. Also, on account of jhoomings, the availability of certain forest products like timber, kendu leaves, lac, etc. become limited for the future generations. As per the study made by different researchers it has been observed that the production and productivity in jhooming cultivation is minimum. So the per capita income and standard of living of the tribals remain at a lower ebb.

In fact, settled cultivation is followed by the tribals and semi-tribals who are more or less settled down in rural areas. Majority of them are small farmers, marginal farmers and agricultural labourers. They also undertake some allied occupations like dairy, piggery, pottery, poultry, etc. Their problems are more serious and challenging. As they follow the traditional method of cultivation in combination with non-irrigated farming, the production and productivity in this sector are minimum. It has also been found that as the tribal people are less migratory, they ultimately depend on agriculture and allied occupations. As a matter of fact, the problems like small-sized and average land
holdings, seasonal unemployment, disguised unemployment, etc. are chronic in the socio-economic trait of tribal population.

Sometimes, the land-reform policies of different State governments are antagonistic with the interests of tribal population. Surplus land released through imposition of ceilings on land holdings are distributed among the tribal households. Even after distribution and the granting of ownership right to them, the land holdings remain under the occupancy of original owners. Owing to their honesty and lack of awareness as to different legislative enactments, they never take the matter to the court of law. Money lenders, Sahukars and other non-tribal people have continued to grab the land, belonging to the tribals on one pretext or another. To cope up with this problem and to safeguard the interests of the tribals, numerous Acts and Regulations have been passed by different State governments. Some examples are “Assam Land and Revenue Regulation (Amendment) Act, 1964; Bihar Scheduled Areas Regulation, 1969; Land Revenue (Amendment) Rule, 1960 of Karnataka; Kerala Land Assignment Rule, 1964; Land Revenue Code, 1959 (Sec. 165) of Madhya Pradesh; Orissa Scheduled Areas Transfer of Immovable Properties (by Scheduled Tribes) Regulation, 1956 and amended in 1965; Tripura Land Revenue and Land Reform Act, 1968 (Section 187); West Bengal Land Reform (Amendment) Act, 1965; and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Protection of aboriginal tribes) Regulation, 1956.

Despite all these elaborate legal safeguards, it has not been possible to check land alienation. The tribals are generally ignorant of their rights and wherever they know them, they are afraid to exercise them either because they do not have enough
resources to pull through the legal proceedings or they are afraid to challenge the superior wielders of money power who grab their lands. The irony of the entire matter is that these superior classes are always in constant alliance with political parties, police, court and administration.

**Tribal Marketing**

Tribal marketing and the tribal indebtedness are the two fundamental problems concomitant with the problems of tribal agriculture.

Mostly tribal marketing consists of supplying the minor products and some typical products collected from the forest. The tribal people like the Kutias of Belguar region of Phulbani district in Orissa mainly supply agricultural products like Jhudunga (cow peas), Kandulo (hill grams), higher seeds and mustard seeds. They also sell forest products like hill brooms, Siali leaves, Siali seeds, sal seeds and kusumo seeds. So, forests are their beloved home and their very existence depends upon forest products. But unfortunately these products supplied by the tribals are purchased for lower prices. Though, different types of co-operatives have been set up in tribal areas for the procurement of different commodities supplied by the tribals, due to their ineffectiveness and mal-intension of their employees, on the supply front the tribal people have been exploited considerably.

On the other side, the tribal demand mainly consists of the minimum necessities of life like rice, salt, kerosene oil, match box, washing soda and clothes. They purchase a limited number of consumer goods for their daily use. It has been observed that the
number of government fair price shops are not adequate to supply the commodities of minimum requirements of the tribal people. Even though public distribution system functions in certain areas, it becomes limited due to the prevalence of barter. In the course of barter they have less bargaining power with the local, non-tribal business intermediaries. Thus, on the demand side also, they are heavily cheated.

**Tribal Indebtedness**

The tribal people are heavily concentrated on primary sector. Due to the limited economic opportunity, the income of the tribals always remains meagre which is never supportive in the routine of their daily expenditure. In order to bridge the income-expenditure mismatch they go on borrowing. As they are simple, innocent and illiterate they are apathetic towards the long and rigid paraphernalias of institutional borrowing. Ultimately, they rely on non-institutional borrowings like village money-lenders, sahukars and salesman with the promise of repaying it in cash or kind soon after the harvest with exorbitant rates of interest. Hence, the tribal people are worstly exploited and they are always in the clutches of village money lenders. Further, the most dehumanising element of bonded labour appears among some tribals. In view of their worst socio-economic conditions, they are compelled to sell their family members permanently for some amount of money. The incidence of bonded labour among tribals has been reported from 12 States viz., Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana.
Impact of Industrialization

Due to the progress of industrialisation, tribal people are made geographically mobile. It happens due to the low agricultural productivity and less-remunerative non-farm activities at their original place. But, unfortunately they are illiterate and unskilled. Therefore, they are not suited for technical posts and their employment is confined to fourth grade jobs. Again to subscribe a big-boost to regional equality, a number of industrialisation programmes are undertaken by the Government of India in tribal dominated regions. This situation creates two complex problems. Firstly, establishment of large industrial projects in tribal areas has caused a large-scale displacement of the tribals. Secondly, the tribal population is assuming more and more migratory character and the tribal life is getting disintegrated.

On account of industrial urbanization, the tribal people are forced to migrate here and there in search of employment opportunities. The tribals are forced to abandon their villages and try for employment in the nearby industrial town. This migration, whether seasonal or otherwise, has a devastating effect on the tribal villages as it shatters the very foundation of the tribal economy which are based on cooperation and group solidarity. Those left in the villages find it difficult to carry on their agricultural operations, let alone their ceremonial hunting and fishing operations which have thus almost disappeared from the scene. As a result, the tribal villages have become dry and drab which further increases the outflow. In the industrial townships, the tribals are condemned to living in slum areas and to a life that is "segmented and heterogeneous in culture".
Moreover, the tribal people as they are entangled in the cobweb of poverty, they including women and children are forced to be affiliated to the unorganised sector for the sake of employment. The wage rates are low and the hours of work are longer. But the tribal population desperately undertake such employment tolerating the poor working conditions.

**Socio-Economic Measures for Upliftment of Scheduled Tribes**

Since independence efforts have been made to improve the conditions of tribals in agriculture. Following measures deserve the attention.

i. Some States have adopted legislative enactments towards recognising traditional tribal rights to land. However, no uniform policy has been chalked out.

ii. Protection against alienation of tribal land and the protection of tribals from money lenders have been legally provided in some States. Land belonging to STs can be transferred only to other STs and that too with the prior permission. Similarly, various State measures have been instituted to put a stop to the exploitation of the tribals by money lenders. However, chronically tribals prefer to take loans from non-institutional sources instead of institutional sources. The main reasons for the failure of the institutional borrowing are (i) The institutional sources generally take too long to sanction the loans and have lengthy paraphernalias (ii) The cooperatives do not give loans to landless people.
iii. Surplus lands through the imposition of ceilings on land holdings have been distributed among the tribals. Simultaneously, schemes like provision of irrigation facilities, ploughs, bullocks, agricultural implements and distribution of improved seeds are in operation in order to help the tribals to improve the productivity of their land.

iv. In the name of anti-poverty programmes a lot of steps have been undertaken by the Government of India to the cause of the upliftment of the tribal class. According to the provisions of Integrated Rural Development Programme, atleast 30% of the beneficiaries should belong to SC/ST. Similarly, at least 30% of the investment in terms of subsidy and credit should flow to SC/ST. Moreover, in Jawahar Raj Yojana also, 6% of the total funds received by the districts is earmarked for Indira Awas Yojana, a housing programme for the poor and destitute among the SCs/STs on 100% subsidy basis. Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme (ARWSP) also lays emphasis on the coverage of SCs/STs.

v. Special multipurpose tribal development blocks have been established. The object of these blocks is to bring about significant changes in the economic and social life of the tribals.

vi. In order to provide better financial access to the tribals at nominal interest / co-operative societies have been opened in various States. But, unfortunately, tribals categorically rely on non-institutional sources.
The Government of India appointed a “Study Team on Cooperatives Structure in Tribal Development Project Areas” under the Chairmanship of Bawa in 1973, to indicate a suitable institutional structure for development of tribal communities. The study team recommended that Large sized Multipurpose Cooperative Society (LAMPS) should be organised in tribal areas on the lines of farmers’ service societies (FSSs) providing all types of credit (short, medium and long-term) including credit for meeting consumption need, their agricultural and consumer good requirements; providing technical guidance for modernisation of agriculture and marketing.

The LAMPS and the PACSs are federated at the State level to form the Tribal Development Co-operative Corporations (TDCCs)/Federations. The TDCCs have been organised in Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Orissa, West Bengal, Manipur and Tripura. The State-Level Tribal Co-operative Federations have come into being in Kerala and Rajasthan. The Madhya Pradesh State Tribal Co-operative Marketing Federation stands merged with Madhya Pradesh State Co-operative Marketing Federation. These TDCCs have been rendering very useful service to the tribals. In the absence of national federation of the state-level tribal co-operative marketing federations (NAFED) a national level tribal cell has been set up to extend marketing / technical intelligence and other support to the State-level Tribal Development Co-operative Federations.

In the Union Budget for 1988-1989, an announcement was made for the setting up of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation. This Corporation plays a catalytic role in developing schemes for
employment generation and financing pilot programmes which can be taken up by the State-level corporations and other agencies active in this field. In collaboration with RBI and NABARD, this Corporation will take care of the overall improvement of SCs and STs. The objective would be to innovate, experiment and promote, rather than to duplicate the work of existing agencies. This Corporation has an authorised capital of Rs. 75 crores with a paid-up capital of Rs.50 crores to be fully subscribed by the Government.

Tribal Development Programmes During Different Plan Periods

During the planning era there have been vigorous planning efforts and allocation of funds for the tribal development. The Second FYP goes for forty-three experimental Special Multi-Purpose Tribal Blocks (SMPT), the Third FYP crystallises the approach to their development through the concept of Tribal Development Blocks with more funds and a systematic approach. By the Fourth FYP period 43 per cent of the tribal population is covered under 504 tribal Development Blocks. Fifth FYP brings the concept of sub-plan for tribal development with adequate funds both from the Centre and the State resources. Accordingly, areas having 50 per cent or more tribal concentrations were delineated and tribal sub-plans are prepared in 19 States and Union Territories. These areas are grouped into 180 integrated tribal development projects as operational units. The States and Union Territories with predominant tribal population, namely Arunachal pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Lakshadweep and Dadra and Nagar Haveli were not included in the tribal sub-plan approach as their State plans are in fact, plans for the development of the tribal communities.
The broad objectives of the tribal sub-plan are: (i) to narrow the gap between the level of development of tribal areas and other areas, and (ii) to improve the quality of the tribal communities. In order to achieve these objectives, elimination of all forms of exploitation of tribals particularly in land, money-lending, malpractices in the exchanges of agriculture and forest produce was given high priority. The tribal sub-plans envisage total physical and financial effort for integrated development of the tribal areas. The investments in the sub-plan are flow from the State plan, Central outlays from Central ministries and departments, institutional finance and special Central assistance.

During the Sixth and Seventh Plans the strategy for backward classes was designed to ensure a higher degree of devolution of funds through the special component plan and through Special Central Assistance than in the earlier plans. During the Seventh Plan, a total expenditure of about Rs.756 crores was sanctioned for the tribal sub-plan.

The Eighth FYP continued this thrust towards their socio-economic development and to give them occupational mobility and economic strength. Accordingly programmes were designed to fulfil their minimum needs together with emphasis on the integration of different sectoral development programmes, with a clear recognition of their needs. Special attention had been given to assist this segment of total population to cross the poverty line. The schemes of welfare continue to lay emphasis on strengthening the education base of the S.C., S.T. and other backward classes.
Social Problem Faced by the Aged People

The problem of old age is becoming a social problem though gradually, in Indian society also. Consequently, the need for finding out the correlates of 'good adjustment' in old age in the Indian background is being increasingly felt. The present investigation is a step in this direction. A problem is considered social when difficulties are met by a group of people, it may (a) result from the functioning, organization or structure of society, (b) endanger society at large, and (c) be solved through social policies and political initiative.

The problem of old age has emerged as a social one, to some extent, owing to the rising proportion of the aged people in the population, but to a large extent, owing to the clearing roles and status of the aged people in the industrial society of the present world.

In any developing society, ageing is more problematic because it is very difficult for aged people to depart from the traditional values and norms and to adopt modern values and norms. Their attitudes towards new functions and structure of society in terms of acceptance or rejection of the new values and norms indicate how they react to the new situation in which they are placed. Their attitudes towards popular religious beliefs are also taken into consideration, because religion plays a very important role in the level of adjustment in later years of life, especially in the context of the changing attitudes of the younger generation towards religion in the present society.
To examine the level of adjustment of the retired people, three major factors are considered. They are (i) situational factors which include the retired person's educational qualification, pre-retirement occupational status, present financial condition, physicals condition and age, (ii) attitudinal factors consist of their attitudes towards various social changes, non-interference in the personal affairs of the grown-up children and religious beliefs, (iii) behavioural factors include the retiree's relationship and interaction with the family members living in the same household and the children living separately with relatives, friends, neighbours and members of voluntary organizations, their involvement in occupational activities, hobbies, religious activities and interaction with non-family members, etc.

Ageing becomes more disturbing in a society whose culture provokes irreverence toward the aged and where the economic competition works to their disadvantage. Owing to the rapid advancement in industrial technology for the expansion of productivity through high energy system, in the twentieth century for instance the American Society has restricted the participation of older employees in the labour market.

It is only since the last few decades that retired people have been regarded as a new category of persons in the society.

In the present society the aged people are ascribed to the terminal sick role and low status. They are not given higher status even in the family.
With the emergence of the nuclear family system in the present society, the role played by the aged people in the family during the joint family system of the pre-industrial society has been transferred to various other persons and institutions. They do not get proper care and protection from their children. They have become relatively an independent generation.

In pre-industrial society, aged people used to get enough opportunities to satisfy their various needs. In the societies dominated by agricultural and handicraft economics they participated in the productive activities as specialists directly or indirectly, depending on their physical health, and remained financially sound and independent.

Until 1900 there was no widespread practice of compulsory retirement at a set age, and people used to continue their occupational activity till they became physically unfit or incapacitated.

Moreover, it was regarded as a moral duty of the children to provide financial and physical security to their parents in old age. The children were the 'eyes, ears, hands and feet' to the aged parents.

As such, even deteriorating health was not an obstacle in leading a comfortable life in old age. They were given the leadership role and powerful positions of decision-makers and advisers in the joint family and community because their wisdom and experience were considered to be of great value for the proper functioning of society.
While the pre-industrial social order provided full opportunities to its aged members for the satisfaction of their various needs, the present society does not provide opportunities to its aged members to lead a comfortable, respectful and socially useful life. With the modernization and industrialization of society the status of the old people has decreased.

Having an 'extra-familial' status in the nuclear family system, which is an obstacle for satisfying even the basic needs, the aged people find the environment of the present industrial society not conducive to get satisfaction of their physical and socio-psychological needs. Since they have to depend on their own capacity and resources they are exposed to the vulnerability of the ageing process. So ageing has become a complex and challenging proposition for individuals to face it personally.

Growing old is not a smooth process but a sad and painful one in the modern industrial society. Quite a few of the aged, therefore, suffer in the process of growing old and become overwhelmed by the threatening environment when they find themselves unable to solve their problems of financial and physical security, utilization of leisure, loneliness, isolation, etc..

Owing to the absence of norms and lack of socializing facilities for the aged people, they do not find any guideline for their actions and thereby experience the lost feeling in themselves.

In this situation, these people become 'social problem cases' because the burden of looking after their interests and taking care of them falls on society. Therefore, in the
highly industrialized countries like the United States of America, the problem of aged people has become a big social problem.

The present study is an exploratory one which attempts to find out what exists rather than to predict the relations that will be found, though the findings may throw light on the important relations between the variables.

Statement of the Problem

India stands second in the world next to China regarding the population. According to the 2001 census, the total population of India was 102.7 crore. The natural increase in the Indian population is almost equal to Australian population.

Tamil Nadu is the seventh most populous and eleventh largest State in India. The population of the State registered a growth of 14.94 and a net addition of 7.2 million, bringing the total population from the 84.4 million in 1981 to 5.66 million in 1991. The scheduled tribe population in India, as per 1991 census, is about 6.78 crore which constitutes about eight per cent of the entire population in the country. Of this, a population of about 55 per cent scheduled tribes is concentrated in the central region, roughly 28.14 per cent in the western region, 12.02 percent in the northeastern region, and 4.22 per cent in the southern region and the remaining in the other regions. Since independence, the Government of India continued to emphasize the programmes and schemes for raising the socio-economic levels of the tribals.
After a long struggle for political independence, India could break the shackles of slavery in 1947, when two types of India were known: one, a territory under the direct British administration and the other under the administration of Princely States known as Indian India. A third India, which was ignored and remained unrecognized at that time, was the tribal India, living in the forests, hills and even on plains, but isolated from the mainstream of social life of this country.

A tribe is, in an ideal state, a self-contained unit. It constitutes a society in itself. A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous, though originally it might have been so.

Tribes have more kin-oriented societies and the nature of social solidarity they maintain is mechanical. In their society, there is less hierarchy and no economic specialization. They depend upon nature, adapting themselves to local situations, with their crude technology. As most of them are not exposed to external situations, the occurrence of interaction and social intercourse is minimum. Thus, their life-style is less in tune with the larger vein of the society.

There are many problems experienced by the scheduled tribes in different parts of our country. To mention a few, exploitation by middlemen and traders in procurement of minor forest produce and sale of essential commodities, land alienation, money-lending at abnormal rates of interest, widespread indebtedness, bondage and discriminatory excise and forest policies. In several instances, survival is at stake, not to
speak of a decent standard of living. Their miseries are compounded by low level of infrastructure and social services. The level of economic activity is very low and there is vast untapped potential of their resource endowment.

A shifting, changing society poses a threat to the realization of integrity in old age. A coherent culture with well defined tradition is the necessary context for the development of characteristics such as wisdom and self-transcendence which give old age its special meaning.

We have little systematic knowledge about how people manage the latter parts of their lives. What we do possess are certain pictures or images, positive and negative, about how people cope with problems in this period. Stereotyped views, for example stoic acceptance of hardship on the one hand and crippling loneliness and depression on the other, play a large part in people thinking about being old. These images affect our own everyday and working attitudes, perhaps more than we imagine, and it is good to try and bring them out into the open and examine them. Images of ageing are stereotype, which we use to locate an identity of a wide diversity of individual persons in terms of socially prescribed age categories. These stereotypes precede and shape our perceptions and are an inescapable consequence of living in a complex world in which a bewildering profusion of messages is generated. Tribal communities that are relatively simple may not have stereotyped images of ageing.
Economic Dimension of Social Work

Social work education in India has been undergoing tremendous changes in the recent years due to the economic trends particularly in rural and tribal areas. Tremendous changes are taking place due to the modernization and growing technology. In fact, it is hard to find a typical village or a tribal hamlet these days, especially, in States like Tamil Nadu. Today, we can see rural people using or having access to the use of telephones, television sets, motorized vehicles etc.

In the light of the above, social work practice is also undergoing tremendous change. On the one hand, the increasing level of psychological sophistication and general awareness among the tribal people has made it easier for professional social workers to offer their specialized services. But, on the other hand, due to the urbanization and modernization among the tribal folk, social workers have to grapple with more varied and complicated problems these days.

Problems of the Aged Tribal People

Generally, the problems of aged persons differ very significantly when compared to that of the other segments of the population. But even, among the older population, the problems experienced by the tribal older persons are very unique and they are more severe and difficult to tackle. The major difficulty for the aged tribal persons is the difficult terrain and the unfriendly weather, which make their mobility extremely difficult. This is particularly more so in the case of tribal older persons who are in the ‘old-old’ category. Today even the remotest villages have access to some kind of basic / primary
health care services, however rudimentary or primitive they may be. But, there are hundreds of tribal settlements which have absolutely no health care facility. Besides, one of the unique problems of the tribal older persons is, the family members leaving behind their elderly relatives and going very far into the deep jungles. The increasing economic hardships of the tribal households are making the life of the tribal older persons still more pathetic. Off late, due to the strict enforcement of the rather inhuman forest rules and regulations (may be, even some laws), the tribal people are finding it extremely hard to earn a living or even to collect some food and fuel wood from the forest areas. There are times when, due to the forest department’s merciless handling of the tribal folk who venture into the forest, the elderly people are without anybody to care even for days or weeks because of the detention of the tribal persons in police stations or forest department offices. Another problem is the rapid migration of tribal people, particularly in the productive age group, to the urban or semi-urban areas for want of jobs in the industrial and service sectors. All these problems complicate the life of aged tribal persons to a very great extent.

Importance of the Study

Ageing process has many associated problems. The respect, which aged persons get from other members of the society, depends on the image of aged persons and the people’s attitudes towards ageing. Elderly persons enjoy a better status in tribal communities when compared to other communities. The elderly people are taken care of very well in the tribal culture that is primitive. The present study attempts to find out the
position of aged persons among the tribal community with reference to social, economic, political, cultural and psychological aspects.

One of the most influential factors in all our lives is the environment in which we live. For older people, this may be particularly so, since they spend more time in their home than many other groups in society.

It is often observed that families do not care for the older relatives as they used to. Throughout the post war period, the size of family has changed markedly. In addition to a decline in the size of family, the change in the actual structure of the family has influenced the availability of family support for older persons.

In traditional societies, elderly people come to take on new roles as emeritus parents, thus echoing Erickson's developmental task of 'generativity'. While women become more assertive and powerful within the realm of the extended family, older men appear to 'disengage' from the world of pragmatic action, but in order to become tenders of the values of their cultures. Their detachment from ordinary affairs frees them to make this advance so that they represent the abstract but vital elements underlying their culture. They do this by engaging closely in the moral values and religious practices which are underlying in their cultures. In doing so they gain new meaning in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

In consideration of the above, it becomes important for us to take a closer look at the situation of the older persons in the tribal community and find out what specific variables are associated with their well being. This knowledge might be useful for us to
take specific measures to ensure the well being of the aged tribal persons and even get some idea for improving the living conditions of older persons in general.

Research Design

The present study is based on the descriptive-cum-diagnostic design. Descriptive-cum-diagnostic studies are those, which describe the characteristics or attributes of the population under investigation and go on to find out associations among the key variables. In the present study, the researcher's first and foremost aim is to describe the characteristics of the aged tribal persons and then to study the nature, direction and strength of association among certain selected key variables. The researcher has to formulate certain specific hypotheses based on his own personal field observations and experiences of working with the tribal older persons and tribal communities at large.

Objectives of the Study

1) To study the social-economic status of the aged tribal persons.

2) To study the leadership role played by the older persons in a tribal community.

3) To study the tribal older persons' participation in the overall community life especially the female persons participating more in the work force.

4) To study the health aspects of the aged tribal persons.

5) To consider the aged tribal persons as a burden to their family or not.
6) To study the tribal older persons' perception about their image in the community and the respect enjoyed by them, and

7) To suggest specific interventions by the government and NGOs to improve the quality of life of the aged tribal.

Hypotheses

a) Tribal older persons play more active leadership role in the tribal community life in the decision making process than the younger generation.

b) Tribal female older persons are participating more in the work force than their male counterparts.

c) Tribal older persons are considered as a burden by their family members.

Sampling Design

Definition of Universe / Study Population

The universe / population of the present study includes all the persons aged 60 or above living in the three tribal villages namely Thenpuranadu, Vannadu and Kombai in the Pachamalai Hills in Tiruchirapalli district. These three revenue villages consist of a total number of 52 hamlets. These villages have been taken up for planning and development purposes by the district administration. Hence, for the present study, the researcher has restricted to the population of older persons living in the hamlets of the above three revenue villages.
Sampling Frame

The researcher collected the voters' lists available in the year 2000 pertaining to the tribal hamlets, from the Thuraiyur and Uppiliapuram blocks and used the same as sampling frame.

Sampling Procedure

Using simple random sampling procedure (lottery method), the researcher has drawn a sample of 150 older persons (aged 60 or above) for the purpose of the study after stratification. The sample constitutes 79 males and 71 females.

Sources of Data

The major source of data used in the present study is primary. Besides, the researcher has also used secondary sources of data from official records such as government publications and the records of the Panchayat Union offices at Uppiliapuram and Thuraiyur. The researcher also has used observation method for understanding the living conditions of older persons in the tribal community.

Tools of Data Collection

The researcher has made use of a self-prepared interview – schedule (Appendix 1) which contained a total of 43 items covering personal data, economic aspects, social aspects, participation in community life, health aspects, cultural aspects, political aspects and general aspects. The interview – schedule is almost completely
structured barring a few items for which open-ended format is considered to be necessary.

**Period of Study**

The researcher collected data during the period 2000 to 2002.

The researcher had to make several visits to the Pachamalai area for the purpose of data collection. Due to the lack of transport and other facilities, the researcher had to face a lot of difficulties in meeting the respondents. Besides, due to the long distance, on many days, the researcher had to stay overnight with the tribal people in their households taking the food served by them and putting up with all inconveniences. However, this personal contact helped the researcher to observe their socio-economic conditions on a first hand basis.

**Data Analysis**

The researcher used the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for analyzing the primary data collected for the purpose of the study. Initially, the collected data were edited and tabulated for the analysis. The researcher himself prepared a master sheet. The pre-coded data were entered straight away in the master sheet. The responses to the open-ended items were post-coded and then transferred to the master sheet. With the help of SPSS, simple tabulations (univariate tables) were made. Bivariate analysis was done by classifying the sample into male and female categories on the one hand and below median age and above median age categories on the other.
hand with a view to see whether gender and age have any significant association with the other variables pertaining to the life of the aged tribal persons. The data were analysed with the use of statistical techniques like $\chi^2$ test, test of proportion, and Mann-Whitney test.

**Limitations of the Study**

In the present study the conditions of older persons in one specific tribal community namely the Malayalees in the Pachamalai Hills. Hence, it would be difficult to generalize the findings with regard to older persons in other innumerable tribal communities spread all over the country since there is considerable cultural variation among the different tribal groups. Secondly, the study has used mainly the method of interview schedule for collecting primary data directly from the aged tribal persons. Even though the tool covered the major characteristics and aspects affecting the life of the aged tribals and the researcher used his personal observations in the field, the researcher could not succeed in carrying out more systematic observation (particularly, participant observation) and in conducting case study of a few selected tribal older persons, due to practical difficulties. Another major limitation is the lack of specific research literature relating to tribal older persons. There are innumerable studies on the various aspects of tribal life in general but there is not even a single study focusing on the conditions and problems of the tribal aged.