UNIT 21   SCHEDULED CASTES

Structure

21.0   OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the discrimination faced by the Scheduled Castes;

- discuss various reasons as to how they were scheduled by the Government for the purpose of reservation or constitutional benefits and to what extent they have benefited from the Government's development programmes; and

- analyse how the Scheduled Castes have organised themselves socially and politically vis-a-vis the upper castes.

21.1   INTRODUCTION

In this unit we shall analyse the Scheduled Castes as a separate and socially stratified category. We shall look at their historical background and examine the problems faced by them vis-a-vis the other upper castes. Following this we shall deal with Scheduled Castes and their social mobility. Then we shall examine the various constitutional measures and development programmes which have been adopted for the Scheduled Castes. Finally, we shall wind up this discussion by examining the working of the reservation policy and the position of the Scheduled Castes in the contemporary India.

21.2   SCHEDULED CASTE AS A COMMUNITY— THEIR STRENGTH AND THE BACKGROUND

You must have come across the term Scheduled Caste and untouchables several times. I am sure you must have wondered what the term meant or who these people are? You must be having an idea that these people are from the lowest

strata most of them working as menial labour. But do you know exactly who the Scheduled Caste are and how they came to be, what their composition is? In the sections to follow you will get to know who Scheduled Caste are, their strength and occupation. You will also familiarise yourself with explanations on the origins and the historical background of the Scheduled Caste.

21.2.1 Scheduled Castes: Social Backgrounds

Caste system forms the essential component of stratification system in India. The Varna system, constitutes a status-hierarchy with the Brahmins on the top followed by *Kshatriyas, Vaishyas* and *Shudras*. The secheduled fall out of the fourfold Varna System.

The Scheduled Caste is a politico-legal-term. It was first coined by the Simon Commission and then Government of India, Act, 1935. When India became independent this term was adopted by the Constitution for the purpose of providing them some special facilities and the constitutional guarantees.

Yet Untouchables or the Scheduled Castes do not constitute a homogeneous group. They are internally differentiated in terms of occupation, numerical segregated on the criteria of untouchability.

Another term used for the Scheduled Castes or Untouchables is "Harijans" (the children of God). This term was first used by Mahatma Gandhi, which refers to an aggregate of castes which may differ from each other and which have been reduced to the lowest ritual and social status in the caste hierarchy. Another term which comes into currency almost at the same time is depressed class or classes. This term was used by Dr. Ambedkar and it refered to those classes of categories or people who were poor, exploited and socially and ritually or religiously degraded. They were treated as *pariah* or socially defiled. In term which is currently popular and is preferred by the scheduled caste is the term *dalit*. The word dalit is inclusive, in the sense that it includes also those communities groups of people, who are marginalised and subjugated it is used in a generic sense to the untouchable or the scheduled caste.

21.2.2 Strength of the Scheduled Castes

Each Indian state has its own list of Scheduled Castes many of their names are synonymous. Some of the castes number several million members each.

The total population of the Scheduled Castes according to 1991 census was 138.22 million which constituted 16.5% of total population of the country. The largest of these castes are the Chamars who form – one quarter of the number of Scheduled Caste – *Banghi, the Adi-Dravida, Pasi, Madiga, Dusadhi Mali, Parayan, Koli Mahas, Adi-Karnataka, Namashudra* etc. almost half of the total number of Scheduled Caste people live in the five states of Hindi belt in U.P., Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Haryana. In the south they are concentrated mainly in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh. In the East in West Bengal. The highest ratio of the Scheduled Caste is in Punjab 28.3. About 84% of the scheduled castes live in rural areas and are working as agricultural laborers, share-croppers, tenants and marginal farmers. Among the, Harijan the ratio of agricultural workers is particularly high in Bihar, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Kerala. More, than one-third of the agricultural workers of India belong to the untouchable castes. A vast majority of the scheduled caste do not possess land, 32.2% have less than 1 hectare.

Almost all persons engaged in jobs like sweeping, scavenging and tanning are from Scheduled Castes. About 2/3rd of the bonded labour are from Scheduled Castes. Literacy among the Scheduled Castes is extremely low. Most of the Scheduled Castes live below the poverty line and are victims of social and economic exploitation. Let us see what the justifications are for the origins of this exploitation.

Distribution of Scheduled Caste Population (1991 Census) in 15 States which Account for 97.2% of Their Total Population

	Total population in 1991	SC population in 1991	SC population as % of State population	SC as % of total population	Cumulative SC population
India	838,583,988	138,223,277	16.5	16.5	
15 most populous states					
Uttar Pradesh	139,112,287	29,276,455	21.0	21.2	21.2
West Bengal	68,077,965	16,080,611	23.6	11.5	32.8
Bihar	86374,465	12,571,700	14.6	9.1	41.9
Tamil Nadu	55,858,946	10,712,266	19.2	7.7	49.6
Andhra Pradesh	66,508,008	10,592,066	16.9	7.7	57.3
Madhya Pradesh	66,181,170	9,626,679	14.5	7.0	64.3
Maharashtra	78,937,187	8,757,842	11.1	6.3	70.6
Rajasthan	44,005,990	7,607,820	17.3	5.5	76.1
Karnataka	44,977,201	7,369,279	16.4	5.3	81.4
Punjab	20,281,969	5,724,528	28.3	4.2	85.6
Orissa	31,659,736	5,129,314	16.2	3.7	89.3
Haryana	16,463,648	3,250,933	19.7	2.4	91.7
Gujarat	41,309,582	3,060,358	7.4	2.2	93.9
Kerala	29,098,518	2,886,522	9.9	2.1	96.0
Assam	22,414,322	1,652,412	7.4	1.2	97.2
Total for 15 major states	811,260,994	134,323,785	16.6	16.6	97.2
Other smaller states	27,322,994	3,899,492	14.3	14.3	2.8
India	838,583,988	138,223,277	16.5	16.5	100

Source : Census of India 1991

21.2.3 The Untouchable Castes and their Origins

The term Scheduled Castes signifies those groups of people who were out of the caste system or the varna hierarchy. They comprise the bulk of "untouchables" or untouchable castes. These groups or castes have been discriminated against by the superior castes through the ages and they have never had any kind of social acceptance from the majority of the people who belong to the upper castes. The Scheduled Caste were deemed untouchable and polluting by the upper caste due to their so called polluting activities like

Projected Scheduled Caste Populatio in 2001
(assuming same proportion of states' population as in 1991)

	Total population in 2001	SC population in 2001	SC population as % of State population	SC as % of total population	Cumulative SC population
15 most populous states					
Uttar Pradesh	175,626,000	36,960,838	21.0	21.2	
West Bengal	80,312,000	18,970,397	23.6	11.6	
Bihar	102,423,000	14,907,545	14.6	9.1	
Tamil Nadu	62,400,000	11,966,667	19.2	7.7	
Andhra Pradesh	76,773,000	12,226,896	15.9	7.7	
Madhya Pradesh	81,666,000	11,879,094	14.5	7.0	
Maharashtra	92,314,000	10,241,959	11.1	6.3	
Rajasthan	54,816,000	9,476,670	17.3	5.5	
Karnataka	52,922,000	8,670,993	16.4	5.3	
Punjab	23,858,000	6,755,026	28.3	4.2	
Orisssa	36,284,000	5,878,509	16.2	3.7	
Haryana	20,204,000	3,989,508	19.7	2.4	
Gujarat	49,194,000	3,644,463	7.4	2.2	
Kerala	32,605,000	3,234,359	9.9	2.1	
Assam	26,589,00	1.968,478	7.4	1.2	
Total for 15 major states	967,968,000	160,771,375	16.6	16.6	
Other smaller states*	49,558,000	7,036,794	14.3	14.3	
India	1,017,544,000	167,858,169	16.5	16.5	

Source : Population estimates for 2001 are official estimates based on projections by the Expert Committee.

scavenging, cremation, skinning and hiding, etc. Not only because of their unclean occupations, but also due to their so called 'dark complexion' they were placed at the bottom of the ritual and social hierarchies of the caste and varna system. Since the *Varna ashram darma* – the philosophy and the religious duty demanded that each *jati* was to follow one's traditional occupation – like priest's son becomes a priest and a shoe-maker or tanner's son or a becoming a shoe maker or a heriditory tanner. It was impossible for the untouchable castes to better their position by changing their occupation. The association of occupation with caste became inseperable, so much so, that the very fact of being born into a community, whether you engaged in clean or unclean activity had become irrelevant. Thus untouchables are those castes which were outside the pale of varna system. They were said to be polluting and marginalised and consigned to the lowest rung in society. Several ideological justifications existed for the sustanance of these hierarchical system, which kept everybody in their place.

The untouchables had no share in the social, political and judiciary powers and their position was almost like that of a slave. Various scholars have given different viewpoints and explained why untouchability was practised in the Hindu caste society.

G.Hanumantha Rao in his book *Caste and Poverty* says that low social status attached to certain occupations is the cause of untouchability. It relates to impure occupations such as removal of carcass, spinning, tanning, scavenging etc. While analysing the origin of caste, system J.H. Hutton suggests that ideas of ceremonial purity were first applied to aboriginals in connection with sacrificial, ritual and certain occupational activities. Max Weber, also has described certain occupations as ritually impure. He states, that the lowest caste structure was considered to be absolutely defiling and contaminating. Thus, the ideas of purity, whether occupational or ceremonial, is found to have been the factor contributing to the genesis and evolution of caste and the practise of untouchability,. The Vedic literature has referred to the Dharmashutras that declare *Chandalas* (cremators) as a progeny of the most hated people of the reverse order of mixed unions, that is of a Brahmin female with a Shudra male. Kautilya agrees with the Dharmashutra writers and he says that people born out of mixed unions were separate castes. He recommends that marriage between different castes should not be allowed and people of such unions should be treated as Shudra.

Manu, the earliest law giver, has very explicitly talked about a caste called *svapathas*, who were grouped with Chandalas and were prescribed to live outside the villages, use of shrouds of corpses as their clothing, broken pot-for meal, iron for ornaments and dogs and donkeys for their wealth. *Mritapas* were also another type of Shudras. The food vessels of *Chandalas* and *Mritapas* could not be used by others because no known method of cleaning pots was regarded as adequate to purify them.

Patanjali, who lived before Manu the great grammarian, had said that both the *Chandalas* and the *Mritapas* resided like other Shudras such as carpenters, blacksmiths, washermen or weavers, within the limits of the towns and villages of the Aryans. In the days of Manu they were not only excluded from the village but were assigned duties of cremators or hangmen which were totally unclean.

In about 1020 AD the *Doms* and Chandalas were two groups not reckoned among any caste or guild. They were-occupied with works like cleaning of the villages and similar other services. They were considered as one sole class and were distinguished by their occupations. The first group of the *Antyajas* who had further sub-divisions following certain crafts were totally eight in number. They lived near villages, they were jugglers, basket and rope makers, sailors, fishermen, and hunters of wild animals and birds. They could freely intermarry though they belonged to separate caste groups. They could not marry with the shoemakers and the weavers however. The shoemakers and weaver were another group of Antyajas who could marry only among themselves. In the past the untouchable castes as a whole were barred from any of the rituals. They did not have any sanctity to perform or participate in any religious or sacred ritual.

It was thought, that the untouchable is unclean by birth; he is born into a caste every member of which, irrespective of birth or occupation, is an untouchable.

Hinduism does not provide any means to him to become clean by the performance of any ritual. They were assigned to their unclean task and never allowed to come out of it. The main condition of their survival was the strict observance of a code of conduct established for them. The bounds of which they were not permitted to cross. Not only did they not have access to public places, but they were not allowed any physical contact by their breath and glance as well. The use of force occupied a main place in keeping the untouchables in their place. Punishment for any breach of rule was mutilation and even taking away life.

Another important explanation to the origins of untouchable caste has been that of the materialists. According to the materialist untouchability grew out of a social class who are in the lowest rung who did not possess the right of holding and usage of land. These landless workers were semi-slaves and were in debt bondage, who not only toiled on other pepole's land but were forced to carry on unclean occupations. They were secured by the social bondage and by the concept of destiny or karma where they were ordained to be doomed to sub-human living.

These castes are referred even today in different regions according to the dialects and languages, which they speak. These people have occupied a very low social and economic position in the caste and class hierarchies.

Besides, they were subjected to various types of social disabilities. For instance, they were not allowed to enter the house of the higher castes. However, they were allowed to work as labourers during construction or repair, stoning the grain, etc. But later the houses so constructed were purified by sprinkling cow urine or cow dungs. In the event of their touching the utensils and other non-inflammables, these things were to be put on fire and then purified by sprinkling cow urine. They were also not allowed to walk on streets or public roads, or enter the temples, or heard in the court of justice. These practices have remained inherent part of the Hindu caste society. Such disabilities of the Scheduled Castes have posed tremendous obstacles for their progress as well as of the society as a whole.

The segregation based on occupation has slowly narrowed down and instead it is primarily based on birth in the low castes. Even if the person is not engaged in the traditional occupations but since he/she is born into the caste, it became his/her status and position in the society. On the basis of their birth in the low castes, untouchables were always pushed into the background and their socio-economic contribution was never recognised in the history. Manu had always proclaimed superiority of the Brahmins which closed the channels of upward social mobility for any other castes and the worst affected groups were the untouchables. Even today the Scheduled Castes lag behind the upper castes in almost all fields and they undergo hardships, sufferings and oppression by the upper castes.

It can be seen from the preceding discussion that various justifications, reasons have gone into placing the Scheduled Castes in a exploitative situation and that this exploitation has gone on for centuries. Modern India realised a need to redress this marginalised state of the Scheduled Caste. In our next section. We will examine the various measures, which are institutionally provided to improve the status of Scheduled Castes.

Check Your Progress 1

1) When was the term Scheduled Caste first used?

   ....

   ....

   ....

2) What are the various names used to address the Scheduled Caste?

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

3) What explanation is given by materialist class analyst to explain the origin of untouchable caste?

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

21.3 CONSTITUTION AND THE SCHEDULED CASTES

Before being scheduled and embodied in the Government of India Act 1935 and later in the constitution of free India in 1950, these castes were classified as "exterior" or "depressed" castes or classes. A caste was classified exterior or depressed if it was found subjected to a set of social disabilities or restrictions. According to the 1931 census, these disabilities or restrictions were: (1) inability to be served by clean-Brahmins; (2) inability to be served by the barbers, water carriers, tailors, etc. who served the caste Hindus; (3) inability to serve water to caste Hindus; (4) inability to enter Hindu temples; (5) inability to use public convenience such as roads, ferries, wells or schools; and (6) inability to dissociate oneself from despised occupation.

Ambedkar played key role in the fight to give Scheduled Caste a dignity and their rights. He among others championed the cause of Scheduled Caste. During independent India certain reforms were undertaken to remove the discriminatory practices of intouchability.

With the coming into force of the Constitution of India the Scheduled Castes were guaranted certain essential rights and benefits. Under Article 341(l), the Constitution after consultation with the governor of a State may specify,

"The castes, races, tribes or, parts of groups within castes or races, tribes which shall be deemed to be scheduled castes for the purpose of the constitution."

However, according to the Article 341 (2) the Parliament of India, can include or exclude any group from the list of Scheduled Castes through an enactment of law.

The Scheduled Castes are socially and economically backward groups and, therefore, the constitution gives special protection to them. Under Article 46 of the constitution, it is the responsibility of the State to promote with special care the educational and -economic interests of the weaker sections of people and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in particular, and to protect them from social injustices and all forms of exploitation. The Preamble reflects the basic philosophy of the Indian constitution which stands by the Scheduled Castes.

There are a number of articles included in Part-III of the constitution which provides fundamental rights to the citizens, Article 14, 15, 16 and 17 provide rights to equality. Article 14 of the constitution provides right to equality before law that means, every citizen in the country is equal before law. Article 15 prohibits social and educational discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. This article provides that no citizen shall be prevented from access to shops, public restaurants, hotels, place of entertainment, use of public facilities like wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads, places of public resort, etc. This also empowers the State to make special provision for advancement of the socially and educationally backward classes of the citizens.

Article 16 prescribes the equality of opportunity in matters of public appointment. It provides that the State can reserve posts in public services for members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Then, finally Article 17 of this part of Constitution legally abolishes the practice of untouchability in any form against the Scheduled Castes. This article treats practice of untouchability as a legal offence and the offender is to be punished in accordance with the law. The offender may be imprisoned and or be subjected to fine. Later the provisions made under this article of the Constitution were strengthened and made more stringent under the Untouchability Offences Act in 1955.

Article 46 mentions specifically that the State must endeavour to promote the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes among the weaker sections of the society.

More precisely, the State shall reserve the public jobs for the members of the Scheduled Caste and Tribes. Two Articles, 330 and 332, lay down that there shall be reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha (Article 330) and State Legislative Assembly (Article 332) in proportion to the number of the Scheduled Castes in various states. And finally, according to Article 340, the President can appoint a commission to investigate the difficulties of the socially and educationally backward classes of the citizens and to make recommendations to remove such difficulties. The commission is also empowered to take stock of the progress made by these classes of citizens due to provisions made under various articles for their welfare, protection and development.

21.3.1 Reservation Policy for the Scheduled Castes

We have mentioned various articles enshrined in the Constitution for welfare, protection and development of the Scheduled Castes. Here, we shall discuss some articles which specifically provide reservation to these castes.

The aim of the reservation policy is to help Scheduled Castes to come up, within specified time, at par with others in the society. The reservation policy has three major components.

These are:

1) reservation in government appointments,
2) reservation in admission to educational institutions and
3) reservation of seats in the House of People (Lok Sabha) and the Legislative Assemblies of the States.

There are other progressive measures to boost employment and steps are taken to eliminate poverty. Further, 15% and 7.5% posts are reserved for the Scheduled Caste and Tribe candidates in government jobs. Such reservations of posts are applicable in all the categories of jobs both in the Central and State Government services. In the recent years, such reservation has been extended to the services in the public undertaking units.

In addition to these, the State Governments have also adopted other measures for school children of the Scheduled Castes. These are:

a) provision of books;
b) provision of educational equipment;
c) provision of mid-day meals;
d) provision of stipends;
e) provision of school uniforms etc.
   Besides, 15% seats are reserved for Scheduled Castes and 7.5% for tribes' in admission in public schools. Similar provisions are also available for the SC/ST students in their admission to colleges, universities and other educational institutions. Then equal percentage of hostel seats are also reserved for them. There are post-matric scholarship by the various state governments to the students belonging to these castes and tribes.

Out of 542 Lok Sabha seats 79 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes. Similarly, out of 3997 seats 541 seats in the State Legislatures are reserved for Scheduled Castes.

The bulk of the Scheduled Caste constituencies contain 10 to 30% of the Scheduled Castes population, and around 75% of the Scheduled Castes population live in scattered fashion outside the constituencies reserved for them. This means, the elections of the Scheduled Caste candidates even from the reserved constituencies are largely dependent on the non-Scheduled Castes. Besides, the Scheduled Castes in rural areas are politically less conscious and are influenced by caste politics. Many of them do not exercise their franchise or they are absent during the time of voting due to reasons of migration for employment. In the urban areas, the Scheduled Castes are relatively in a better position. But in spite of the reservation and other developmental measures the deprived sections who are less in number and who are uneducated continue to

remain backward. The caste class nexus works strongly and allows only a few castes to be politically or socially mobile. This has defeated the very purpose of the reservation and the intention of the constitutional measures for development of the Scheduled Castes.

21.3.2 Developmental Programmes

Besides the above mentioned provisions and measures, a number of other developmental schemes have been adopted for the people in general and the Scheduled Castes in particular in the rural areas. Some of these are: integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), the new 20 point programme etc. But incidentally these programmes have not properly been implemented at the block level. A comprehensive strategy was worked out during the -6th Five Year Plan which had 3 aspects:

1) Special Component Plans (SCP) for the Central and the State Governments for monitoring various programmes for development of the Scheduled Castes.

2) Special Central Assistance (SCA) for Special Component Plans for the Scheduled Castes in the different states.

3) Scheduled Caste Development Corporations (SCDC) in the States.

The SCP identifies schemes for welfare and development of the Scheduled Castes and provides financial assistance to the State Governments to various programmes under these schemes, it acts as an interface between the Scheduled Caste families and financial institutions in respect of bankable schemes of economic development. The corporation provides subsidy loans and other kinds of assistance to these families, and thereby, helps to increase the flow of funds from financial institutions to the Scheduled Caste families. In the Seventh and Eighth Five Year Plans also the Central and State Governments have set up a large portions of the plan outlays for the welfare and development of the Scheduled Castes under the special component programmes.

While the constitution emphasises on social and educational backwardness of certain castes and tribes for their being eligible for the benefits of the constitutional provisions, the present controversy centres around the definition of backwardness itself. According to this, the criteria for identifying those deprived sections of population who are eligible for the Government's privileges and concessions have not been clearly identified in the present reservation policy. There are many socially backward castes who are economically forward and are reaping the fruits of reservation while the majority of the needy population have no access whatsoever to these constitutional measures. The experience in the last fifty years or so has shown that the reservation policy has not delivered the desired results to the right people. The policy has generated conflicts and tensions between those who are beneficiaries of reservation and those who are out of the purview of the policy. We have to accept the fact that the opposition of the weaker sections by the stronger sections of the society has not ended. The benefits of development in every aspects of life have been appropriated by about 20% of the population who are at the top and are drawn more from the nonscheduled and less from the scheduled castes.

The intended benefits of the reservation policy as well as of the other developmental programmes are not, made available to those people who rightly

deserve them. There are various infrastructural levels at which these benefits are appropriated as the caste and class politics works very strongly given the existing social circumstances. At the operational level, there are innumerable barriers, which have to be removed. Against this backdrop, it is realised that the Scheduled Castes have to organise themselves socially and politically in order to get their due share and rights and to fight against the dominant castes or class and remove the caste differences among themselves.

The attitudes of the upper castes towards the reservation policy and other developmental measures have also to be positively directed so that the goal of social progress, social justice and social equality can be achieved. The Government and the power elite have to understand the socio-economic factors which seem to make reservation necessary for those people who have been victims of social discrimination and social injustice for over centuries. Their attitudes and perception towards the lower castes have to undergo radical change for getting the above goals realised.

The analogy of footrace here is applied for minorities facing disadvantaged and the need for affirmative action therefore. This analogy was used in the United States to reassert the need for affirmative action.The analogy can also apply to Scheduled Castes who are saddled with all kinds of disadvantages. The minority female that the box talks about could well be a Scheduled Caste woman or man who has been wearing the weights of discrimination for centuries.

What Makes a Fair Foot-race?

Imagine two runners in a 20 mile race. One of the runners must start with a 10-pound weight on each of her feet. As a result, she cannot run as fast, tires more quickly, and falls far behind. Almost anyone would agree that this is not a fair race. So, halfway through the race, the judges decide that she can take off the weights. Is this enough to make the race fair? Does she have any realistic change to win from her present position? Would it not be fairer to allow her to move ahead to the position of the other runner to compensate for the disadvantage of wearing the weights for the first half of the race?

This analogy had been used to illustrate the reasoning behind affirmative action (Farley, 1988, pp. 265, 336). The runner represents a minority of female individual seeking a good job or entry into graduate or professional school. The weights represent the effects of both past discrimination and the institutional discrimination she encountered in her elementary and secondary education. Examples of such discrimination, which may or many not be intentional, include low teacher expectations, tracking, biased tests and classroom materials, lack of minority and female role models, and under funded and segregated schools. Just as the runner is disadvantaged by the weights, the minority applicant is disadvantaged by poverty and institutional discrimination. Just as the other runner was not encumbered by weights in the first half of the race, the white male applicant was not burdened by these disadvantaged in early life. Most people would agree that is would not be fair to expect the runner to catch up after having to run half the race with weights. Could the same argument be made in the case of the minority or female applicant who often has to run the first half of the "race" of life with the "weight" of poverty and educational disadvantage? Is it fair, when that minority person applied for college or employment, to say "Now the weights are gone, so it's a fair race?")

Source: *Sociology* by John E. Farley. 1990. PrenticeHall: New Jersey.

21.4 IDENTITY AND SOCIAL MOBILITY AMONG THE SCHEDULED CASTE

From our discussion in the preceding pages it is very clear that Scheduled Caste or the dalits have always been kept at the fringes of society, treated as untouchables they have been exploited for centuries. To improve their conditions the constitution has not only banned untouchability but gave various provisions which have offered an avenue for a mobility and new identity among the Scheduled Caste. Besides this, the Scheduled Caste as a community have tried to forge a new identity and also, found ways of moving upwards both at socio-cultural as well as political level. In the section to follow we will talk about social mobility and identity among the Scheduled Caste.

21.4.1 Scheduled Castes and Social Mobility

Besides, the various constitutional provisions and welfare and developmental measures for socio-economic progress of the Scheduled Castes after independence, the dalits and their sympathisers have carried out a number of social movements. In the modern times some major movements were led by Gandhi and Ambedkar. Here, we shall examine the movements led by Ambedkar and Gandhi as well as constitutional provisions and measures which have been able to bring a direct influence on the status or positional uplift of the Scheduled Castes.

Yogendra Singh, in his book *Social Stratification and Change* in India has argued that there are two kinds of social movements. One is with the integrative orientation and the other is with the alienating orientation. The efforts made by the lower castes to sanskritise themselves may be called a movement with an integrative orientation because it does not renounce caste as a system of social stratification. The motive force for the backward and the Scheduled Castes to sanskritise was just to ventilate their deprived feelings of status and position which were denied to them for centuries. By imitating the higher castes they tried to find a position as that of the upper castes. But they have not always succeeded in their efforts, as there is no legitimate acceptance by the upper castes.

The movements of the Scheduled Castes with integrative orientation have changed the emphasis in the present time. From imitating the upper castes, the Scheduled Castes have started looking at them (upper castes) with disdain. This has led to a horizontal level caste consolidation. The evidence is provided by many sociological studies. The sub-castes within the scheduled castes have started coming together to form a 'homogeneous' caste group and exploring a new identity. There is change from sanskritisation to consolidation of power and to acquire a positive identity. The consolidation of power is also seen in the increasing presence of dalit based parties, especially BSP in the Indian political arena. In turn, this has contributed to independent identity for Scheduled Castes and has made them less dependent on the upper castes.

Ambedkar has led another movement which was a move from the caste affiliations to embracing Buddhism. In.1956, he launched the drive for mass conversion of the Scheduled Castes to Buddhism, within a few months after his death, his followers organised the political wing of the Scheduled Castes in the name of the Republican Party of India. Both these reflected the alternate

religio-political orientation of the scheduled caste movement with respect to caste based social stratification and political mobilisation. In this regard, Yogendra Singh concludes that Scheduled Caste movements for social mobility has oscillated, on a tendency of integration to sanskritisation and of alienation, conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism or Christianity to Islam.

Undoubtedly, there is relative improvement in terms of upward mobility of certain Scheduled Caste families and individuals. There are also favourable shifts in the political and social awakening among the Scheduled Castes. But the constitutional measures have helped only those Scheduled Castes who have a dominant minority position in a particular region. An analysis of the enforcement of the Untouchability (Offences) Act in various courts indicate that most cases are not against individuals or specific castes but only against institutions. It is also revealed that the enforcement of various measures under the Act is more effective only in those places where the Scheduled Castes are politically more conscious of their rights or have high literacy rates. Relatively speaking there has been a considerable improvement in the social and economic status of the Scheduled Castes but they still lag behind, in many ways, in relation to the upper castes.

Activity 1

Visit the nearest settlement around your house which has predominant Scheduled Caste population and ask them their problems and write them down. Compare your note with others at the Study Centre.

21.4.2 Scheduied Castes Seeking a New Identity

Untouchability is a cultural problem related to the Hindu religion and the caste system. Many social movements were launched by social reformers and religious leaders against untouchability. A number of such movements launched by the *dalits* or the Scheduled Castes under the leadership of B.R. Ambedkar gained strong momentum. This was, reflected in the growing self consciousness of the Scheduled Castes which continues even today. However, the spontaneous revolts and organised struggles launched in different parts of the country against the practice of untouchability and their economic exploitation are not recent phenomena. There had always been anti-untouchability movements throughout the history. But their numbers had increased since the British rule in India and especially during the freedom struggle.

a) Anti-untouchability in Bhakti and Arya Samaj movements

The anti-untouchability movements may be classified into two categories: (1) reformative movements and (2) alternative movements. The reformative movements aim to reform the caste system in order to put an end to the problem of untouchability. The alternative movements aim to create 'an alternative cultural environment by conversion to' another religion. The reformative movements arrived out during different periods in India are broadly of three types: (1) bhakti movement (2) neovedantic movement (3) sanskritisation movement. Bhakti movement was popular during the medieval period in India when there was a succession of foreign invaders like the Mughals, Turks, Arabs and the Afghans. The bhakti movement tried to bring some sort of cultural and emotional integration between the upper castes and the. lower castes. Kabir, Ramanand, Chaitanya, Tukaram and Ramanujam were the noted saints,of that

period who spread the spirit of brotherhood among all human beings. They preached that every caste member could attain salvation through Bhakti to God. In spite of all this, the socio-economic position of the Sudra/untouchable castes remained unchanged. Even the temples constructed by the members of the bhakti movement did not allow the untouchables to enter their premises.

Neo-vedantic movement assumed two forms namely neo-vedantism and sanskritisation. Vivekanand, Dayanand and Gandhi emphasised on secularisation of profession. Dayanand Saraswati the founder of the Arya Samaj believed that the caste system was a political institution created by the ruiers' for the common good of society and not a natural or religious distinction.

b)   **Gandhi and the Movements of Untouchables**

Gandhi also said that all the four varnas were equal in status but not equal in opportunity and occupational division. For him, the varna system was not a hierarchical order. A scavenger had the same status as a Brahmin. As stated earlier in this unit, he symbolically called untouchables as "Harijans", that is "the people of God". Gandhi believed in the unity of various social groups. This was reflected in all his actions like his adoption of a harijan girl as his own daughter. He voluntarily decided to live with the untouchables to become one with them in appearance and in the standard of living. He even opposed separate electorate for the untouchables because, in his opinion, it could intensify the social division, which already existed in Hinduism. Gandhi had organised the Harijan Sevak Sangh for improving the life of the Harijans. The Sangh started hostels for the school untouchable children and improved work conditions of Harijans.

c)   **Sanskritisation: Anti Untouchability Movements in South India**

Further, there were quite a few movements launched by the untouchable castes in different parts of the country which successfully mobilised the people of these castes to forego their traditional way of life, food habits and even name of the castes. These were very much in tune to sanskritisation. In some cases sanskritisation encouraged upward status mobility to honour castes. By abandoning their traditional occupations many of the lower castes had struggled for a higher status in the caste hierarchy. They followed Sanskritic norms and rituals and justified their claims to a higher status by creating their own mythologies according to the local traditions. However, how far their claims for equality with the upper castes was accepted in a particular region was always a question. Those castes who have tried to seek a new identity by identifying with and imitating certain customs and practices of upper castes are still treated as untouchables in their places of residence. But there are a few caste groups like the *Nadars* in Tamil Nadu, *Ezhavas* in Kerala and the *Jatavs* of Agra in Uttar Pradesh who have somehow been able to organise themselves to fight against the oppression meted out to them.

Hardgrave has studied the *Nadar* community in Tamil Nadu. The Nadars who were traditionally engaged in toddy-tapping were treated as untouchables. They rejected their title or surname of *Shanan* and *shavar* to adopt a new title or surname of *Nadar*. This attempt was mainly to dissociate themselves from the traditional occupation of the community. They followed Sanskritic rituals and made attempts to enter temples as early as in 1970. A section of *Nadars* in some villages and towns also converted to Christianity and formed organisations to strengthen unity among them. Many of their attempts to enter temples were

not fulfilled in the beginning because there were lot of restrictions and resentment posed by the caste Hindus or the upper castes. Some cases were taken to the court which delivered the judgement against the *Nadar* community and they were asked to pay Rs. 500/- for purification of the temples in which they attempted to enter. Despite all these failures, the *Nadars* continued their efforts for status elevation and undertook many secular activities. They formed the *Nadar Mahajan Sangham* which carried out literacy programmes and campaigned against toddy-tapping within the community. They also participated in political activities and even obtained political positions. In the 1921 census they got themselves registered as *Nadar Kshatriyas*. M.N. Srinivas has noted that the census operations introduced by the British made every caste self-conscious of its rights and status. This activated the process of sanskritisation.

Similar to *Nadar*, the *Ezhavas* in Kerala also tried to achieve upward social mobility. The *Ezhavas* were also traditionally toddy-tappers. They were led by Shri Narayanan Guru and the S.N.D.P. Yogam, forming an association called *Shri Narayana Guru Dharma Paripalayan*. In the latter part of the 19th century the association launched activities for sanskritising the norms and customs of *Ezhavas*. It undertook secular programmes such as establishing schools and co-operative societies. The *Ezhavas* also joined hands with Christians and Muslims for achieving their aims.

d) Anti-untouchability movement in U.P.

The Jatavs of Uttar Pradesh also tried to sanskritise themselves by giving up their traditional occupation which were directly linked with the Jajmani system, that is, hereditary occupational services to the upper castes by the lower castes. The Jatavs of Agra were urban dwellers and the majority of them were also engaged in the leather work (shoe making). So, many of the Jatavs could improve their social and economic conditions once the shoe industry developed in and around Agra. Like the *Nadars* and *Ezhavas* the *Jatavs* and *Mahars* also formed organisation to spread sanskritic norms and customs among their caste members. They started schools and distributed scholarships to deserving students of their jatis, in order to identify themselves as a higher caste, like the Nadars, the Jatavs also claimed for a new and separate identity (from the rest of the Scheduled Castes). O.M. Lynch in his book "Politics of Untouchability" has shown that the Jatavs claim to be recognised as a separate caste among the scheduled castes without being amalgamated with other castes under the list of scheduled castes which the Jatavs claim not to have any connection.

e) Anti-untouchability movment in Maharashtra

The *Mahars* in Maharashtra under the leadership of Ambedkar demanded, in 1919, separate electorate for the depressed classes.

Many of the militant Mahars also got extremely frustrated with their abortive attempts towards sanskritisation and even gave up Hindu religion completely. Many Jatavs also followed this example later. In the early fifties, Ambedkar found that Buddhism was appropriate as an alternative religion. He preferred Buddhism primarily because in his opinion, it is an indigenous

Indian religion of equality, a religion which was anti-caste and anti-Brahmin. Consequently, along with him a large *Mahars* of Maharashtra converted to Buddhism. The Militant Mahar youth organised the Dalit Panther Movement

in 1942 because the religious conversion did not make any significant change in their socio-economic condition. Now, the scheduled castes are involved in civil rights movements, students movements in the university and college campuses, and also in the ecological movements in many regions. Thus, they are collectivity endorsing their identity in various ways to pave a brighter future for themselves. The new identities of the scheduled castes are being accepted by others. Because of their educational development and the westernisation the practices of untouchability and discrimination against them are slowly becoming less. The welfare and developmental measures undertaken for the improvement in their economic position and upliftment of their social status have been responsible for opening new vistas for the depressed classes. In spite of all these, we cannot say for certain that the Scheduled Castes are enjoying an equal status at par with the others. Their present generation has just set the stage for development and we can hope that the Scheduled Castes would acquire a new and a positive identity vis-a-vis rest of the castes and communities in years to come.

A few more untouchable castes left Hinduism and developed their own separate religion. The *Chamars* and *Chuhars* of Punjab formed the *Adi Dharm* which believed that they were not part of the Hindu caste system. Later, the followers of *Adi Dharm* were politically aligned and absorbed in Ambedkar's Scheduled Caste Federation in the late 1940s. Some Untouchables followed Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, and all those who were converted to Christianity or Islam did not make any attempts to sanskritise them. The classic case is of the *Nadars* of Tirunelvelli in Tamil Nadu who converted to Christianity. However, all those who have become Christians have not ceased to be untouchables. Caste differentiation has permeated itself even within the Church.The economic differentiation between the *Pulaya* Christian (traditional untouchables) and the Syrian Christians in Kerala still persists. Earlier, the Syrian Christians considered themselves to be more superior to *Pulaya* Christians in terms of education and employment. But now their situation is gradually improving. K.C. Alexander who has made a noteworthy study of social mobility among the *Pulaya* Christians has observed the *Pulayas* who now are university graduates and who are employed in white collar jobs are rarely treated as untouchables.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The scheduled castes are:

   a) Kshatriyas

   b) Brahmins

   c) Shudras

   d) Untouchables outside the four-fold division of various systems or the caste system.

2) Antyajas was referred in the Writing of ....

3) Which of the statements is right? Put a (✓)mark in front of the correct statement:

   i) Untouchables do not constitute a homogeneous group.

   ii) Ambedkar called the untouchables Harijans.

   iii) Sanskritisation is process of alienation.

21.5 LET US SUM UP

We have analysed the problems of the Scheduled Castes from the very early times till date. We have seen how untouchability as a phenomenon is inherent in the caste-ridden Hindu society and social mobility for the untouchables is hampered because of their low caste status.

The Scheduled Castes are slowly trying to recover from their disabilities of untouchability of and discrimination. We have seen that there are a number of constitutional provisions made for them in the independent India. We have looked at the operational inconsistencies of the governmental measures adopted for enhancement of the status of the Scheduled Caste. We have also the possible measures to be adopted and properly implemented for a better future of the depressed sections of the people in India.

21.6 KEY WORDS

Scheduled Castes	:	The untouchable castes listed in the Schedule for the purpose of constitutional measures and concessions for their welfare, protection and development.
Chandalas, Mritapas	:	Particular categories of untouchable castes who performed unclean occupations in the past and were regarded the most down-graded people in the Hindu society.
Antyajas	:	Another term used for untouchables who live outside the habitations of the caste Hindus in the past.
Alienation-orientation	:	The untouchable castes getting out of caste system and converting to Buddhism, Christianity or Islam.
Integrative-orientation	:	Assimilation into the upper castes through sanskritisation process, i.e. imitating the culture, behaviour of the styles of life and upper castes.
Homogeneous	:	United whole, without differences.
Infrastructure	:	The facilities available in the existing structure.
Reservation	:	Special concessions and privileges granted by the constitution for the socially and educationally backward sections of the society. Reservation is applicable in admission to educational institutions, hostels, fee concessions etc. for recruitment in government services; and in representation in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures.

21.7   FURTHER READINGS

Singh, Yogendra. 1980, *Social Stratification and Change in India,* Manohar, New Delhi.

Benjamin, Joseph. 1989, *Scheduled Castes in Indian Politics and Society,* ECS Publications

Kamble N.D. 1982, *The Scheduled Castes,* Ashish Publishing House, New Delhi.

Ghurye G.S. 1969, *Caste and Race in India,* Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

21.8   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) The term Scheduled Caste was first used by the Simon Commission.

2) Some of the terms used to address the Scheduled Caste are Untouchables, *Harijans*, *Chandalas* and *Dalits*.

3) According to the materialist class analysis Untouchability grew out of a social class who did not possess the right of holding and usage of land. These landless workers were semi-slaves and were in debt bondage. They toiled for other peoples land but were forced to carry on unclean occupations. They were secured by the social bondage and by the concept of destiny or Karma.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The scheduled castes are:
   a) Kshatriyas
   d) Untouchables outside the four-fold division of various systems or the caste system.

2) "Antyajas" was referred in the Writings of Alberuni.

3) The correct statement is :
   i) Untouchables do not constitute a homogeneous group.

UNIT 22   SCHEDULED TRIBES

Structure

22.0   OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to :

- Explain who are tribes and what makes them different from non-tribes;

- Relate the occupation of tribes within the environment that they live;

- Understand the problems of tribes within the environment that they live; and

- Analysis the various ways in which their problems are being tackled.

22.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit of this block you have acquainted yourself with the problems of Scheduled Castes. In this unit we shall be talking about the problems of Scheduled Tribes.

To understand the problems of Scheduled Tribe we think it necessary to define tribes in terms of their general characteristics and to explain what is meant by Scheduled Tribes. We shall also describe the constitutional safeguards which are provided to them. The unit also discusses their demographic profile with regard to geographical area, racial and linguistic affinities. Next we will try to understand their economic pursuits and their relationships with regard to land and forest. We will also discuss their educational status and show how the low rate of literacy is contributory factor for their exploitation. Tribal struggles and movements are manifestations and vent to their frustration. In the end, the unit presents the various opinions as to what should be the proper approach to their development.

22.2 DEFINITION OF TRIBE AND SCHEDULED TRIBE

In this section we shall be dealing with the definitions of tribes and the Scheduled Tribes. Let us begin with the definition of tribe.

22.2.1 The Tribe

A universally acceptable or applicable definition is lacking. However the word tribe is widely used. Purely for the sake of classification, the British Government used the word tribe, along with prefixes like jungle and hill, aboriginal, indigenous to describe, the people who seemed to have little contact with the main culture. The word tribe has been used by European historians to refer to distinct groups like the Gauls and Anglo-Saxons and autonomous political groups such as Lichchavi,. Mulla, Khasa, etc. in ancient India. British social anthropologists like Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard,. Fortes and Nadel have used the word tribe to refer to autonomous political unit which lives in its own territory and possesses its own distinctive way of life.

Efforts have been made to look for some generalisation and common denominators if not a proper definition. In the Indian context the Commissioner for, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in his report for the year 1952 has listed sudh common features. These are that the tribes: (i) live away from the civilised world in the inaccessible parts lying in the forest hills, (ii) they belong to either one of the three stocks–Negrito, Australoid or Mongoloids, (iii) they speak the same tribal dialect, (iv) they profess 'primitive' religion known as 'Animism' in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element, (v) they follow 'primitive' occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest products; and (vi) they are largely meat eaters. The list also includes their love for food and drink.

A.R. Desai commenting on the above features, says that of 25 million people described as tribal only 5 millions possess these features. D.N. Majumdar states that, except for the tribes of Eastern India, everywhere else ethnic strains have crisscrossed in the sub-continent. Thus, it is very difficult to say with certainty

what is tribal. Yet, in spite of the social and cultural differences that exist among the tribal people dispersed over India. In their social life kinship is the principal unit of organisation. They are often the units for land ownership, economic production and consumption. In spite of the differences some common features do exist.

In the subsistence economy very few tribal groups are still hunters and food gatherer but many of them practise shifting agriculture or cultivation. And still others are pastoral nomads. Tribes do not usually take to trading or financial transactions. Thus, the society is more or less homogeneous with little sense of hierarchy and subordination.

Politically, tribal societies are relatively simple and egalitarian. Lineage, clan and kinship tend to overlap with their political organisations. Tribal religion tends to be less systematised, less specialised and elaborated.

These above mentioned characteristics are very general and preliminary and are often shared by non-tribals also. Keeping in mind the problem of definition, F.G. Bailey thus suggests that the definition of tribe should be seen in a continuum: the tribe at one end and caste.at the other end.

We have discussed so far about the problem of conceptualising the tribe. It still leaves us with the question as who are Scheduled Tribe?

22.2.2 The Scheduled Tribes

For ages, the tribes had little more than a casual contact with so called civilised or advanced cultures and societies. When the British consolidated their position in India, their expansionist operations necessitated the opening up of the entire country through an effective communication system. The British consolidated the money economy, acquired lands and introduced cash-cropping, land tenure, a new legal system, administration etc. All these measures opened the tribal land to outside influences. Though all these changes brought.relief to the tribes these systems gradually became exploitative. Along with these the Christian missionaries in India exposed these communities of people to much quicker tempo of modern life by providing them formal, education, making them conscious about health and so forth.

The social, cultural and economic exploitations, of the tribals prompted them to go on wars and agitations. With increasing feeling of deprivation their agitations, struggles and movements also increased. In the wake of tribal upheavals and for variety of other reasons, the British thought of protecting the tribes by having regulated areas for which normal rules were not applicable. Along with the distinct and special arrangements made for areas populated by tribals, there also emerged the concept of tribe as a social category to differentiate them from the Hindus, Muslims and other distinct religious groups. The Government of India Act 1933 incorporated some provisions and the policy of reservation for the tribes notified in the Schedule.

The concept of Scheduled Tribe emerged henceforth and was included in the Constitution of independent India. A list of tribes was incorporated in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. In 1971, the list contained names of 527 tribes. The reservation policy or the policy of protecting discrimination for the notified or Scheduled Tribes has been made a constitutional obligation

> **Box 1**
>
> **Constitutional Safeguards**
>
> Under Article 15(4) special provisions are made for educational advancement of the Scheduled Tribes. These provisions are like reservation of seats and relaxation in marks in admission to educational institutions, scholarships, etc.
>
> Under Article 46 the State is enjoined upon to promote with special care to education and economic interests of SC and ST and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
>
> Articles 330 and 332 seats are reserved for SC and ST in Lok Sabha State Vidhan Sabhas.
>
> Under Artcle 339(1) the President may at anytime appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Area and the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the State.

22.3 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TRIBES

Scheduled Tribe population, according to 1991 census was about 3.7 million and comprised 8.1% of the country's total population. They are spread over the various regions of India and we find various races represented among them.

22.3.1 Geographical Zone

The tribal population can be demarcated in the following three geographical zones:

i) North-North-Eastern Zone : It includes the tribal areas of Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir), Himachal Pradesh, Northern Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim and the North East comprising seven states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura).

ii) Central or Middle Zone: It includes West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Southern Uttar Pradesh, Southern Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra.

iii) Southern Zone: It includes Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and the two Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

The Middle zone has the largest tribal population and the tribal communities residing therein are better known than those in the other zones.

22.3.2 Racial Affinities

On the basis of racial affinities the Indian people are classified into various groups. The ancestry of the present tribal population is traced chiefly to the following three races:

i) The Negrito : This shorter version of the Negro is found in the Andaman islands. There are four Scheduled Tribes in this area, viz., the Andamanese (now settled in Strait Island, the *Onge* in Little Andaman Island, the *Jarawa* on the western coast of Middle and South Andaman Islands and the *Sentinelese* in the two Sentinel Islands.

States	Total population	ST population	ST population as % of State population	ST population as % of total ST population
India	838,583,988	67,758,380	8.1	100.0
Madhya Pradesh	66,181,170	15,399,034	23.3	22.7
Maharashtra	78,937,187	7,318,281	9.3	10.8
Orisssa	31,659,736	7,032,214	22.2	10.4
Bihar	86374,465	6,616,914	7.7	9.8
Gujarat	41,309,582	6,161,775	14.9	9.1
Rajasthan	44,005,990	5,474,881	12.4	8.1
Andhra Pradesh	66,508,008	4,199,481	6.3	6.2
West Bengal	68,077,965	3,808,760	5.6	5.6
Assam	22,414,322	2,874,441	12.8	4.2
Karnataka	44,977,201	1,915,691	4.3	2.8
Meghalaya	1,774,778	1,517,927	85.5	2.2
Nagaland	1,209,546	1,060,822	87.7	1.6
Tripura	2,575,205	853,345	30.9	1.3
Mizoram	689,765	653,565	94.8	1.0
Tamil nadu	55,858,946	574,194	1.0	0.8
Arunachal Pradesh	864,558	550,351	68.7	0.8
Kerala	29,098,518	320,967	1.1	0.6
Uttar Pradesh	139,112,287	287,901	0.2	0.4
Himachal Pradesh	5,170,877	213,349	4.2	0.3
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	138,477	109,380	79.0	0.2
Sikkim	406,457	90,901	22.4	0.1
Lakshadweep	51,707	48,163	93.1	0.1
A & N Islands	280,661	26,770	9.5	0.0
Daman & Diu	101,586	11,724	11.6	0.0
Goa	1,169,793	376	0.0	0.0
Punjab	20,281,969	0	0.0	0.0
Haryana	16,463,648	0	0.0	0.0
Delhi	9,420,644	0	0.0	0.0
Pondicherry	807,785	0	0.0	0.0
Chandigarh	642,015	0	0.0	0.0
	838,583,988	67,758,380	8.1	

ii) The Proto-Australoid : The tribes of the Middle and the Southern zones are generally assigned to this race and they form the bulk of the tribal population in India.

iii) The Mongoloid : The tribes of the North and North-Eastern zones generally belong to this race which is divided into two sub-types, viz., Palaeo-Mongoloids (long-headed and broad-headed) and TibetoMongoloids.

Besides these three main racial groups, some tribal communities trace their ancestry-to the Palaeo-Mediterranean stock also.

Projection of Scheduled Tribes Population in 2001
(assuming the same proportion of Scheduled Tribe as in 1991)

	Total population in 2001	ST population	SC population as % of State population
India	1,017,544,000	84,465,196	8.3
Madhya Pradesh	81,666,000	19,002,044	23.3
Maharashtra	92,314,000	8,558,448	9.3
Orisssa	36,284,000	8,051,352	22,2
Bihar	102,423,000	7,846,349	7.7
Gujarat	49,194,000	7,337,822	14.9
Rajasthan	54,816,000	6,819,778	12.4
Andhra Pradesh	76,773,000	4,847,638	6.3
West Bengal	80,312,000	4,493,218	5.6
Assam	26,589,000	3,409,807	12.8
Karnataka	52,922,000	2,254,080	4.3
Tamil Nadu	62,400,000	641,432	1.0
Kerala	32,605,000	359,645	1.1
Uttar Pradesh	175,626,000	363,468	0.2
Punjab	23,858,000	0	0.0
Haryana	20,204,000	0	0.0
Total For 15 Major States	967,950,000	73,985,081	7.6
Other Smaller States*	49,594,000	10,480,115	21.1
India	1,017,544,000	84,465,196	8.3

22.3.3 Linguistic Affinities

On the basis of linguistic affinities, the Indian people are classified into four speech families, viz., the Indo-European (Aryan), the Dravidian, The Austric (*Kol* or *Munda*) and Tibeto-Chinese. The Scheduled Tribes speak about 105 languages and 225 subsidiary languages, or dialects. The linguistic classification of the Indian tribal population is as follows:

i) **Sino-Tibetan** : In the North and North-Eastern zones most of the tribal speak some form or the other of Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman. In certain north eastern areas there is an admixture of the Mon-Khmer (Austric) speech, e.g., among the *Khasi*. In Nagaland, sixteen languages apart from numerous dialects are spoken.

ii) **Kol or Munda** : In the Central zone the Austric family of languages is dominant. The Munda languages lack the verb and gender differentiation. The only classificatory device is the differentiation between animate and inanimate. Some of the important Munda languages are *Santhali, Mundari, Ho, Kharia, Korwa, Korku* and *Gadaba*.

iii) **Dravidian** : The tribal people of the Southern zone speak some form or the other of the Dravidian languages, viz., Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu. The *Kedar*, one of the oldest inhabitants of India, speak a Malayalam dialect. There has been Dravidianisation of significant South Indian tribes like the *Chenchu* and the *Yenadi*. Some of the important Dravidian tribes are *Gond*, *Oraon, Maler, Kandh, Saora, Parja, Koya, Kolam, Paniyan, Irula, Malser* and *Malaryan*.

Thus, the geographical zones described earlier correspond roughly to the three linguistic zones. But there-is no correlation between race and language. People belonging to one race may speak different languages. Likewise, people speaking one language, or languages of one speech-family, may belong to different races. The Aryan languages are spoken by some tribal communities as a result of cultural contact. In the Middle zone most of the tribes have become bilingual, speaking their own dialect as also some form of Hindi, Oriya or Bangali as spoken by the neighbouring rural population. The *Baigas* have completely lost their original language and they speak Chhattisgarhi, though culturally they continue to maintain certain distinctive traits of their tribes.

Activity 1

Try and see if you can identify the recial and linguistic origins of some of the tribal people who you happen to know.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Name some of the important Dravidian Tribes.

    ....

    ....

    ....

2) List out the three racial groups to whose ancestry the present tribal population is traced to.

    ....

    ....

    ....

3) Name a few tribes from the Central Tribal zone.

    ....

    ....

    ....

22.4 TRIBAL ECONOMY

The tribal communities are engaged in hunting and food gathering. They are also pastoral people and nomads, shifting cultivators, settled agriculturists, artisans and plantation, mining and industrial labourers. In Koraput District of Orissa we find the spectacle of co-existence of primitive groups like *Bondas* and *Didavais*. Also, there are tribals from two different communities who work in the HAL factory at Sunabad manufacturing supersonic MIG engines. Thus, there is wide divergence in the economic status of the tribes from region to region and within a region.

22.4.1 Hunting and Food Gathering Tribes

These tribes depend for their livelihood on gathering food (edible roots, tubers, fruits, nuts, flowers, leaves, honey) from the forest, hunting and fishing. The

important tribes in this category include: *Jarawa, Onge, Chenchu, Birhor, Kadar, Maria, Kuki, Bonda, JuAng, Palliyan, Raji* among others.

They use poor indigenous tools like digging sticks, iron jungle knives, earthern, wooden or bamboo pots and vessels, bamboo baskets and sticks for food gathering. For hunting purposes they possess different types of traps like rope nets used by Birhors to catch monkeys and hares. Pit traps are used to catch big animals like wild boar. Three types of weapons are used: hand missiles like *bhala, barchhi, labeda* (thick wooden ends), *qulel* and hand operated implements like axe and knive. Dogs are used by *Kadars* and *Chenchus* for hunting. For fishing they have a variety of traps made of rope, yarn and bamboo. Harpoons, *bhalas* and sticks are also used. Fishing by hand is also common. In food gathering, hunting or trapping and fishing operations tribals may take part individually as well as in groups.

22.4.2 Pastoral and Cattle Herding Tribes

The classic pastoral tribes include *Todas* of the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, *Gujjars* and *Bakarwals* of Jammu & Kashmir. and *Gaddis* and *Gujjars* of Himachal Pradesh. In middle India *Kisans* or *Nagesiag* of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are considered to be pastoral to a certain extent. *Bharwad* or *Maldhari* and *Raisipotra* of Gujarat and *Rabaris* of Gujarat and Rajasthan are the cattle herders of western India. *Gollas, Kurubas* and *Labadas* are the herders in south India. *Bhotias* of the U.P. hills depend on cattle rearing. Some tribals are loosely called 'pastoralists' and they treat the occupation as a subsidiary one. Todas of the Nilgiris have attractedworld-wide attention on account of their economy and religion being centred around the buffalo and their practice of polyandry. Pastoralists have adopted themselves in many ways in different parts of India. Some earn out their living by selling items like milk and its products, wool, hair and so on and others rear livestock and earn their livelihood by selling animals. They also consume milk and milk products themselves. The livestock provides them food usually not so much in meat as in milk, dung for fuel, hides for leather and utensils and wool or hides for clothing.

22.4.3 Cultivators

Agriculture among the tribes is of simple and poor nature. They do cultivation at subsistence level and are unable to meet their minimum daily needs. In the low-lying land, raising paddy crops is easy as artificial irrigation is not needed. In the uplands only coarser varieties of rice as well as pulses, millets and other products of minor value are grown. Their agricultural implements are indigenous and made by local ironsmiths. A few tribes use cow dung manure as well.

An important characteristic of tribal agriculture is cooperation seen at the time of transplanting of paddy and on other occasions. Help is rendered among the relatives or among the villagers or among the people of an area reciprocal basis. Some prominent agriculturist tribes are *Khasis* and *Jaintias* of Meghalaya; *Khasas* (*Jaunsaris*) and *Tharus* of Uttar Pradesh; *Kinnauras*, *Pangwals* and *Swanglas* of Himachal Pradesh; *Bhumijs, Koras, Bhuiyas, Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Hos, Kharwars, Baigas, Gonds*, etc., in middle India; *Bhils, Meenas, Garasias, Damarias, Koli Mahadevs, Varlis, Thakurs, Korkus, Dublas*, etc., in western India; *Koyas* of Andhra Pradesh; *Malayalis* of Tamil Nadu and so on.

Besides these plain cultivators, there are the hill cultivators who are -engaged in shifting cultivation. Hill cultivation is a seasonally regulated sequence of procedure designed to open up and bring under cultivation a patch of forest land. After one or two seasons of staple cropping the plot is left fallow for years together with a view to restoring fertility of the soil through forest growth. Following this the plot is again cleared and vegetations are burnt and another cycle of cultivation begins. Hill cultivation goes under a variety of names: *Jhum* in North-East, *Kurwa* or *Khallu* in Santhat *Paraganas*, *Bewara* in Ranchi and *Palamau* in Bihar, *Podu, Rema, Dahi, Kaman, Bringa, Gudia*, *Dongarchas* in Orissa, *Penda, Dahiya, Biwar, iguharh, Farhha, Dippa, Marhan or Erka* in Madhya Pradesh, *Kondapady* in Andhra Pradesh.

Approximately more than 6 takh Scheduled Tribe families are engaged in shifting cultivation covering about 10 million hectares of land. Tribal people inhabiting in the hill forests of all the seven states in the North-East, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are dependent on hill cultivation for their livelihood. These tribes include *Garos, Tripuris, Noatias*., a few *Halams* and *Riangs, Chakmas, Mags* and *Nagas* with their different nomencatures in the North-East, *Malers* or *Sauria Paharias* of Santhal Paraganas, *Hill Kharias* and a few *Korwas, Parhaiyas* and *Birjias* in Bihar, *Saoras* and *Kutia Kandhs* in Orissa, *Kamars, Baigas* and *Maria Gonds* in Madhya Pradesh, *Konda Dhoras* and *Nooka* or *Mukha Dhoras* and a few *Bagatas* in Andhra Pradesh and *Malaikudis* in Karnataka.

22.4.4 Simple Artisans

Most of the tribal people know matting, basketry, bamboo work, spinning, etc., which serve as subsidiary occupations for them. But a number of tribes subsist on crafts and cottage industries like basket making, tool making (iron and wooden).Other tribes use, spinning and weaving, metal work, ironsmithy, etc. They visit the periodical markets *(haats)* with their finished goods and dispose them off by barter or on cash.

Some of the tribes whose primary occupation is craft are mentioned below. Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir and *Gaddis, Gujjars* and *Kinnauras* of Himachal Pradesh produce wool products. In Bihar *Lohras, Karmafis, Chik-Baralks* and *Mahalis* are artisans. *Lohras* and *Karmalis* fulfil the needs of agricultural tribes or other people by making and repairing their agricultural implements and other tools. *Chick-Baralks* supply hand-woven cloth to *Mundas, Oraons*, etc. *Mahatis* make baskets and other bamboo products to earn their livelihood. *Asurs* of Bihar and *Agarias* of Madhya Pradesh were traditionally ironsmiths. Now, they have adopted agriculture and hunting. *Kolams* of Maharashtra were formerly engaged in basket and mat making from bamboo strips and also from paratya (remnants of cotton). This traditional occupation is still practised though they have adopted agriculture. *Vitolias* of Maharashtra are engaged in making bamboo mats, baskets and winnowing fans. *Irulas* of Tamil Nadu and *Thotis* of Andhra Pradesh make bamboo mats and baskets and subsist on this. *Kotas* of the Nilgiris depend on carpentry, tool making and pottery.

22.4.5 Labour: Agricultural and Non-agricultural

Traditional agriculturists or artisans amongst tribals have adopted an economic life of casual labour. Agricultural work is mostly available in the locality itself

within a radius of a few kilometres. Non-agricultural work potentialities are situated in the local as well as at distant places in different states. Non-agricultural labourers are mostly engaged in different industries. Tribals have taken to such work on account of pressure on land due to population growth and opening of mines and industries in tribal areas. They go out as seasonal migrants to nearby or distant towns, mines, mills and tea gardens to work as labourers. They work in railway and road construction, forestry, -construction work like civil work in emerging factories, houses, dams, bridges, etc. Their men and women move to the working places in bands. The proportion of tribals is progressively increasing in categories like factory workers, plantation workers, trade, commerce, business, transport, mining, construction, political or social work, Government service, municipal service, teaching, priesthood, entertainment art, etc. The core of industrial India falls in middle India and the tribals of Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh from the bulk of industrial labour in this zone. The tribals of Chhota Nagpur also work in the tea garden of Assam and West Bengal and at the same time are engaged in forestry and other works of Andaman and Nicobar Islands. *Santhals* are said to be good pick miners and coal cutters. Half of the labour force in the manganese industry of Madhya Pradesh tribal.

Santhals and *Hos* dominate in iron mines and industry in Bihar. Most of the tribals are unskilled labourers in quarries, mines and industries. Landless labourers have accepted this work as their main occupation while for others it is a subsidiary occupation. Occupational changes are obvious among village artisans. There is gradual disappearance of village craft due to the impact of industrialisation. Along with occupational changes there is considerable increase in income and expenditure patterns of the families of industrial labourers. Material culture has undergone much change.

22.4.6   The Skilled White-collar Job Holders and Traders

Some individuals or families of tribal communities of all the regions are working for their livelihood in offices, hospitals, factories, and business enterprises. Some of them are engaged in commercial trade of their own. The reservation for the Scheduled Tribes in services and post in Government offices and Public Sector Undertakings as laid down in the Constitution has helped a lot in creating this type of economic life among tribals. It is observed that mostly the educated and the converted Christian tribals are engaged in offices, hospitals, administrative 'jobs, etc. The representative tribes of traders are *Bhotias* of the Indo-*Tibetan* border and *Valmikis* of Andhra Pradesh.

22.5   TRIBE, LAND AND FOREST

It is evident from our discussion on the tribal economy that the majority of the tribes depend on land and forest to make a living. Their social life is also interwoven around the land they live on. They have thus a physical and. emotional attachment and dependence on land and forest. Most problems faced by these people arise out of their relation to land and forest. Let's have a look at the land and agrarian situation to understand their problem better.

22.5.1   Land and Agrarian Situation

According to the agricultural census of operational holdings held in 1981, the

holdings of the Scheduled Tribes amount to 167.04 lakhs hectares forming 10.2% of the total holdings. Their share in the total number of operational holdings is low in proportion to their population. The decreasing per capita landholdings has resulted in scarcity of land and displacement of tribals from their land. Land scarcity and backwardness is, thus, one of the central aspects of the agrarian situation.

The process of land alienation among the tribals has been going on for a long time. After the advent of British rule, with opening up of means of communication and increased expansion of British dominion there was infiltration by non-tribals into tribal areas. The tribals increasingly came into contact with non-tribals. Some of the effects of their contacts were healthier but the tribals were invariably exploited because of their ignorance and innocence. Frequent needs for cash in lean times and famines forced the tribals to get into the clutches of money lenders. Inadequate credit facilities led to unscrupulous money-lending. Loans were advanced to them in cash at exorbitant interests. The tribals being ignorant and illiterate didn't maintain records of such transactions and were not aware of the malpractices of the money lenders. Often they parted with practically all they produced to payback debts and interests or gain their land in lieu of payment. The money-lenders invariably got the land transferred to their name. This exploitation was sought to be checked by various Acts adopted by the Government. But because of the cunningness of the money-lenders and their collusions with politicians, bureaucrats and police administration the provisions of the acts proved to be ineffective and the exploitation of tribal steadily continued.

Land of the tribals has also increasingly been taken over by the Government for mining and industries. The tribals are uprooted and displaced from their land. They have also not benefited from industrialisation. As the tribals have remained mostly unskilled, their claims for getting government jobs have been overlooked. Those few who are employed are invariably in menial jobs. Industrialisation, thus, hasn't provided an alternative employment to the tribals.

In the matter of agricultural practice, the tribals are still lagging behind as stated earlier. The majority of the tribes practise shifting agriculture. They clean patches of forests and slopes of hills by burning the trees and bushes and then dibbling the seed in ash-covered soil. For the first few years, good crops are produced but the fertility of the soil is soon lost out. Cultivators then shift to other areas and the cycle continues. It is generally agreed that this is not an ideal method. Experts have described this practice as being wasteful and primitive causing soil erosion and floods and thus causing ecological imbalance.

A lot has been said about the improvement of shifting cultivation and weaning people away from it. But it is so not easy for shifting cultivation is a way of life of the tribals. Their social and physical climate, terrain habits, customs, etc. are interwoven with this system of cultivation. Any improvement or replacement of shifting cultivation must therefore take into account the socio-economic conditions of the people. Attempts were made to bring the shifting cultivators or *Jhumias* down to the flat regions in Tripura. They were provided with, subsidies to arrange the basic requirements for a settled agriculture.

This arrangement had proved to be a failure. However, the people who practised subsistence economy were placed in direct competition with largely monetised economy. Thus, the Renuka Ray Committee has been very critical of this. The

Dhebhar Commission visited some such areas and remarked some of these attempts as 'absurd'. Thus, weaning people away from it does appear to be not the only solution. The problem in case is to be understood in the backdrop of the peoples' sociocultural and economic relations.

Another problem which accentuates the situation of land scarcity and land alienation among the tribals is their growing population.

As in other matters of agriculture the tribals also suffer from terrible inadequacies. They do not have access to credit facilities, irrigation works, etc.. On the whole, in matter of planned development the tribals have been neglected.

The situation of tribals is also worsened by the fact that their fields have low productivity. Talking about the poor yield of land, especially in central India, 'Stephan Fuchs (1972) has pointed out various reasons. 'Poor stony soil, paucity of irrigation facilities and employment of very crude techniques and implements of cultivation are some of the main reasons for the poor quality of productivity.

22.5.2 Forest and Forest Produces

Most of the tribal areas is covered with forest. The tribals are very heavily dependent on forest not only on account of the geographical configuration but because of unproductive agriculture. Despite the popular cliche that "tribals are forests" and the symbiotic relationship between them and forest, there is almost constant friction between tribals and the Government (Forest Departments). There is a basic difference in the perceptions of the tribal people and the Government in respect of forests. The tribals regard forest as their mother. Those forests produces which are important for the tribal people may have little value in the eyes of the Government. On the other hand, the tribal may not have much concern about timber or such other items which the Government may consider as the main produce of forests. After reservation of forests the tribal people had to seek permission of Government officials even for the use of those resources which were a part of their long tradition. Then there was competition for their use from outsiders. Restrictions were imposed on tribals even on use of bamboo forests and collection of firewood.

In the new forest policy the needs of the local people have received some appreciation. Yet certain provisions therein cast a heavy burden on tribal economy. The Forest Conservation Act, 1980 brought a basic change in the management of forest. Earlier, after clearing natural forests, the plantation of single species like teak, for meeting the needs of outside economy for timber, was accepted as scientific management of forests. But now forest is taken to mean natural forests comprising all sorts of trees, plants, creepers, etc. This new perception serves the interests of tribals. In a bid to convert ordinary forests into full-bloom natural forests and protect environment, the entry of the people has still been banned and they are being denied even their ordinary requirements from the forest. The Government gives contract to others of minor forest produces like bamboo, *tendu leaves, mahua, kusum, karamy* and *sal* seeds etc. This contributes to the state revenues. This is meant in away to eliminate the middle-men who exploit the tribals. But the take over has adversely affected the customary practises of Tribals like their weekly market. Earlier, this weekly market was a place of tribal collective activity which has been disrupted. The takeover of forests by Government has affected the tribals in other ways too.

In times of famine, scarcity and lack of returns from agriculture the tribals used to arrange items for their basic survival from the forest. They killed small game, gathered tubes, leaves berries, etc. which helped them tide over the period of stress. The ecological link between tribal, and nature has suffered a great deal with rapid destruction of forest and by Government controls.

In many cases due processes of law have not been followed for notifying reserved forests. This has led to serious problems in Sonbhadra (U.P.), Garhchirol (Maharashtra) and Singhbhum (Bihar). There are also disputes regarding demarcation not only between the people and the Forest Department but also between the Forest Department and the Revenue Department. In some states the problem of Forest Villages has still not been solved. At present, there is direct confrontation between the Government and the tribal people in some areas like Adilabad, Khammam and Srikakulam in Andhra Pradesh, South Bastar in Madhya Pradesh, Garhchiroli, Chandrapur and Nasik in Maharashtra and Singhbhum in Bihar. In many areas the forests are not out of effective control of the Forest Department. In the light of these it seems necessary to consider justifiable demands of the people and avoid superimposition of laws unilaterally as well as to check authoritarian and oppressive behaviour of the departmental officials.

Check Your Progress 2

1)   Describe in few words the relationship the tribals have with the forest.

....

....

....

....

....

2)   Name the tribes whose primary occupation is craft.

....

....

....

....

....

3)   Hill cultivation goes under a variety of names what are those names?

....

....

....

....

....

4) Who are the pastoralists?

....

....

....

....

....

22.6 TRIBES AND EDUCATION

Education is considered not only one of the important inputs or factors for social change but an index of social change. Thus education was one of the means sought to uplift the tribes from their deplorable conditions. Articles 46 of our Constitution is looking after the educational development of Scheduled Tribes as stated earlier. It states "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

Accordingly special assistance has been given to promote education among the Scheduled Tribes. A number of schools and hostels have been opened in tribal areas. Free education, tuition fees, hostel fees, distribution of text books, reservation of seats in schools, colleges and universities, etc. are some of the facilities made available to them. In spite of the specific constitutional provisions made and the various grants and facilities available for the promotion of education among the tribes we do not get a satisfactory picture, The statistics show us how dismal the literacy rate is among the Scheduled Tribes over the years.

22.6.1 Literacy Rates

We find that the Scheduled Tribes have doubled their literacy level in the previous two decades (1961-1981). Yet, their achievement in literacy is not comfortable when we compare it to the rates of literacy among other communities.

The gap between tribals and non-tribals in the field of education has not decreased. Instead, it has widened in some areas. This is so in spite of the promotional scheme of tribal development adopted by the Government. Now, the question is why is this so? We shall discuss this in the following section.

22.6.2 Problems of Education

The problems of education among the Scheduled-Tribes have been studied by various committees, institutions, organisation and many individuals. They all could find some basic problems of education among the tribes. One of the basic problems plaguing the tribals is their economic, deprivation and backwardness. A large number of tribals are living below the poverty level. To them, education is a luxury. Moreover, in the case of those people who are engaged in agriculture their minor children are also engaged in it. This is one of the reasons for the few enrolments of children from the families of the tribal cultivators. A very few tribal parents are educated. The illiterate parents do

not realise the value of education. They feel little urge to educate their children. Many tribals like – *Gujjars, Bhotia, Gaddi* etc. are nomads who move from place to place. There are others who migrate from one place to the other in search of employment. It is inevitable under the circumstances that education in both the cases is neglected.

The medium of instruction is another hindrance for promotion of education among the tribes. The medium of instruction in schools in tribal areas is not the mother tongue of the tribals inhabiting there. Many a times it is found that tribal languages do not have a script of their own. In almost all the schools in tribal areas there is lack of sufficient number of tribal teachers. The curriculum of education is another important problem. The existing curriculum as experts rightly feel, is not suited and has little relevance to the tribal people.

These and many other such problems haven't really been kept in mind when various schemes for tribal development have been adopted. There is often neutral formalism in bureaucracy about many welfare and development schemes formulated for them. The tribals are still at fringe and the various types of development have hardly touched them. They remain discontented to a large extent. A number of agitations and struggles among the tribes are expression of their discontent.

22.7 TRIBAL MOVEMENTS

Numerous uprisings and movements among the tribes especially in Bihar had occurred as early as in 1772. Some of the important movements among the tribes in British India were *Mizos* (1810), *Kols* (1795 & 1831), *Mundas* (1889), *Santhals* (1853), *Muria Gonds* (1886) and so forth.

When the British came to India and expanded their rule, they came into clash with the tribes also. The British interfered in many of their customs which was resented by the tribes. But more than anything, the oppressive and exploitative landlords, middlemen, money-lenders, forest officials and princely chiefs contributed much to tribals rise in a revolt. They were eventually subdued, disarmed and or many a times appeased.

The tribes who were in close proximity to Hindus and who were influenced by the Hindu customs and traditions had their own preoccupations, their movements were directed to raising their social mobility. Their movements have been compared to the status mobility movements among the lower castes. The tribes like *Bhumij, Kond, Juang* and number of other tribes were influenced by caste associations of Hindus. In Madhva Pradesh, for instance, there were movements among the Gonds claiming Kshatriya status. The sought to purify and cleanse their social and religious institutions in tune with the practice of high caste Hindus.

After Independence the Scheduled tribes, whether Hinduised or Christianised, were granted certain economic, educational, political and administrative privileges. This made them aware of themselves as unified groups who could hold on their own against all sorts of oppressions. They also could claim higher status because of education, economic benefits, political power etc. There are intances of movements among tribes seeking their ties not only with fellow tribes but also with the other oppressed sections of people.

As we can see, coming together for collective actions among tribes has found range of variations, But when we examine a social movement in all its aspects, we find that a tribal movement does not fit neatly into a type. A movement tends to serve several interests at the same time, apparently political movement has social, economic and cultural even if its such objectives are not formulated. For instance, the Jharkhand Movement was a political movement fighting for a homeland – a federal state. But it has an ideological base like a cultural reawakening, attempts to common religion, habits, traditions, etc. which supply the infrastructures for the political grouping of tribals in South Bihar.

For the purpose of study, the tribal movements have often been classified into 3 types on the basis of their orientation. These are : (1) Movements for political autonomy, the Jharkhand Movement is a good example of this (2) the agrarian and forest based movements, the naxalite movements others involving tribes of Bihar, Orissa and Andhra Pradesh are fighting for their customary rights of land and forest. It can be are the results of oppression, discrimination, neglect and backwardness of the tribal people. (3) The third kind is socio-cultural movement.

While it is true that tribals are fighting to have their access to the fruits of development, there is also a growing realisation among them to preserve their cultures, customs, traditions etc. Thus there are revivalistic, nativistic and millenarial trends of movements among the tribes in India. This brings us to the questions as whether the tribals should be assimilated into the mainstream or whether they should be protected? And in what way they will benefit from the development taking place in the country? Let us see what various scholars have to say on this.

22.8 APPROACHES TO THE TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT

Under the British rule the policy of maintaining the status quo was followed. Hutton and others condemned too much of isolation as also of complete assimilation of tribals. V. Elwin wanted a revivalist policy to be adopted. His scheme of "National parks" pleaded for the complete non-interference of the British rule and its withdrawal from the tribal areas. In reaction to these conservative or revivalist views, G.S. Ghurye, a senior sociologist, made a case for the complete assimilation of tribals with the rest of the people in India. He said that it was misleading to call the tribes aborigines as they were actually only backward Hindus and the solution of all their problems cultural as well as economic and social, lay in their complete assimilation into the Hindu society. In fact, the tribal folks have distinct cultures and their complete assimilation with Hindus may not be possible without disruption to their culture, customs, traditions etc. Tribal culture has many happy and useful facets and the same must be preserved.

D.N. Majumdar opines that the best policy for tribes would be for their controlled (planned) and limited assimilation. By limited assimilation he implied; the need and desirability of preserving their useful institutions, customs, practices etc. though these are to be tribal in origin and character. The transcultural borrowing should be encouraged. For example, instead of forcing child marriage upon the tribal folk Hindus should adopt the tribal

practice of marrying late. It would not only improve average health but also put a check on the alarming rise in India's population.

A plan for tribal development must be holistic. It should tackle all cultural, social, economic and political, problems of the tribals. Priorities must be fixed in terms of quick results. At the outset, the tribal support for planning has to be enlisted by demonstrating to them that an attempt is being made-to change their life for the better and not at destroying whatever they have. The first focal point on which to concentrate is to their health any hygiene besides their economic life. No plans for change can succeed without their proper education. Instructions should be imparted in such knowledge as helps a person to be a better number of his / her own community much as possible the traditional system of imparting instruction should be retained. It is a human problem of immense magnitude for the solution of which administrators, social workers and social scientists must pool their resources together.

The informal approach towards development was laid down by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India. In his foreword to the second edition of 'A Philosophy of NEFA' by Dr. Verrier Elwin, Nehru wrote on 9th October, 1958:

"We cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas or just not take interest in them. In the world of today that is not possible or desirable. At the same time, we should avoid over-administering these areas and, in particular, sending too many outsiders into tribal territory. It is between these two extreme positions that we have to function. There has to be such developments as communication, medical facilities, education and better agriculture."

Nehru added that these avenues of development should be pursued within the broad framework of the following five fundamental principles:

1) People should develop along the lines of their own genius and we should avoid imposing anything on them. We should try to encourage in every way their own traditional arts and cultures.

2) Tribal rights in land and forests should be respected.

3) We should try to train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will, no doubt, be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid introducing too many outsiders into tribal territory.

4) We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through, and not in rivalry to their own social and cultural institutions.

5) We should judge results not by statistics or the amount of money spent but by the quality of human character that is evolved.

These five principles have since come to be known as Tribal Panchsheel.

It is often, stated that the objective of tribal development is to enable the tribals to join the mainstream of national life. The word mainstream, however, is a nebulous expression. Similarly, the other commonly used expression of 'integration' is open to different interpretations. What is desirable on the part of non-tribals is not to make any conscious or deliberate efforts to assimilate

or even acculturate the tribals. Let the non tribals acquire some of the good and healthy traits of the tribals cultures as relations is not possible in a system based on exploitation. The processes of socio-economic transformation have got to be duly regulated.

The tribal society has largely been egalitarian and democratic. The triabal elite today have the only model of larger national life comprising socially and economically structured society where there are the poor and the rich. In the tribal areas we still have an opportunity of strengthening an egalitarian society. Development in the tribal areas should be so guided that deprivation processes do not set in. B.D. Sharma, the former Commissioner for the SC/ST has observed that the entire question of tribal development boils down to two basic issues : (i) whether the traditional command of the community over resources can be preserved, and (ii) whether the egalitarian structure of the tribal communities can be retained and their social milieu can be taken advantage of to initiate a process so that their socio-economic transformation can be negotiated without deprivation. This process cannot be superimposed but has to be stimulated by the tribal commuinity itself which has a tradition of self-governance.

Check Your Progress 3

1) Enumerate in few lines the problems faced by tribals in the area of education.

....

....

....

....

....

....

....

2) Match the following :

	A	B
1)	*Jaintia*	Himachal Pradesh
2)	*Koya*	Andhra Pradesh
3)	*Tharus*	Meghalaya
4)	*Swanglas*	Uttar Pradesh

3) List out some of the main provisions provided in the constitution for the upliftment of tribes.

....

....

....

22.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to define the term tribe and have enumerated some of their characteristic so as to understand who really constitute the tribe. We have also talked about the term Scheduled Tribe and how it came to be. To have a better understanding of the problems of tribes, we have thought it necessary to discuss their demographic profile and describe their economic pattern. Besides, we have analysed the land and forest, the important components of the tribal economy. We have mentioned the problems that the tribal face in regard to their relationship to land and forest. In the section on land and agrarian and forest situations we have attempted to look at the roots of alienation, backwardness and exploitation of the tribals in India.

Besides analysing some problems relating to tribal education, we have mentioned about their repeated upheavals, revolts, struggles and movements which are expressions of their discontent, oppression and exploitation from all levels. As much as the tribals are fighting for their economic and political rights for their participation in the developmental process, they are also fighting for their cultural and social rights. We have seen the rise of many revivalist movements too. In spite of all these, the question that still remains is 'what kind of development is best suitable for the tribals'.

22.10 KEY WORDS

Aborigines	:	The original inhabitants of a country or of a region or a place.
Assimilation	:	In the sociological context, it means the ethnic process of being similar or the process of being absorbed into the system. For instance, we can say that the Parsis, who came from Iran centuries ago, have got assimilated into the Indian culture though they still maintain their distinctiveness in some of the customes, traditions, dress, etc.
Gleaning	:	An agricultural practice specially among the tribes where they pick up the grain with patient labout after the reaping.

22.11 FURTHER READINGS

Majumdar, D.N. and Madan, N., 1956. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology.* Asian Publishing House: Bombay.

Majumdar, D.N. 1958. *Races and Cultures of India.* Asian Publishing House: Bombay.

K.S. Singh, 1972. *The Tribal Situation in India,* Mohanlal Banarasi Dass: Simla.

22.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) Some of the important Dravidian Tribes are *Goud, Oran, Malas, Kaudh, Saora, Parja, Koya, Kolam Paniyan, Irula, Mauses* and *Malaryan.*

2) The ancestry of the present tribal population is traced chiefly to the following three reaces: (1) Negrito–the tribes of Andaman belong to this racial stock (2) the Proto–Austrloid-the tribes of middle and southern zone are assigned. to this tribe (3) the Mongoloid–the tribes of the North and North-Eastern Zones generally belong to this race.

3) The *Mundas, Santhals, Ho, Kharia, Kol* are some of the tribes from that central tribal zone.

Check Your Progress 2

1) The tribal way of life–social, cultural and physical is interwoven with the forest. A majority of tribes depend on the forest for their livelihood, not only because of geographical configuration but because of unproductive agriculture. This depends on forest has a made forest an important face their life, they regard forest as their mother. Lately this relationship of theirs with forest has got disturbed because of governmental restrictions on the use of forest resources.

2) Some of the tribes whose primary occupation is craft are : *Gujjars* and *Bakarmals* of Jammu and Kashmir, *Gaddis, Gujjars* and *Kinnaurs* of Himachal Pradesh, *Holras, Karmalis, Chik Baraiks* and *Mahlis* of Bihar *Kolams* and *Vitolias* of Maharashtra, *Irulas* of Tamil Nadu and *Thotis* Andhra Pradesh.

3) Hill cultivation goes under a variety of names: *Jhum* in North-East, *Kurmas* or *Kallu* in Santhal Paraganas, *Bewara* in Ranchi and *Palamau* in Bihar, *Odu, Rama* and *Dahi* in Orissa *Dippa, Marhan* or *Ekka* in Madhya Pradesh.

4) Tribes whose main occupation is cattle rearing and whose economy is dependent on these are called the pastoralist. Some of the pastoral tribes are : *Todas* of Nilgiri Hills, *Gujjars* and *Bakarmals* of Jammu and Kashmir and *Gaddis* and *Gujjars* of Himachal Pradesh. *Kisans* of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, *Maldhari* and *Raisi Potra* of Gujarat and *Rabaris* of Gujarat and Rajasthan, *Bhotias* of North-East.

Check Your Progress 3

1) In the field of education tribals are lagging far behind when compared to non-tribals. One of the main reasons for this state of affairs is economic and social backwardness of the tribal people. A large majority of the tribal people are living below the poverty level. To them education is a luxury. Lack of access to schools is another problem for there are verv few schools in the remote tribal areas. The life-style, customs and traditions of the tribal do not really encourage a culture for pursuit of education. The medium of instruction is another major problem in the promotion of education among the tribes. Very often they are taught in a language which

they are not familiar with.

2) Match the following

A	B
1) *Jaintia*	Meghalaya
2) *Koya*	Andhra Pradesh
3) *Tharus*	Uttar Pradesh
4) *Swanglas*	Himachal Pradesh

3) To protect the Scheduled Tribes from exploitation and injustice, the Constitution has made provisions to safeguard their interests.

Article 46 of the-Directive Principles of State Policy enjoins upon the State "to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of SC/ST and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

Accordingly, under Article 15(4) provisions are made for their educational advancement by reserving seats in educational institution, granting scholarships, etc. Article 16(4) provides for their -reservation in services.' Under Article 330 and 332 seats are reserved for SC and ST in Lok Sabha and State Vidhan Sabhas. Under Article 330 and 332 seats are reserved for SC and ST in Lok Sabha and State Vidhan Sabhas. Under Article 339(l) the President may at any time appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the scheduled areas and welfare of the scheduled tribes in the states.

UNIT 23   MINORITIES

Structure

23.0   OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with the problem of minorities in India and also minorities in contemporary societies the world over. The study of this unit should enable you to:

- understand the conceptual and the theoretical explanations of minority;

- analyse the rights of minorities and the need for that; and

- discuss the problem of minorities in the contemporary Indian society.

23.1   INTRODUCTION

We have discussed in the previous unit, the problem of Scheduled Tribe which is a problem essentially of the disparities and deprivations. The problem of minorities is also similar to that of many tribal groups. The minorities, because, of their relatively less numerical strength feel that their rights are persistently ignored. This unit discusses how minorities have emerged and the problems they face and also their rights. We will also talk about the social composition and rights of minorities and the constitutional provisions for them in India.

23.2   THE PROBLEM OF MINORITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

The problem of minority or minorities came to the fore-front after the World War-I when a number of new-states were carved out of the wreckage of the

Central European Empires and quite a few majority communities found themselves turned overnight into minorities in these states. For example, the Germans were reduced to a minority in Poland and the Austrians in Czechoslovakia. Lest the peace of the world be disturbed on account of ill-treatment of minorities treaties called the Project Guarantee Treaties had been entered into to instill a sense of loyalty among the new States under which they were placed and to enjoin upon the new governments to own the citizens of the erstwhile enemy countries as their new nationals and citizens.

23.2.1 The Dimensions of the Problem

In the past one hundred years or so the minority problems have occupied a very important place in the politics of countries the world over. Many issues have, however, remained unsolved. Even today minority problems in different forms appear very frequently in the West. Thus, race riots occur in England and the USA. Chechnya has been problem for Russia. In erstwhile Yugoslavia the Serbs and the Croats have fought wars of secession.

The position of the developing societies or the Third World is the same. Ethnic and communal riots are chronic part of their politics. The Indian case is one of the saddest ones. India has a record of over hundred years of minority problem. The major problem has been of the Muslims which split the country in 1947. Communal riots have become a recurring phenomenon in the present day Indian society.

23.2.1 Who are the Minorities?

In a very general sense, we can say that when a group of people is divided on any issue or approach or characteristics the difference usually produces a bigger sub-group and a smaller sub-group. The smaller sub-group is called minority whereas the bigger sub-group is called the majority. It is also possible that the two groups could be of equal strength or the smaller group may have control over power and other resources. So, it is not always the numerical strength or non-strength, which is the deciding factor for a group to be called a minority.

It is now widely felt that population size is not the only feature of minority status. If a group is discriminated against on the basis of religion, race or culture it can be considered a minority group. The sub-commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities set up under the Human Rights Commission which drafted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has defined minorities as only those non-dominant groups in a population which possess or wish to preserve stable, ethnic, religious or linguistic traditions or characteristics markedly different from those of the most of the population.

In the International Encyclopaedia of the Social Science, Arnold Rose has defined minority without any quantitative connotations. He defines it as 'a group of people differentiated from others in the same society by race, nationality, religion or language, who think of themselves as differentiated group and are thought of by others as a differentiated group with negative connotations. Further, they are relatively lacking in power and hence are subjected to certain exclusions, discrimination and other differential treatments.'

In any country religious groups may now be divided into linguistic groups and vice-versa. This phenomenon is known as cross-cutting cleavage. Accordingly, a person may be a member of a religious minority and yet of a linguistic majority

or vice-versa. How such a person would behave depends on his or her interest from issue to issue.

Jagnath Pathy (1988) has also listed out the defining properties of minority group. In his opinion, the minorities are:

● subordinate in someway to the majority,

● distinguishable from the majority on the basis of physical or cultural features,

● collectively being regarded and treated as different and inferior on the basis of these features, and

● excluded from the full participation in the life of the society.

He further says, discrimination, prejudice and exclusion by the dominant group and self segregation by the subordinate or minority constitute the basis for minority identification (Pathy, 1988 : 28).

The wish to preserve distinctive features of one's social and cultural life is an essential feature of a minority community. As a consequence there are always groups which are different from other group in terms of language, religion etc. The dominant group tries to assimilate the minority groups. The non-conformist very often, are likely to be persecuted. This attitude of the majority group generates a greater consciousness among the members of the minority community for preserving their separate identity.

The wish to have separate identity often gives rise to political demands. The demands are for either special treatment, recognition of the need for preserving minority identity or in extreme cases for autonomy or secession from the area.

With these general properties a group can be identified as being a minority group. There are, however, operational problems of applying such specifications with minority, because a great deal depends on the situation existing in a particular society at a particular time. Social groups can only be properly identified in terms of their relationship to other groups. The nature of such relationship is determined largely by the system of control over economic and political resources prevailing in that society and the historical development of those relationships. The numerical strength is, thus, not an objective criterion to distinguish one group from the other. The concept of minority is, therefore, dynamic depending on the relation of domination and discrimination.

A minority group very often organises into a coherent group drawing on the shared values culture, language or religion. For example, the Muslims in India are a minority group on the basis of their religion in comparison to the majority of Hindus. But they constitute a majority in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Similarly, Christians are a majority in Nagaland,. Meghalaya, Mizoram and so on. Besides having an identity on the basis of religion, a group may also identify itself on the ethnic basis. Thus, a Muslim may identify not only on the religious basis but also on the ethnic basis. He or she could consider himself or herself a Bengali or a Malayalee. A great deal depends on the politics of the situation. Thus, many minority groups are all ethnic groups for they group around shared values and culture.

The Constitution of India uses the term minority but does not defines it any where. The Supreme Court and various High Courts have so far depended on

the statistical criterion. Any community that does not constitute more than 50% in the state is thus called a minority. Furthermore, the Indian Constitution recognises two types of minorities based on language and/or religion. Thus in India about 82% people are by religious designation Hindu. The Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Parsis and other from smaller group of minorities.

The Constitution does not recognize minorities based on culture, race or nationality.

Percentage of Population of Major Religions, 1991

State /UT	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists	Jains	Others	Religion not stated
INDIA	82.00	12.12	2.34	1.94	0.76	0.40	0.39	0.05
States								
1. Andhra Pradesh	89.14	8.91	1.83	0.03	0.03	0.04	-	0.02
2. Arunachal Pradesh	37.04	1.38	10.29	0.14	12.88	0.01	36.22	2.04
3. Assam	67.13	28.43	3.32	0.07	0.29	0.09	0.62	0.05
4. Bihar	82.42	14.81	0.98	0.09	-	0.03	1.67	-
5. Goa	64.68	5.25	29.86	0.09	0.02	0.04	0.04	0.02
6. Gujarat	89.48	8.73	0.44	0.08	0.03	1.19	0.03	0.02
7. Haryana	89.21	4.64	0.10	5.81	0.01	0.21	-	0.02
8. Himachal Pradesh	95.90	1.72	0.09	1.01	1.24	0.02	-	0.02
9. Karnataka	85.45	11.64	1.91	0.02	0.16	0.73	0.01	0.08
10. Kerala	57.28	23.33	19.32	0.01	-	0.01	0.01	0.04
11. Madhya Pradesh	92.80	4.96	0.65	0.24	0.33	0.74	0.09	0.19
12. Maharashtra	81.12	9.67	1.12	0.21	6.39	1.22	0.13	0.14
13. Manipur	57.67	7.27	34.11	0.07	0.04	0.07	0.77	-
14. Meghalaya	14.67	3.46	64.58	0.15	0.16	0.02	16.82	0.14
15. Mizoram	5.05	0.66	85.73	0.04	7.83	-	0.27	0.42
16. Nagaland	10.12	1.71	87.47	0.06	0.05	0.10	0.48	0.01
17. Orissa	94.67	1.83	2.10	0.05	0.03	0.02	1.26	0.04
18. Punjab	34.46	1.18	1.11	62.95	0.12	0.10	0.01	0.07
19. Rajasthan	89.08	8.01	0.11	1.48	0.01	1.28	-	0.03
20. Sikkim	68.37	0.95	3.30	0.09	27.15	0.01	0.09	0.04
21. Tamil Nadu	88.67	5.47	5.69	0.01	-	0.12	0.01	0.03
22. Tripura	86.50	7.13	1.68	0.03	4.65	0.01	-	-
23. Uttar Pradesh	81.74	17.33	0.14	0.48	0.16	0.13	0.01	0.01
24. West Bengal	74.72	23.61	0.56	0.08	0.30	0.05	0.67	0.01

(**Souce:** Census Data Online, 1991)

23.3 APPROACHES TO THE MINORITY PROBLEM

We can see that the problem of minorities has assumed importance all over the world. We have already mentioned that a minority issue is not just related to its numerical representation in a society. It is related to its oppression. Besides, it is to be perceived on the basis of language, culture, religion, etc. in relation to that of a dominant group which is, very often, a majority group in a society.

A whole lot of theories have been advanced about the nature, causes and implications of the problems of minorities. Many scholars have tried to understand the problems of minorities in various ways. Some consider, that ethnic identity among minority groups is natural and primordial. The scholars

who stress the cultural differences say that primordialism and linguistic differences among minority groups tend to generate conflict rather than cooperation among them. Other scholars consider the utilitarian bent of minority groups and state that it is representing a power struggle. They feel that cultural factors are incidental to this process. These scholars feel that the minority identity should be seen in the context of development where each group tries to forge an identity in its Struggle for scarce resources.

Various Approaches have been adopted towards a solution of the minority while some suggested assimilation, others suggested protection and for some the way out was to get rid of the minority community itself, by persecution, deportation etc.

23.3.1 Assimilation

The issue of minority and majority has been going on for centuries. Earlier the problem was seen as one of the conflict: of religions and ethnic groups. These days the problem is essentially related to national minorities. The concept of nation assumes that political boundaries must coincide with the characteristic of people living within it. A nation state prefers if possible a homogenous religion, language, ethnic identity etc. In the words of Clude "The rise of the problem of minorities was a logical consequence of the ascendancy of nationalism. It is injected into politics ... the principle that the state should be nationally homogeneous and a nation should be politically united." (Clude, 1955. p. 81). This gave rise to unrestricted control over given territory, uniformity of laws, languages, customs etc., irrespective of differences. Homogeneity is never a reality thus there are constant efforts by the majority to assimilate the minority. The minorities are made to abandon their ethnic, religious cultural and linguistic characteristics which differentiate them from the dominant group. For instance in the erstwhile Soviet Union, this kind of homogeneity was imposed with the interntent of making the national state secure and its institutions stable. The welfare and security of the state were primary consideration. As a result the minority considerations were sidelined. It was not long before the various majority ethnic groups realised this kind of subjugation and fought for their rights.

The assimilation of heterogenous groups through coercion is not so bluntly adopted, states now prefer adopting other indirect methods. Discrimination is one such method.

23.3.2 Discrimination and Annihilation

While the minority groups are allowed to preserve their distinct characteristics they are also subjected to a great deal of discrimination. The discrimination may be in the form fewer government funds for minority educational institutions etc. Very often they are discriminated in their social life. They are subjected to ridicule and segregation which further compels them to stay away from the majority. That is why we find that minority groups stay together in ghettos away from the majority.

This discrimination in fact leads to assimilation among some ambitious members of the minority community. These people in order to advance themselves seek to rid themselves of their disabilities by deliberately surrendering their typical features. These disabilities may, many times, be

sufficient to induce assimilation, also certain encouragement is given to induce this change.

In case assimilation is found to be impossible, some states resort to the very direct method of annihilation. The members of minority group ire eliminated by expulsion or by massacre. Genocide of the Jews by the Germans is a best example of this.

23.3.3 Tolerance and Equality

The policy of tolerance and fair treatment is adopted by many states when dealing with minority community. A great deal of leeway is given for the preservation and persuance of the minority social and cultural life. Though the state may have in mind the assimilation of various minority groups as the final goal. It will nevertheless adopt a tolerant attitude towards minority groups as long as the minority communities do not cause any destabilizing effect on the nation state.

We find this policy of tolerance and fair treatment guiding the provisions in our Indian Constitution. The Constitution establishes no state religion, guarantees equal opportunity to all irrespective of caste, creed and religion. The Constitution was not in favour of forced assimilation to preserve the rich harmony in Indian culture within the framework of national unity. The Constitution forbids discrimination against minorities. Thus, we find that Constitution envisages fair treatment for all.

However the question that has been asked many times is how are the minority groups faring under the Constitution? It is true that there is equality on the paper, but is it really practiced?

It is a contention of the many minority groups, also studies have revealed, that these groups suffer a great deal of discrimination in social life. They are often discriminated in all walks of life, in securing a job, in getting funds for educational institutions, in their social interaction and so on, inspite of the constitutional guarantees. In any case a great deal seems to depend on the bargaining power a particular disadvantaged group has. Some are at disadvantage in their effort to bring to state's notice that certain of their sociocultural rights need protection. For example, the tribals of central India-Santhals, have been unable to get state recognition for their tribal language, inspite of the fact that there are large number of people speaking the language.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Name some of the major minority conflicts which have troubled and are troubling the world politics.

    ....
    ....
    ....
    ....

2) What are the various approaches adopted to understand and resolve the problem of minorities?

    ....
    ....

....

....

....

23.4 MINORITIES AND THE POLITICO-LINGUISTIC VARIATIONS

Geographically, a minority may either be spread all over the country or concentrated in some regions. If a minority community is spread, it can carry out only some agitations for its rights. When it is geographically concentrated, it often resorts to movements for autonomy or even for secession. For example, the contemporary Jharkhand movement was a movement for regional autonomy while the Phizoite Naga movement is for secession. Further, if minorities are not found numerically spread in many areas but are influential in a few localities, they may field or sponsor their own candidates in elections and may form even their.own political party. If they are weak, they support the candidates belonging to other communities in the elections. They support, however, those parties and candidates who, they think, are most likely to protect their interests. When,minorities consistently support other individuals or political parties in the elections, they are said to constitute 'vote banks'.

In India as elsewhere linguistic groups are regionalised. Most of North Indians speak Hindi in different dialects., In South India the different Dravidian languages, namely Telugu, Tamil, Kannada and Malayalam, are spoken. Further, in Western India Marathi and Gujarati are major languages and Punjabi is spoken in Punjab. In Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh there are some smaller linguistic groups. In Eastern India Assamese, Bengali and Oriya are major languages. In the fringe areas and in between the major language groups of India there are small but distinct language groups. We cannot, therefore, call any Indian language group as the majority population. Hindi is spoken by the largest number about 30% of people. However, if we take the linguistic regions within India, we frequently find minority language groups. Amost all the Indian states have been reorganised to bring about some linguistic homogeneity of the regions. Yet a few minority languages exist in a state. For example, Konkani is found in South Western India where Marathi is the main language or the various tribal languages are spoken in Central and in the Northeast India.

Because of the peculiar political history, the Hindu-Muslim relation has emerged as the gravest political problem in modern India. During the British rule the economic condition of the Muslims deteriorated. The Muslims avoided English education and fell behind the Hindus in the competition for services and other avenues. A section of the Muslim elite advised the Muslims to accept English education and government services and to move away from the Indian National Congress which, they thought, was dominated by Hindus. The British followed their famous "divide and rule" policy and granted separate electorate for the Muslims as mentioned in the earlier sections of this unit. Separate electorate was later extended to the other minorities too. On the other hand, the insistence of the All-India -Muslim League upon the two nation theory led to the partition of India and large scale migrations from and to the country. Mostly the wealthier section of the Muslims went over to Pakistan and a substantial number of Muslims continued to live in India.

As already noted, the Indian Constitution did away with the concept of political minority. That is to say, under the Indian Constitution the minorities (except the Anglo-Indians) have no separate political rights apart from those which they enjoy as ordinary citizens of India. Every member of a minority-group enjoys rights only as a citizen of India. He/she is protected from all kinds of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. Every citizen has equality before the law and the equal protection of law. They also enjoy equality of opportunity in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.

There is, however, the provision of the affirmative action of the State aimed at ameliorating the condition of the weaker sections of the people. Thus, legislative seats are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Special protection of land and wealth is provided through the restriction on their movement-from the places where they normally live. Government services and other facilities are reserved for members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes.

Yet, there is another set of rights which relate to the minorities. These belong to the domain of freedom. Specifically they are the freedom of speech and expression, to form associations or unions, to assemble peacefully and without arms, at a place or places, to move, reside and settle in any part of the territory of India. Minorities are also provided to acquire, hold and dispose of property and to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business. There is, of course the right to life and liberty besides the freedom of religion. However, the State can regulate or restrict any economic, political or other secular activities which may be associated with religious practice. The State may make any law providing for social welfare and reform of Hindu religious institution. The Sikhs have the right to wear and carry *Kirpans* (swords) but like the Jains and the Buddhists, they are regarded as Hindus, with reference to reform of Hindu religious institutions.

The second kind of rights of the minorities are group rights. Any section of citizens living in any part of India and having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve that. No citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or aided by the State on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language, or any of them.

Activity

Based on your observations and experiences, write a few lines on how you perceive the minority problems.

23.5 MINORITY RIGHTS IN MODERN INDIA

We have said that after World War I, a number of minority treaties were adopted for the new States. In India also before the transfer of power, the British thought of binding the successor regime to some special provisions regarding the minorities. But such treaties and provisions could not be effectively imposed upon sovereign States in Europe nor the special provision for Muslims could be successfully carried out in independent India.

The minorities, might, however, seek to ensure their group rights within the States of the sovereign constitutional systems. For example, the first representative system was introduced at the local government level in British India in 1872-83. Right at that time some Muslim leaders of Bengal and Punjab demanded separate electorate in which they wanted to elect their leaders themselves and not with the help of votes of other communities. They got, their rights with the support of some British officials though the Indian nationalists strongly opposed the political separation of the minorities. The separate electorate was introduced, more or less in the same way, in the provincial and central legislatures, when they were created by the Indian Councils Act of 1909. Thus under the Government of India Act, 1935 altogether 18 separate constituencies were created through the provisions of the separate electorate and reservation for minorities.

The modern sovereign States in the world do not favour the separate electorate system formalities. But there are two other constitutional devices. These are collegial executive and proportional reservation. The independent India not only abolished the system of separate electorate but also removed the concept of political minorities. Instead, it has granted special cultural and educational rights to the minorities over and above the rights to equality and freedom that they enjoy as individuals. The cultural and educational rights enable the minorities to run their own educational and cultural institutions or foundations, We have mentioned in Section 23.3 of this unit the various provisions laid in the Indian Constitution to safeguard interests of the minorities, the state has no authority to undertake social reform which tamper with the cultural and educational rights of the minority communities.

The question may arise here as to why a minority community should specialty be given a group right when the majority community has no such right. The answer is that a majority community by virtue of its number can guard its interest. But a minority community needs protection from the dominance of the majority community. The minority treaty or the system, of separate electorate or minority rights are but some legal-constitutional provisions for protection of minority. Both these two systems have operated in Switzerland successfully under the proportional representation system, multi-members constituencies are created and the voters are given as many preferences as there are seats. Those candidates who get the prescribed quota of votes are elected. The quota is fixed on the basis of dividing the number of votes by the number of seats. This enables the minority communities to send their representatives to legislatures in strength proportionate to their number in the total electorates of the country. Similarly, the collegial executive is elected by a legislature through proportional representation. This enables the communities to be represented in the executive in strength proportionate to their number in the legislature.

23.5.1 Equality for Minorities

Minority problem can politically be conceived in two broad forms: 1) in a democratic set-up, wherein all members of a given society or country have political freedom, and 2) in a colonial set-up where a minority is either the ruling class or being ruled in the social condition of slavery.

Thus in a democratic set up a minority community may compete as well as collaborate with the majority. The basic desire of the minority in such a situation

is for political, social and economic equality. Political equality takes the form of equal rights. Social equality takes the form of equal status. Economic equality takes the form of equal opportunity and prosperity. The liberal democratic constitution can furnish the principles of equality before law and equal protection of law besides equal opportunity in the affairs managed by the government. But they cannot guarantee equal prosperity or even social status to all which largely depends upon economic prosperity. Objectively, in a country like India, containing several minority groups, the economic status may vary from group to group. Thus, the Parsees and the Sikhs in India are as affluent as some of the majority community of the Hindus. The Muslims are less affluent. But the condition of the tribal groups is generally much worse. Such conditions may easily promote disaffection particularly in a situation with the increased communication facilities and frequent interaction among the different groups.

Contrary to this, in a colonial situation the ruling class, which is often in minority is mostly privileged, the example may be given of the British in India fifty years ago or of the white community in South Africa in recent. When the ruling class is in a majority like whites in North America the condition of the minority is like that of the American Indians which is miserable.

All religious and linguistic minorities have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. The State, while granting aid to educational institutions, shall not discriminate against any educational institution on the ground that it is under the management of a minority whether based on religion or language.

23.5.2 Controversies over Minority Rights

Some of the minority rights have become subjects of controversy. Regarding social reform among the Hindus, two kinds of grievances have been expressed. First, a section of the Sikhs resent being regarded as Hindu for 'this purpose. Actually, they are opposed to the reforms like the Hindu Marriage Act and the Hindu Succession Act which grant equal right to women and forbid bigamy of males. A section of the Hindus, on the other hand, demand that minorities like the Muslims and the Christians be brought under the scope of such reforms and all sections of the citizens be governed by a common civil code. But many Muslim leaders are opposed to it on the plea that the Muslim Personal Law is a part of the Muslim religion. However, by insisting in retaining the Muslim Personal Law they are also stopping progress of the Muslim women. The government of India regards it a sensitive issue and prefers to wait until the Muslim public opinion is sufficiently aroused in favour of bringing some change in it.

On the question of minority educational institutions too, there is some controversy. Many such institutions allege governmental discrimination against them. On the other hand, there are allegations of corruption and oppression of teachers in such institutions by their authorities. Moreover, many such institutions insist on religious or traditional education and thus oppose the modern scientific education. This keeps the minority youth deprived of modern education and thus lagging behind others.

For historical reasons, the Hindu-Muslim relationship has emerged as the central minority problem in India. We have mentioned earlier that the British fostered conflict and brought it ahead by partitioning the country. That was preceded

and followed by communal riots which had taken hundred of thousands of the lives of either community. Poverty and unemployment of the people have intensified conflicts among communities. Over and above all this, communal politics has become a part of the electoral strategy of most of the political parties in India. There is increasing intolerance of the rights of minorities in the country. While society needs to be tolerant of minorities, the State should be absolutely impartial about the different communities. Therefore, the principle of secularism has been enshrined in our Constitution according to which the State should keep away from the religious affairs and controversies of any community. Instead, it should strictly maintain law and order. This alone may maintain unity of the people and the unity of nations.

Check Your Progress 2

1) List out some of the minority group of our country.

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

2) What are the provisions for minority rights enshrined in the constitution?

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

3) What are the defining properties of minority group?

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

   ....

23.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have discussed the problems of minorities. We find that it is a problem which is affecting practically every country. Though the problem is seen essentially in terms of numerical representation. We find that it goes beyond that, the problem arises because of subjugation, exploitation and discrimination by a stronger group towards the weaker group.

The status of minority group is defined not only by certain characteristic features but by the dynamics of politics which are prevalent from time to time. In a

democratic set up if a group is heard louder than others and if it can mobilise itself it often achieves some rights that it demands.

The unit discusses the various approaches adopted to tackle the problem of minority. We can see that no single approach is used at one time, often it is a combination of assimilation, discrimination and a policy of tolerance that is being followed.

We also talked about the minority rights, the controversies regarding this and the prevailing situation of minority problem in India.

23.7 KEYWORDS

Consensus	:	Agreement in opinion of all people concerned.
Differentiated	:	To cause difference or to change what was similar between things or people.
Dominant	:	A dominant group is one which exercises control over other groups.
Discrimination	:	To treat one with difference and prejudice.
Genocide	:	A deliberate extermination of group or a race. The extermination of Jews by the Germans during Hitler's regime is a good example of genocide.
Segregation	:	To keep apart, to isolate a group from others.
Utilitarian	:	Concerned with looking at the usefulness of a thing.

23.8 FURTHER READINGS

Beteille, Andre (ed.) 1969, *Social Inequality : Selected Readings,* Penguin: New Delhi.

Furnivall, J.S. 1953, *Colonial Policy and Practice,* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Kabir, Humayun. 1968, *Minorities in a Democracy,* Firma KLM.

Shakir, Moin. 1980, *Politics of Minorities,* Ajanta: Delhi

23.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1) The recent conflicts in Yugaslavia between the Serbs the Croations assumed a major significance for the world politics. We heard about the race riots in America where there was backlash from the American blacks. The ethnic struggles by various minority groups in the erstwhile Soviet Union has resulted in a change in the configuration of the state itself.

2) Some of the major approaches which are often adopted as a solution to minority conflicts is assimilation, discrimination, annihilation and attempts to a fair treatment.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Some of the major minority group in India are Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsees, etc.

2) There are only two specific Articles (29 and 30) in the Constitution that explicitly guarantee the protection of the interest of minorities in India.

3) In the first instance the minority group is distinguishable from the majority on the basis of physical or cultural features. They are exclude from full participation in the life of the society, and are subordinate in someway to the majority. Discrimination, prejudice and exclusion dominant group constitute the basis for a minority group identification.

UNIT 24   ETHNICITY

Structure

24.0   OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you should. be able to:

● understand what the term ethnicity means;

● explain various perspectives on ethnicity;

● analyse the major reasons for the emergence of an ethnic movement; and

● relate it to various factors which come into play.

24.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous unit, you read about the problems of minorities. In this unit, we will get to know about ethnicity, a phenomenon which has become a thorny issue. This unit will start with the definition of ethnicity and outline some of the perspectives on ethnicity. We will also be explaining the importance of identity for a group which provides an ethnic movement the impetus and a motive. Towards the end of the unit we will explain to you how ethnicity is greatly shaped by disparities and deprivations; a modern problem of development initiatives.

24.2 ETHNICITY: THE PROBLEM, DEFINITION AND IDENTITY

You must have heard the word ethnicity or ethnic problems. The word ethnicity comes from the root word ethnic which loosely means race. An ethnic community does not strictly have a racial connotation. A community can be distinct from others in many ways: their racial stock or origin being one of them. A community may distinguish itself from others by way of a particular or distinctive culture, language, religion or a combination of all these. Because of this distinctive aspect the ethnic communities often come in conflict with other communities with whom they come in contact.

In this section we will understand this problem of ethnicity by first understanding what ethnicity means and the nature of identity of ethnic communities.

24.2.1 The Problem of Ethnicity

Ethnic activity and separation came in a big way in the post colonial, newly emerging nations like Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nigeria etc. This was easly and crudely explained away as tribalism, backwardness etc. But ethnic activity affected even the developed West; the problem of Welsh and the Scots, Wallon-Flemish conflict in Belgium, the Basques in Spain, to name only a few. Even the seemingly egalitarian conflict-free melting pot America has been shattered by black ethnic activity. The erstwhile Socialist block, now, and for a long time, has been cauldron of ethnic crisis, with Crotian, Serbians, Bosnians, Slovak, Czech etc. in a conflict. In fact, ethnicity has now become a worldwide phenomenon.

The problem of ethnicity and national building has been widely discussed over the past few decades. The phenomenon of ethnicity has become all intrinsic component of the socio-political realities of multi-ethnic or plural cultural societies, specially in a country like India.

In India, with its variety of pluralities, in terms of language, race, religion and so on ethnic conflict has become a part of the political scenario. In most countries, including ours, the processes of development and change have generated conditions for ethnic conflict, as the fruits of these development processes have come to be distributed unevenly. Also the nature and character of the lower structure and rule of the political leadership have their role to play.

24.2.2 Definition of Ethnicity

The definition of concept in any field of social science is usually difficult. And a term such as ethnicity is loaded with meanings, values and prejudices and therefore, is even more difficult to define.

Ethnicity pertains to the word ethnic which is a distinction of mankind based on race. Ethnicity has now lost the original connotation. "It is now employed in a broader sense to signify self-consciousness of a group of people united, or closely related, by shared experience such as language, religious belief, common heritage, etc. While race usually denotes the attributes of a group, ethnic identity typifies creative response of a group who consider themselves marginalised in

society" (Barun De and Sunanjan Das, 1992: 69). Barth and Benedict Anderson feel that boundary is an important criterion for self defintion by ethnic group, to separate themselves from 'others'.

Let us see how the identity of a group is defined *vis-a-vis* another Community and how this identity becomes psychologically and socially important for a member or members of the community.

24.2.3 Ethnic Identity : A Psycho-sociological Reality

William G. Sumner observed that people have their own group as the center of their lives, and rate all other groups with reference to their own. He called this tendency of individuals to cling to their clan ethnocentricism. It is a generalised prejudice.

Why do human beings slip so easily into ethnic prejudice? Human beings have a natural tendency to form generalisations, concepts and categories. Their categories are close to their first-hand experiences. They also categorise basing on hearsay, fantasy and emotions. This process of social categorisation leads to the formation of an "in-group" and "out-group". All groups develop a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs. Therefore, the formation of ethnic attitude is functionally related to becoming a group member. According to the social categorisation theories given by H. Tajfel (1981) as well as J.C. Turner (1982), every social group attempts to achieve an identity in contradiction to the "out-group" Identity can be broadly characterise as the process by which an individual is bound to his/her social group and by which he/she realises his/her social self. In the context of the Indian political identity, such a formulation has several implications. The emotional fervour associated with linguistic issues can perhaps be viewed in the context of this definition of social identity structure of the different language groups in the country.

The normative character of ethnic prejudices involve far more than the fact that attitudes are shared by members of a majority or minority group. Each member is expected to hold such attitudes and various kinds of pressures are brought on those who fail to conform to it. A sense of identity is a very natural human tendency but when an ethnic identity is consolidated and used as a reference point for mobilisation to share in the power structure, the mobilisation becomes far more effective.

While ethnic attributes are categorisation for the purpose of classification which is a static formulation, ethnicity is a dynamic process, whereby a group of people or community regroups itself as an adaptive strategy in response to specific demands of the situations.

Various scholars have looked at this phenomenon in various ways. We will have a quick look at some of the approaches to the study of ethnicity in our next section.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What are the various basis on which a community considers itself as distinct and different from others?

    ....

    ....

....

....

....

2) Write in few lines what you understand by the concept of identity.

....

....

....

....

....

24.3 ETHNICITY: THE VARIOUS PERSPECTIVES OF ANALYSIS

Ethnicity has given new forms and meanings with changing process such a imperialism and modernity. Consequently ethnicity has become an important field of study for social scientist. There are varieties of assumptions regarding ethnicity.

There are some scholars who see the ethnic problem in terms of assimilation and integration; wherein an ethnic group is absorbed into the mainstream group or a dominant ethnic group : an assimilation of this kind in effect is homogenisation to create a nation state. To diffuse tension and to protect the dominated group it is also suggested to co-opt the marginalised group.

There are social scientists who see ethnicity as a natural bond between people, immutable or primordial (Geertz 1963:109). Thus the formation of political identity is seen by them as stemming from this primordial loyalty.

There are still others who essentially see no difference between class interest and ethnic interest. They argue that ethnicity is another alternative avenue for mobility (Berge 1976). Loyalty which goes in the way of mobilisation.

In this section and sub-section which will follow, we have given few ideas on ethnicity by some scholars who have worked in this area. Though there are conflicting and differing opinions on ethnicity some common points can be gathered from these various understanding.

24.3.1 Perspectives on Ethnicity

The conception that ethnicity is culturally pre-determined with its primordial loyalties and sentiments is largely discounted among social scientists. By and large scholars agree that an ethnic group is essential a social group when it is mobilised for collective action in pursuit of the interest of the group.

Writing on the politics of ethnicity in India and Pakistan, Hamza Alavi feels that the boundaries of ethnic categories are not 'objectively' pre-given, for whenever there is change of interest or situation, realignment has occurred as is evident from experiences. A so called objective criterion like, religion can be abandoned in favour of another like region or language. Alavi further states that the ethnic community, therefore, is not simply a politically mobilised

condition of a pre-existing set of people, described as an ethnic category. The ethnic categorisation itself is dependent in some way in the very emergence of, the community. Experience shows that both ethnic category and ethnic community are simultaneously constituted in a single movement.

Writing about ethnicity and nation-building in Sri Lanka, Urmila Phadnis says that ethnic identity is a significant but not a sufficient requisite for evoking ethnicity. It is the mobilisation and manipulation of group identity and interest by the leadership that leads to ethnicity. Ethnicity is used as an ideology and also as a device to wrest greater concessions and shares in the power structure. Dipankar Gupta also argues that the manifestation of ethnicity in Indian politics is not so much an outcome of popular grass-root passions as it ts a creation of vested political interests. He applies the notion of 'conspiracy' to ethnic politics in India to draw attention to the deliberate and calculated manner in which such politics is fashioned. He justifies his approach by asking the question as to, why from a variety of ethnic identities that abound in one society only certain ethnic dyads are politically activated and that too very selectively at certain points of time?

K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman (1988) feel that ethnicity is being increasingly used to denote people with a distinctive set of bio-cultural and bio-social characteristics. Ethnic differences is recognition of contrast between us and them. In their opinion. ethnicity is an excellent tool for identification of the aspirations of a community for delineating its boundary, and for preserving its identity. These are some perspectives or approaches to study ethnicity.

24.3.2 Some Characteristics of Ethnicity

Following are some of the characteristics of ethnicity.

1) Ethnicity relates to ascriptive identities like caste, language religion, region etc.

2) Inequality in terms of sharing power between two ethnic groups results into conflict. The ethnicity is socially mobilised and territorially confined. It has numerically sufficient population, and is a pool of symbols depicting distinctiveness. It has a reference group in relation to which/whom a sense of relative deprivation (real or imagined) is aggregated

3) Being left out of the developmental process or even being a victim of uneven development, ethnicity causes ethnic movements.

4) Ethnicity is manifested in Indian politics not merely due to grassroot discontent but is also a creation of vested political interest.

5) Ethnic groups that use ethnicity to make demands in the political arena for alteration in their status, in their economic well-being, etc. are engaged very often in a form of interest group politics.

Before we try to understand the role of ethnicity in Indian politics, it is important to stress that whatever the difference between ethnic groups, the focus of their interaction finally boils down to the centrality of politics of who gets what, when and how? As already stated the focus of interests of an ethnic group, is to get some benefits for itself. The group often uses ethnic criterion like religion, language or caste to mobilise itself to give identity to itself which separates it from other group or groups. Thus, delineation of boundary of an ethnic group

of community is an important aspect of ethnicity markers. But exactly which one will get projected at a specific point of time would usually depend on where or how the person draws the boundary. Since delineation of the nature of boundary rests on the conditions existing at a given moment, the whole exercise becomes a response to the specific conditions. This adds fluidity to the situation and makes the identity projection a dynamic phenomenon. The nature of identity shifts along with changing circumstances and calls for change in boundary or a change in identification. The seeming singularity of identity, by and large, conveys a notion only. In reality, plurality of identities appears much more widespread than it ordinarily appears to be.

24.3.3   Latent and Manifest Identities

With plurality of identities, it is important to appreciate that all the identities of individuals or groups cannot be noticeable at a time. In fact, among various identities only one becomes manifest or apparent at a given point of time and the rest of the identities remain subsurface or latent. It may be repeated here that exactly which type of identity becomes manifest at a specific hour would depend on the nature of the immediate boundary delineation. It is, thus, through the interplay of latent and manifest identities that ethnicity expresses itself in a dynamic process. In general, whether an individual would identify himself/ herself as a Hindu Rajput or a Bihari would depend, by and large on the existing conditions and felt needs of a given moment. A person ordinarily exercises his/her in order to work out what response it would be most appropriate at the given situation and acts accordingly. Thus, he/she contributes to the overall dynamics of the process.

Activity

Do you feel a sense of identity with the community you belong? If so, write in few lines the reasons why you have this feeling of identity?

24.4   PLURALITIES AND LARGER IDENTITY

India as we know has cultural economic and social heterogeneity. The complex ethnic plurality of our nation is a known fact. The ethnic groups vary in sise, culture, consciousness of group identity etc. and very often clear boundaries can be demarcated between group. The system on the whole is highly segmented and heterogeneous.

In such a system what are the ways in which these groups have incorporated into a nation state?

In the sections to follow we will discuss this constant dynamics; the quest for a larger identity at one level and pursuance of ethnic identities at the other level.

24.4.1   Quest for a Larger Identity

There is a general notion that narrow loyalties are expression of retrogradation or prejudice. This originates from the concern for broader identity and lack of appreciation of the fact that plurality of identity is a reality. In fact, emergence of ethnicity all around primarily on cultural counts has put the boundary of any nation-state under severe stress. Implicitly assuming the political boundary as something very sacred, the quest for larger identity is usually emphasised.

No doubt, this serves some immediate political purpose,(s). But at the same time, this emphasis on a large identity like nation ignores the reality of plural identities and their possible interplay and thus reverts back to the nation where religion, language etc. become static categories of ethnic attributes. At this stage, will be beneficial to understand how nationality or a nation has originate India. This we hope will clear, some confusions regarding the conflicting relationship between ethnicity and nationality.

24.4.2 The Emergence of India as a Nation

Geographically, Indian Sub-continent has facilitated the existence of numerous groups belonging to various racial stocks, speaking different languages and having different patterns of culture. Centuries of living together has not removed these differences. At the same time, the different groups moved in a unison in the political, economic and social spheres. The different groups were united by a common historical destiny which created a psychological unity. Though diverse practices were allowed, Hinduism retained a pan-Indian quality. Language too played its role in uniting the diverse elements: Sanskrit in ancient India provided the bridge between various pluralities, while Urdu, English and Hindi sought to do the same in later times. Thus, there existed a pan-Indian culture as well as various diverse, regional, local and ethnic culture what we may call as great and little traditions respectively.

Politically and administratively, India came under one umbrella under the centralised rule of Ashoka's Kalinga empire. Later the strong centralised monarchy under the Moghals created a pan-Indian sentiment. At the same time, several political powers, small identities had emerged in India. These were like the kingdoms of Marathas in Maharashtra, Sikhs in the most of Punjab in the North-West and in Bengal in the East. These territorial identities were not always well defined.

By the time of the British took over the reign of India, the change was enormous. With the British came the printing press, new system of education, new means and modes of communication and transportation and ideas of secular state, fraternity and liberty. Years of discontent with the British rule and its policies resulted in the first indigenous revolt in 1857. "The failure of the movement of 1857 to drive British out of India led to rethinking amongst educated Indians about alternative ways and means of getting rid of foreign domination. They commented that new education, science and technology had to be accepted in order to forge a new Indian national identity. If Indians could strive as a single entity. The task wold be easily and quickly accomplished. Thus, in the second half of the 19th century, organisations with the prefix 'Indian' began to appear" (Gopal, 1992: 42). The growth of national feeling was facilitated by infrastructural facilities and conditions such as printing press, new means of communication and transportation, etc. as mentioned above. This growing consciousness was implicit in the growth of such pan-Indian organisation like British Indian Association and later the Indian National Congress in 1885. Indian nationalism reached a maturity and became the uppermost concern, though there were occasions when ethnicity and plural identities were in conflict with nationalism. The latter, very often, appeared as integral part of Indian nationalism. Although secular ideas of nationalism were on the rise the question of regional identities were not dead and buried, rather, they were just relegated to the background. Thus, we not only had pan-Indian organisations like Indian

National Congress, there were organisations at the regional level like the Justice Party with its undertones of ethnic chauvinism in the Madras Presidency. However, "Secular nationalism, in the face of foreign rule kept ethinic and caste identities under control. It did not subdue them, but made compromises" (Ibid).

Once the freedom was won all the subduced forces surfaced again in the independent democratic India. Political power came to be the key to economic prosperity and enhanced social status. Henceforth, conscious attempts have been made by vested interests to whip up ethnic identity and invariably all political parties have made compromises with ethnic demand. Thus, we can see that the articulation of ethnicity or ethnic movements has closely been related to the power structure, the democratic process and initiation of socio-economic development.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Write in few lines the opinions of K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman on ethnicity.

    ....
    ....
    ....
    ....
    ....

2) Who coined the word ethnicity?

    ....
    ....
    ....
    ....
    ....

3) What are the principal arguments given by the tribals for their demand of a separate state of Jharkhand?

    ....
    ....
    ....
    ....
    ....

24.5 DEPRIVATION, DISPARITY AND THE STATE'S RESPONSE

A careful observation will reveal that ethnic movements are generally the expressions of deprivation and disparities in sharing of privileges. The Jharkhand Movement, for example, was a movement essentially to fight the exploitation of tribes by non-tribes not only in terms of natural resources but in terms of subjugation of their culture.

24.5.1 Regional and Ethnic Identities

What can be gathered from the above is that state is essentially accommodative of some of the ethnic demands. This has diffused the ethnic tension and conflicts in the country. And in some sense this enhanced the mobility and bargaining power of the ethnic group.

The post-Independent India has seen a lot of changes. We have made some new strides in development activity. Amidst this, there have emerged new classes and groups which have asserted for their separate identity and have enabled them to claim a larger share in the fruits of development. They have also realised that in a federal political structure like ours, which has a strong central state. the best way of carving out more power is to capture power at the state level.

Soon after Independence the most powerful manifestation of ethnicity in India was the demand for creation of state or province on linguistic basis. The State Reorganisation Committee was formed in 1956 and boundaries of the states were redrawn on the linguistic basis. This forming of linguistic states was a manifestation of ethnic identity. This process reinforced the regional and linguistic identity and ethnicity. Thus, the demand for separate state on various accounts like ethnicity, language, etc. soon became a part of the political scenario. Various political parties were formed at the state level which were, by and large, identified with ethnic elements.

24.5.2 Jharkhand Movement as an Example

The tribal belt of Central India comprising the portion of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa has seen the rise of the Jharkhand Movement, which agitated for the formation of a separate state for tribals and which they succeed in achieving. The Jharkhand Movement is a good example of politics of ethnicity. The movement drew its sustenance mainly from the growing discontent among tribals on account of their land alienation, exploitation and political neglect of their problems at the national level.

The Jagirdari system in the 18th century turned tribals into more tenets. And they were exploited shamelessly by non-tribals. In the wake of this there were a series of tribal uprisings between 1789-1900 A.D.

The Christian Missionaries entered the area of the middle of the 19th century. They made available for the tribals the facilities of education and helped, increase employment opportunities and economic improvement for them. A few educated tribal Christians organised Chhota Nagpur Unnati Samaj (CNUS) in 1928 for the tribal upliftment.

The turning point came when a separate province of Orissa was carved out of Bihar in 1936. The Chhota Nagpur Unnati Samaj and its new incarnation was Adibasi Sabha in 1938, emerged as the dominant political party under the leadership of Jaipal Singh, a British educated tribal of the area and this party demanded, for the first time, a separate tribal province.

The principal arguments given for the demand of separate state were: the physical characteristic of the area is such as there is a large concentration of the tribals. Their mental make-up, language culture and values are totally different from those of non-tribals. Also, the tribals felt that the welfare and

developmental works both provided and carried out for them are pittances in comparison to the mineral wealth and forest resources exploited from the region. The tribals had a strong fear of losing their identity as they were in minority surrounded by the non-tribals.

The tribals were marginalised at all levels. This had generated tremendous frustration among them. This harsh reality had provided the ground for effective propaganda which had facilitated the growth of an internal solidarity and out-group antagonism. There was an antipathy among them towards the non-tribals or Dikus. Interestingly, the definition of Dikus has changed with changing context. Originally Dikus were Zamindars and their non-tribal employees. Later non-tribals of upper castes background were identified as such. At present, the people from North Bihar are branded as Dikus.

24.5.3 The Indian State's Response

The Indian constitution, has recognised the ethnic diversities and ensured that these diversities may not be obliterated. At the same time, the constitution has also felt that ethnicity should not stand in the way of political, social, economic and cultural progress of people in the country. Provisions such as universal adult franchise granted to the people irrespective of their caste, race, language etc. granted to the people secular participation in various social and economic activities. The state has also turned to be reformist and has intervened to promote the lot of weaker sections and minorities.

Let us have look at some of the government policies to have an idea of the nature of ethnic demands and the State's response. "The most important of such demands came from religion and linguistic groups the resultant fear of dismemberment of the nation, appears to have made such demands totally unacceptable to the government. Whereas, demand for linguistic reorganisation of the State have been considered despite initial reluctance. Further, a policy of accommodation is clearly visible on the official, language issue. Brass (1978) lists down four rules which regulate the attitude of government towards ethnic demands. They are: (1) All demands short of secession will be allowed full expression, but sessionist demand will be supressed, if necessary, by armed forces (2) Regional demands based on language and culture will be accommodated but those demands based on religious differences will not be accepted. (3) An ethnic demand will be accepted only when it achieves broad popular support in the region and (4) the views of other groups involved in the dispute is essential for problem solving" (Nair, K.S., 1985: 106).

24.6 LET US SUM UP

One often hears a great deal about ethnicity and ethnic movement without really knowing what these mean. In our unit on ethnicity we have attempted to bring across to you the meaning of ethnicity. We have also mentioned about various perspectives on ethnicity and we hope that you would realise that ethnicity can be looked from various angles. The problem of ethnicity cannot be seen only as an identity problem but a problem of deprivation and lop-sided development. By presenting the case of the Jharkhand movement, we have drawn attention to the underlying basic problem of deprivation and exploitation covered in any ethnic movement.

It can be said in the end that ethnic movements are basically movements demanding for a larger share of the fruits of development and for this they adopt various strategies of mobilisation. The ethnic identity having a strong emotive appeal mobilises people into strong cohesive groups which then go on to make their demands felt whether real or imaginary.

24.7 KEY WORDS

Boundary	:	A line that marks a limit in terms of identity. A boundary separates one group from the other by pointing to the distinctive aspects of each group.
Ethnocentricism	:	It is a word coined by W.G. Sumner and used in his book 'Folkways'. It is a technical term for the view of things in which one's own group is the centre of everything and all other groups are scaled and rated generally inferior to it.
In-group	:	A social group of people having the same interests and attitudes.
Out-group	:	A social group of people other than those of in-group and their interests and attitudes are also different from those of the former.
Latent	:	Concealed and not visible, lying undeveloped but capable of developing.
Manifest	:	That which is clearly seen.
Mobilisation	:	In this context, it would mean to mobilise people into active participation in an ethnic movement.
Primordial	:	Existing from the beginning. That is why it is said to, be very basic. For example, identity to one's group by way of language, ethnic stock etc. is primordial because it seems to have always existed.

24.8 FURTHER READINGS

Banton Michael, 1983. *Ethnicity, Ethnic Group,* Macmillan Student Encyclopedia of Sociology, (In Michael Mann, ed.) Macmillan Press: London.

Brass, Paul, 1992. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison,* Sage: New Delhi.

Galser N. and D.P. Moynihan: 1975. *'Ethnicity',* Harvard.

Singh S.K. (ed.) 1992, *Ethnicity Caste and People,* Manohar : New Delhi.
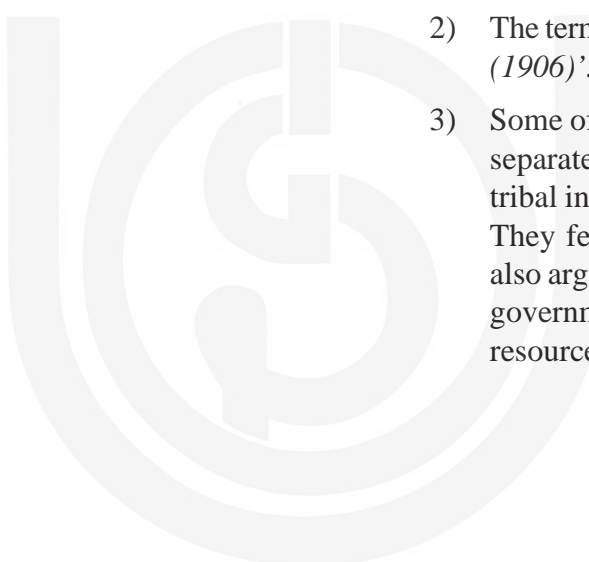
24.9   ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1)   An ethnic community may consider itself distinct and different from other on the basis of a shared culture, language, race, religion or combination of all these.

2)   William G. Sumner observes that people have their own group as the centre of times and rate all other groups with reference to their own. Identity is this process where an individual is bound to his/her social group by which he/she realised his/her social self.

Cbeck Your Progress 2

1)   K.S. Singh and Sandra Wallman feel that the word ethnicity is being used to denote people with distinctive set of bio-cultural and bio-social characteristics which draws a line between us and them. They are of the view that ethnicity is an excellent tool for identification of the aspirations of a community for delineating its boundaries and presenting its identity.

2)   The term 'ethnicity' was first used by W.G. Sumner in his book *'Folkways' (1906)'*.

3)   Some of the principal arguments given by the tribals for the demand of a separate state-of Jharkhand were that the tribals are different from non-tribal in terms of language, culture, values, physical and mental makeup. They feared that they will lose their identity of being minorities. They also argued that the welfare and developmental measures provided by the government are pittances as compared to the mineral wealth and forest resources extracted from the tribal dominated areas.

REFERENCES

Anderson, B., 1983. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Verso: London.

Ansari, Iqbal A., 1989. *The Muslim Situation in India,* Sterling : New Delhi.

Bailey F.G., 1960. *Tribe Caste and Nation : A Study of Political Activity an Political Change in Highland Orissa,* Manchester University Press: Manchester.

Banton Michael, 1983. *Ethnicity, Ethnic Group,* Macmillan Student Encyclopedia of Sociology, (In Michael Mann, ed.) Macmillan Press: London.

Barth, F. (ed.), 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries : The Social Organization of Cultural Differences*, Little Brown: Boston.

Barun De and Sunanjan Das, 1992. Ethnic Revivalism : Problems in the Indian Union in S. K. Singh (ed.). *Ethnicity Caste and People,* Manohar New Delhi.

Benjamin, Joseph. 1989, *Scheduled Castes in Indian Politics and Society,* ECS Publications

Bentley, G. Carter, 1983. 'Theoretical Perspectives on Ethnicity and Nationalism'. *Sage Race Relations Abstacts.* VIII(3) 1-53.

Berghe, Van den., 1976. 'Ethnic Pluralism in Industrial Societies'. *Ethnicity 232-55.*

Beteille, Andre (ed.) 1969, *Social Inequality : Selected Readings,* Penguin: New Delhi.

Brass, Paul, 1992. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison,* Sage: New Delhi.

Clude, L., 1955. *National States and National Minorities,* H.U.P.

Fuchs, S., 1972. 'Land Scarcity and Land Hunger Among Some Aboriginal Tribes of Western Central India' in S.K.Singh (ed.) *Tribal Situation in India.* Shimla.

Furnivall, J.S. 1953, *Colonial Policy and Practice,* Cambridge University Press: Cambridge

Galser N. and D.P. Moynihan: 1975. *'Ethnicity',* Harvard.

Geertz, Clifford (ed.), 1983. *Old Societies and New States,* Free Press: New York.

Ghurye G.S. 1969, *Caste and Race in India,* Popular Prakashan: Bombay.

Ghurye, G.S., 1983. *The Scheduled Tribes,* Popular Book Depot : Bombay.

Gopal, S., 1992. Ethnicity, Nationality and Nationalism in S.K. Singh (ed.) *Ethnicity Caste and People.* Manohar : New Delhi.

Gupta, Dipankar, 1991. Communalism and Fundamentalism Some Notes on the Ethnic Polities in India. *EPW,* March.

Hutton, J.H. 1931. Census of India 193.1, Vol. I, Part IIIB. *Ethnographic Notes,* Government Press : Shimla.

Kabir, Humayun. 1968, *Minorities in a Democracy,* Firma KLM.

Kamble N.D. 1982, *The Scheduled Castes,* Ashish Publishing House: New Delhi.

K.S. Singh, 1972. *The Tribal Situation in India,* Mohanlal Banarasi Dass: Simla.

Majumdar, D.N. and Madan, N., 1956. *An Introduction to Social Anthropology.* Asian Publishing House: Bombay.

Majumdar, D.N. 1958. *Races and Cultures of India,* Asian Publishing House: Bombay.

Mendelbaum, David G., 1970. *Society in India.* Popular Prakashan : Bombay

Nair, K.S., 1985. 'Ethnicity Identity and Integration' in A.D. Pant and Shiva K. Gupta (ed.). *Ethnicity and National Integration.* Vohra : Allahabad

Phadnis, Urmilla, 1989. *Ethnicity and National Building in South Asia,* Sage: New Delhi.

Shakir, Moin. 1980, *Politics of Minorities,* Ajanta: Delhi

Singh K.S. (ed.) 1992, *Ethnicity Caste and People,* Manohar : New Delhi.

Singh, S.K. (ed.), 1972. *Tribal Situation in India .IIAS:* Shimla.

Singh, Yogendra. 1980, *Social Stratification and Change in India,* Manohar, New Delhi.