
UNIT 22 SCHEDULED TRIBES

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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 Lichhavi, 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 Article 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
Orissa	31,659,736	7,032,214	22.2	10.4
Bihar	86,374,465	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
Orissa	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*, *Malsar* 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 racial 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.
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- 2) List out the three racial groups to whose ancestry the present tribal population is traced to.
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- 3) Name a few tribes from the Central Tribal zone.
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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, earthen, 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 knife. 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 *Nagesiang* 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 attracted world-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; *Bhumijis, 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 Santhal 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 lakh 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 nomenclatures 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. *Chik-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 form 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 *Valmiki*s 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 clear 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 cliché 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 tubers, 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.), Garhchiroli (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.

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- 2) Name the tribes whose primary occupation is craft.

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

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4) Who are the pastoralists?

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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. Article 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 Madhya Pradesh, for instance, there were movements among the Gonds claiming Kshatriya status. They 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 instances 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 millenial 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 tribal 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 community 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.

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- 2) Match the following :

A	B
1) <i>Jaintia</i>	Himachal Pradesh
2) <i>Koya</i>	Andhra Pradesh
3) <i>Tharus</i>	Meghalaya
4) <i>Swanglas</i>	Uttar Pradesh

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

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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 costumes, traditions, dress, etc.
- Gleaning** : An agricultural practice specially among the tribes where they pick up the grain with patient labour 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.

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 races: (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 very 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) <i>Jaintia</i>	Meghalaya
2) <i>Koya</i>	Andhra Pradesh
3) <i>Tharus</i>	Uttar Pradesh
4) <i>Swanglas</i>	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(1) 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.