
UNIT 23 SCHEDULED TRIBES

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23.0 OBJECTIVES

After you have studied this unit you should be able to:

- give a description of Scheduled Tribes;
- provide a view of internal differentiation within Scheduled Tribes as a whole;
- outline various important tribal Social Movements;
- delineate Constitutional Provisions and measures for tribal welfare;
- record the role of tribal elites; and
- describe the position of tribals in the emergent social stratification.

23.1 INTRODUCTION

Despite its wide currency in social science literature, the term tribe has not been defined with any scientific rigour and precision, and continues to be used to describe certain categories of pre-literate cultures covering a wide range of forms of social organizations and levels of techno-economic development. It is both identified as a stage in the history

of evolution of societies and as a type of non-state society organized on the basis of extended kinship network that enables it to be a multifunctional grouping.

Some superficial and empirical characteristics are attributed to the term. These are: (i) homogeneity (ii) isolation and non-assimilation (iii) territorial integrity (iv) consciousness of unique identity (v) animist (now defunct) but religion is all pervasive (vi) absence of exploiting classes and organized state structure (vii) multifunctionality of kinship relations (viii) segmentary nature of socio-economic unit, and (ix) frequent cooperation for common goals. Besides, there are many other ambiguous empirical external attributes which have remained unchanged for over a century, though during this period the non-tribal societies have radically changed. This lands us in the endless dilemma of the exception and rule. Small wonder, several serious critiques have demonstrated how the term tribe is at a theoretical dead end and is ideologically manipulative.

Any way, the question of homogeneity and the idea of equality among the tribes have been increasingly found to be of little significance for everywhere women, slaves and strangers are excluded from this equality. Even in lineage based societies, there are economic and political inequalities in terms of control of marriage, exchange of elite goods and the redistribution process. In the Indian context where the equivalent of the term tribe was non-existent before colonial domination, several studies have shown the differential control of land, contribution of labour, surplus extraction, occupational diversity, etc. Similarly, geographical isolation is myth; for instance, the Gonds in India are found in eight states, Bhils in seven, Kandha and Saora each in six, Munda and Oraon in five states and 20 others each in four states. Historically, there has been a continuous process of interaction between the tribes and the larger society particularly in the said states, albeit, at an unequal level. About state formation, there were many early states, other than that of tribals, in the late medieval period in central India tribal belt and in the North-East. Thus, the assumption of a historic and static tribal society surviving as a cultural lag is misleading.

For Indian researchers, it is almost a taboo of defining the term. However, any attempt from whatever criterion or criteria would inevitably exclude a large number of Scheduled Tribes from being called as tribes. Hence, tribe simply refers to those included in the list of Scheduled Tribes. While this juridical terminology and categorization has been uncritically accepted in Indian social research, the term is nowhere defined in the Indian Constitution. Only Article 342 (1) provides that the President, after consulting the governor of state, may designate the "tribes and Tribal communities or part of groups within tribes or tribal communities" to be the Scheduled Tribes for each state.

Accordingly in 1950, the President promulgated a list of the Scheduled Tribes apparently by making some additions to the 1935 list of Backward Tribes. No uniform test for distinguishing the Scheduled Tribes had ever been formulated. The amendments of 1956 and 1976 to left out some tribes despite their meeting the assumed tribal characteristics. In fact, the Dhebar Commission (1961) felt no need to devote any attention to the problem of identifying the tribes. And this seems to have remained unchanged at both legal and academic levels.

Nonetheless, as most concepts are often imprecise prone to change though they largely carry instrumental and operative values, the notion of tribes cannot be otherwise. For our purpose, a working definition would suffice. The tribal peoples in general are historically evolved entities.

They are biologically self-perpetuating and are marked by certain common cultural features. Being subordinated in several ways to the dominant society and its institutions, they have been for long engaged in struggles to preserve and promote their distinguishable features as well as territorial survival resources.

23.2 TRIBAL POPULATION

According to the 1991 Census, India's tribal population was about 68 million, that is about 8 per cent of the country's population. This number is large and is much more than the population of many a country round the world. As some tribes were temporarily

accommodated in the other Backward Classes Category, there were only 19 million persons distributed among 212 tribal communities in 1951 Census. Their strength increased to 38 and 52 millions in 1971 and 1981 respectively, constituting about 7.0 and 7.8 percent of the total population. Today, there are between 258 to 540 communities, depending on whether synonymous and sub-tribes are treated separately or not. Hence, these numbers should be treated as indicative rather than conclusive.

Moreover, their population varied widely. For instance, the Jarwa had a strength of only 31 persons whereas the Gond had over 7 million persons enumerated in 1981. Other small communities like the Andamanese, Onge, Shompen, Toda et. al. had less than thousand persons whereas the Bhil, Santal, Oraon, Munda, Mina, Khond, Saora, etc. had more than a million persons each.

23.2.1 Regional Concentration

Similarly, the regional concentration is of great diversity. About 55 percent of the tribals live in central, 28 percent in Western, 12 percent in North-East and 4 percent in Southern India, and only 1 percent elsewhere in country. But it is interesting to note that, with minor exceptions, there is a continuous belt of tribal habitat from Thane district of Maharashtra to Tengnoupal district of Manipur. Also, the tribals are mostly found in the meeting points of dominant Lingua States. In the 1960s, one-third of the tribals lived in the districts where they were in majority. Infact, over sixty percent lived in the districts where they composed of 30 percent or more of the total population. Even now, the situation may not be very much different.

23.2.2 Role of Growth

It is a fact that the tribal population has been growing faster at a higher rate than the general population. During the 1981-91 decade, the general population grew at the rate of 2.1 percent a year and the tribal population grew at the rate of 2.6 per cent a year. The growth is, however, much higher in the North-East, i.e., at the rate of 4.6 percent per year as against 2.5 percent in Central Indian belt and barely 1.5 percent in southern tribal region. The growth in the North-East must have to consider immigration from outside the country, and elsewhere particularly in the Central and the Western Indian tribal belt the inclusion of new or non-tribal communities in the list of the Scheduled Tribes owing to political compulsions.

Box 23.01

Further according to 1991 Census, the sex ratio among the tribals was higher (972 females per 1000 males) than the general population (929 females for 1000 males). But over decades there is decline, even at time, more than the general population. About literacy, only 23 percent of tribals were literate as against 43 percent among the general population. For female literacy, only 15 percent tribal women were literate against 32 percent females of population. Perhaps a review of the concept of literacy and strategy of tribal education after 50 years of independence is called for. Similarly urbanization : population living in urban areas is as low as 7 percent for tribals when 26 percent of general population live in urban areas.

The averages, however, do not completely comprehend the gamut of differentiations in the tribal milieu. There is enormous heterogeneity not only in terms of the numerical strength, rate of demographic expansion, regional concentration, gender composition, literacy, urbanization but also occupation, ecology, linguistic affiliation, racial composition, kinship systems, history of movements and vast number of other variables.

23.3 INTERNAL SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION

It is difficult to conceive of a society which is completely egalitarian. Every known society in the world contains differences in status carrying different privileges and prerogatives in economic, social, political and ceremonial activities. In Indian context, most of the bigger tribal communities had a tribal aristocracy and warrior nobility. There were landlords and serfs/tenants among the Munda, Shedukpen, Korku, Bhilala, Gond, etc. Often, the smaller tribes served the dominant classes of the powerful tribes. Small wonder that the Hindu

Kings and Mughal rulers recognized several tribes like Bhil, Gond, Koli, Meena, etc. as the dominant communities of the respective regions. The Gond, Chero, Tripuri, Bhuyan, Kachari, Khasi, Binjhal, Koli and others had developed independent kingdoms out of the tribal matrix. The British too strengthened the feudal crust of the tribal society by introducing the Zamindari and Malgauri systems in tribal regions. But it alienated other's lands and forces the peasants onto plantation and mine labour both inside and outside the country. Consequently, there were innumerable protests against such systems.

23.3.1 Struggle Differentiation

Following Independence of the country, the structural differentiation among most of the tribals has become incontrovertible. The inequality among almost all tribes in the country is striking in terms of land control, occupational distribution, income employment of labour, spread of education and urbanization, intensity of outside contact, access to productive resources, life style and so on.

Let us discuss the question of land which is vital for over 80 percent of the tribals in the country. In an agrarian system where land is scarce, the uneven distribution of land will normally speak for the agrarian relations. The bigger the landowner is, the greater will be need to employ outside labour to cultivate the farm. Conversely, the smaller is the peasant let alone the landless, the propensity to sell labour in order to subsist will be greater. The exploitation is in-built into the scheme operative in almost all tribal belts in the country.

23.3.2 Control of Land

The available land control data suggests striking differences among the tribals. For instances in the 1970s 43 percent of tribals owned less than a hectare whereas 9 percent controlled more than four hectares each. The highly skewed land ownership indicates not only internal economic differences but also socio-political differentiation. Several regional studies in Gujarat, Orissa, Tripura, West Bengal and other states have also supported that. For instance, 37 percent of the tribal households have so little land that they cannot survive on land whereas 7 percent with more than 20 acres each, need not participate directly in the production process to generate surplus. Higher the size of the land, there is also greater control of livestock, marketable surplus, employment of wage labour, income consumer goods, better house, and greater access to education and institutional credit. The land inequality is however, more striking among the relatively developed tribals. The smaller tribes have rather lesser differentiation than the bigger ones.

Having mentioned serious differentiations among the tribal people of the country in terms of economic, social and political aspects, it has to be asserted that all tribals experience the dispossession from their customary survival resource bases, recurrent assault on their history, culture and institutional structures. They also face marginalisation in the spheres of decision making. And, therefore, the tribal people are emerging as a unified social category of despised, exploited and marginalized ones.

23.4 TRIBAL SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Before the 18 century, the tribal people appeared to be rather passive to their own centralized power as well as Hindu and Muslim rulers. The only exception was certain regions and tribes under the Maratha rulers. The tribal rulers rarely extorted more than acceptable for the reproduction of the system. In a sense, legitimization of their power was decentralized.

It was colonialism, for the first time which forced them into the centralized repressive state. Consequently, the dispersed and relatively unorganized tribes and their divisions got united and rose in revolts of course at the local level. During the 19th century, most of the numerically strong and settled tribal communities like Santal, Oraon, Kol, Koya, Bhil, Saora, etc. fought against colonialism and feudalism as was perceived in their immediate context. Apart from a few reformative, messianic or emulative movements, most of their revolts and agitation were related to land alienation, forest reservation, forced and indentured labour, oppressive, taxation, loss of culture and religion, and replacement of their traditional power.

The anti-colonial perspective, however, was not well articulated precisely because the British interests were pursued through the local and regional powers. The intra-tribal contradictions were overshadowed by the onslaught of non-tribals, and the ethnic bonds and common heritage spared their own exploiting members from attack. With the rise of the nationalist movement in the early 20th century, anti-colonial perspective percolated to the tribal struggles of Kandha, Koya, Oraon, Munda, Saora, Warli, Gond, and others.



The Bhil Tribe of India. Women collecting firewood

Courtesy: Kiranmayi Bushi

23.4.1 Tribal Movements Since Independence

However, since independence, the tribal movements have become more diverse. Despite their heterogeneity at large, the common grievances of tribals is their dispossession and indignity, and aspirations form a common platform with some subjugated non-tribals and thereby, consolidate pan-regional loyalties and consciousness. Yet, almost all tribal movements organized so far have been intrinsically associated with the ethnic or nationality question. Small wonder, the current tribal movements in terms of socio-cultural mobility towards the twice-born cultural complexes have become insignificant. Instead, the reverse trend is becoming more and more conspicuous.

Activity 1

Find out about tribal movements since Independence from friends and students. Make a note on the same in your diary.

The organized struggles mostly appear among the relatively large population with some level of literacy, awareness of national democratic process and internal socio-economic differentiation. Evidence suggests that the tribals that are more differentiated provide greater resistance to subjugation; and the elite structure serves as the rallying point for struggles. Their struggles or movements are concentrated expressions of the socio-economic, political and cultural expressions of the tribal peoples at large.

23.4.2 Motive Forces of Struggle

The tribal struggles are essentially rooted in three interrelated motive forces namely, the epistemology of individualism, statist ideology and capitalist model of development. The movements are, therefore, for recognition of collective rights over the survival resources

and internal self-determination in the legitimate cultural, linguistic spheres as well as a dynamic strategy for sustainable development. Unfortunately, however, the militant nationalist struggles of the tribals their political autonomy in the North-East and the radical agrarian struggles against the obnoxious methods of surplus appropriation in parts of the obnoxious methods of surplus appropriation in parts of central India tribal belt are simply treated as a law and order issue and dealt in military terms. The demands for political autonomy and extension of the 6th Schedule to tribal areas are perfectly legitimate and constitutional deserving appropriate democratic handling of the issues.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Provide a working definition of Scheduled Tribes in about five lines.

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- 2) Write a note on tribal social movements in india in about five lines.

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23.5 CONSTITUTIONAL PROVISIONS AND MEASURES

There are as many as 20 Articles and two special Schedules in the Indian Constitution concerning the welfare of the tribals and development of the Scheduled Areas. This constitutes a unique distinction in the whole world. Besides the Articles of the Fundamental Rights to Equality (14, 15, 16, 17), rights against exploitation (23, 24), special rights of the tribals (15, 16, 19), there are several Articles in the Directive Principle of the State Policy - not enforceable by law which are related to the Scheduled Tribes (38, 39, 41, 43, 46, 47, 48). The most important is thought to be Article 46 which commits that 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 Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." The ideal is laudable. But no mechanism or guidance is provided on how the weaker sections can achieve their exploitation free existence in an overall exploitative complex.

23.5.1 Tribal Welfare Measures

In additional, there is a provision for a minister of tribal welfare in some states (164), administration of the Scheduled and Tribal Areas specially with respect to land alienation and money lending (244), development grants to states (275), identification of the Scheduled Tribes (366) and reservation for tribals in legislatures, education and employment (330, 332, 334, 335, 338, 339). Though the provision of reservation is considered one of the most meaningful provisions, it may be noted that it is not the tribal collectivities but only the individuals belonging to them who are entitled for such benefits.

Article 371 upholds customary laws, justice and socio-religious practices of tribals in some states. The Vth Schedule (244) tends to be protective and paternalistic. It does not recognize group rights in land and land based resources, and the customary political institutions. Anyway, most of the protective provisions have remained ineffective or inoperative in practice. The VIth Schedule veers towards self-management, ethno development and internal self-determination through the autonomous district/ regional councils with executive, legislative and judicial powers. But the scope has been seriously diluted through

several easy amendments. Nonetheless, the Vth Schedule alone honours the customary corporate rights over resources, cultural diversity, sustainable self-development, self-management and self-reliance of tribal people in certain regions.

23.5.2 Policy for Tribals

The tribal policy or policy for tribals is rather complex; for it aims to balance improvement of their conditions, on the one hand, and a degree of assimilation with preservation of their distinctiveness and measure of autonomy on the other. It is a fact that the broad frame of operational policy was crisply put forward by Nehru (1958) which included, among others, that they should develop along the lines of their own genius, and their rights in land and forest should be respected. But in practice neither their genius is ever considered nor their land and forests honoured. In fact, the state has become major source of alienation of resources and de-recognition of the cognitive principles and practices of the tribal people

Recently, there has been an interesting development. The Panchayat Raj (extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 though still excludes tribal areas in the North-East and tribals in non - scheduled areas and urban areas, does provide for consultation with the Gram Sabha (village Council) before making acquisition of land for development projects. It considers the community as the basic building block with its firm foundation of tribal traditions and customs as the pivot of the system of self-government. The Gram Sabha is also endowed with power of management of community resources, resolution of local disputes, approval of plans and programme, ownership of minor forest produce and minor minerals, restoration of unlawfully alienated and, control over money lending and marketing, self-management according to customs and many more. Although it does not meet the standards of the Vth Schedule fully, the drive is towards that. Hence, in the Vth Schedule tribal peoples are still striving for its implementation.

23.6 SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT

In spite of the constitutional commitment and five decades of planning for tribal welfare, it is sad to observe their levels and standards of the living are conspicuously lower than the national averages. Poverty, malnutrition, mortality and morbidity are much higher among them. Nearly 85 percent of the tribal families remain below the poverty line as against national average of 38 percent. Sixty per cent of them are nutritionally deficient. With the reservation of forests, came closures of areas for military and national security purposes, large scale immigration of non-tribal population, extraction of mineral, hydrological, and environmental resources, they have been losing their land and land based endowments, and facing de-culturalization. The asymmetry of power has thus been accentuated in the post-colonial era.

Much has been said about the expenditure on tribal welfare. But actual expenditure had remained less than one per cent of the plan outlay till the end of the Fourth Five Year Plan. Since then, it did increase to about three per cent but largely due to the inclusion of infrastructural and administrative costs. Earlier, the expenditure incurred by the tribal welfare ministries and departments were accounted but now any identifiable expenditure by other including industrial and hydel projects are added. Hence, differences in the percentages conceal more than reveal the fact. In any case, suffice to say that it has never been commensurate with the proportion of their population. If we take into account the inflation, the per capita annual expenditure of the Tribal people upto the mid - 1970s was as little as one and half rupees at 1951 price level. After that, it increased to about five rupees at that price level by adding many other costs including administrative costs of 194 Integrated Tribal Development Projects, 268 Modified Area Development Approaches in tribal pockets below the block level, and 90 cluster areas of primitive groups covering 69 percent of tribal population. Not simply the amount spent on tribal welfare is much less conspicuous than has been made out, but whatever little spent is also biased in favour of education, instead of economic development.

23.6.1 Micro-Level Surveys

Several surveys at micro-level have noticed that between 50 to 60 percent of the sampled households had no idea of any welfare or development programme, let alone receiving any

benefit from any schemes and projects. Rather, they pointed how their miseries have increased in the recent decades due to the current notion of development and invasion of unequal market forces into their midst. Of course, some welfare measures and development plans and schemes around 10 percent did receive the specific benefits. They mostly belonged to the big landowners, traditional leaders and educated elite of the advanced regions and dominant communities. The only exception to this are 74 "primitive" groups who have got some benefits of these plans and schemes. This may be so as in process, there are some contingent benefits to the common tribal masses.

Thus, the tribal welfare system is primarily a product of the tribals' struggles; and represents a quid pro quo in exchange for political quiescence. It has, however, strengthened the structure of mediation, varying from a few leaders to a cross section of the populace, depending on the levels of internal contradiction, the imminent threat of struggles, contribution to labour and commodity market, electoral calculations and the relative autonomy of the State. Obviously, welfare's are not meant to accomplish redistribution of socio-economic and political power. The indiscriminate extension of the benefits to a structured society would logically mean that the higher the class and social status, greater is the share of those benefits percolated down to the village level. The primary focus then is to co-opt a few members to act as a buffer to make the articulation easier and the maintenance of the existing unequal system guaranteed. But the crystallization of alliance between such privileged sections of the tribals and the all India ruling classes still remains a very feeble one. Anyway, the tribal people have achieved little and not to their expectations as citizens of the country.

23.7 ROLE OF TRIBAL ELITES

In the colonial period, most of the struggles for justice were led by the disposed traditional elite with great consequence. Independent India has taken serious note of it and provided several avenues for ameliorating their conditions of living. But as the resources are limited or rather improperly distributed, the spread of benefits are very much limited. Accordingly, the system of granting special facilities has generated a small modern elite among the tribals in terms of education, politics and economics, whereas the large majority of the tribal people have remained where they were before Independence, if not worse.

Box 23.02

Some have argued that the tribal elite articulates its own interests and not of the common masses and, therefore, in the development planning focus should be directed to the weaker sections among the tribals. But the argument misses the fact that when Indian society as a whole is class divided (and also on the basis of caste and religion) and when exploitation marks the social relations in the almost every field, how can the emerging tribal elites be very much different? Moreover, by being simultaneously members of indigenous community and the national society, the tribal elites generate a system of linkage to the wider system. If the process of formation of elite is accelerated, there may be a scope for building a national elite. This would considerably reduce the inter-ethnic distances within the national polity. Besides, they constitute the nuclei of the social transformation of the tribal society or societies. There may be occasional withdrawal of this responsibility but that is not specific to tribal elites rather, it is shared by elites belonging to the rest of the nation.

Being a late comer, the tribal elites are not able to compete equal terms with the non-tribal elites and this, tend to be an integral part of their community system. Tribal elites thus, cannot fully separate from their own people. The masses at times treat them as customary political elite, moneylenders, rich peasants, modern political leaders educated and government servants, agents of labour contractors, etc. The contradictions with alien market forces and their agents being so severe, the conflicts are often channelized along ethnic lines with direct and indirect support of the same internal elites.

23.8 TRIBALS AND EMERGENT SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

It is interesting to note that in the 18th century writings on India, the term caste has often been used synonymously with tribe, and later in cognate manner as in the phrase castes :

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tribes. Even the Indian Constitution (Art. 341(1)) holds that a tribe may be included in the category of scheduled castes. In fact, 1951 Census temporarily accommodated over a million tribals in the Other Backward Classes category.

Be that alone, the little attention that has been paid to tribal transition in social science research is largely seen as a shift from tribe to caste. Indeed, some sociologists have even called the tribes as backward Hindus. Of course, most of the major tribal communities have had interactions with the Hindus, Muslims and others, and in the process of which, changes have appeared in the cultural as well as structural complexes of the tribes, castes and others. But the historical and contextual evidence rarely supports the thesis of the trend of transformation of tribes into castes as such. For a couple of decades, emulation of the dominant culture through sanskritization swayed the tribal people. But as these attempts hardly improved their status of material conditions of life, most have retrieved their unique ethnic identity. Historically, they were many but existentially they are tending to be one in the contemporary period.

23.8.1 Recent Studies

Some recent studies have observed peasant features among a few numerically important tribes. But the characterization of tribal peasant society varied from more or less undifferentiated communities of peasants to stratified groups and further as a class society. Again, the motive forces of change - exogenous, endogenous or both - remain still an unexplored arena in tribal research. Among these who have rejected the tribal peasantry as a single interest group, most have analysed differentiation as stratification, i.e. categories of wealth, income and status through which families move up and down. Income distribution, assets control, occupational structure, etc. may provide description of the social strata but not the social relations and how the system operates. It also cannot identify the motive forces of change. Besides, any two researchers following the same approach would arrive at different classification of the same population. Most often, these strata are commonly called as classes - upper, middle and lower, rich and poor, and so on. But these descriptive divisions may at best provide a series of approximations illustrating partial aspects of social class.

23.8.2 The Marxist Conception

The Marxist conception of class, on the other hand, is analytical and contrasts sharply with the synthetic gradation scheme so prevalent in current literature on social stratification. To put it simply, the differentiation of the peasantry in the materialist sense is tied to the conditions under which the surplus is generated, appropriated and consumed or reinvested. But the operationalisation of the concept of class in the backward economic structures, where the boundary tends to be rather ambiguous, besets with a number of problems. Control of means of production and participation in the labour process do not sufficiently indicate the class identity and structure, for most tribals experience the world primarily in the idiom of tribe.

Activity 2

Does the Marxist paradigm fit the data we have on tribals? Discuss with friends and fellow students. Put down your observations in your notebook.

Needless to mention that the land ownership among the tribals is very unequal as stated earlier. However, in the present time nearly 55 percent of landowners own less than 5 acres each whereas 11 percent control over 15 acres each. A study in Gujarat found that 25 percent of the tribal households controlled only 3.6 percent of the total land whereas less than one-tenth of the households control a - third of the land resources. The inequality in land control is equally explicit with respect to individual village, and each and every tribes. In short, the tribal world is entwined with the larger capitalistic sector. Ruling classes of both have at once contradictions and alliances, and hold the key to economic progress or stagnation.

23.8.3 Tribes as Peasant Societies

We have earlier shown distinction between tribe and peasantry but at the existential level all the major tribes are actually peasant societies existing within the broad political economy of the State. Their existence and motion and perhaps be better understood in terms of a class analysis of these societies and the level of articulation of the different modes of production within their ethnic structures. As the ethnic consciousness and practices continue, class practices have not yet become dominant at political level.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Outline some important constructional provisions and measures for tribal welfare use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) Delineate the present position of tribals in the social structure. Use about five lines for your answer.

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Meanwhile, the recent processes of economic liberalization and globalization have further accentuated class and community divisions albeit regional and sectoral inequalities. The tribals being the most marginalized and residing in resource rich areas have suffered the most and experienced absolute decline in their living standards. Even today they face alienation of their endowments, provide cheap labour, undergo involuntary displacement, and suffer from food security and many more. This is the process of the intensification of marginalization of tribal masses. But external alien interests can only articulate through local intermediaries. Thus, a very small section of advanced tribals with some assets of wealth, education and power is used for profit accumulation of the transnational corporations and international institutions. In the process, this section also becomes prosperity but this prosperity (?) of the few is of course very temporary.

23.9 LET US SUM UP

Though traumatized by deculturation, acculturation, co-optation and negative identity, the tribals have largely managed to preserve their self identity, values of kinship, institutional reciprocity, knowledge of shared history and territorial occupancy. They are discovering their philosophical and cultural uniqueness and potentialities. There is also an increasing trend of inter-tribal unity and consciousness undermining the internal structuration and ethnic co-optation. Their communal control of customary resources and revival of traditional institutions and values of egalitarianism may act as a defensive mechanism against the gamut of imposed ills.

23.10 KEY WORDS

- Peasant Societies** : Societies with little internal differentiation who work their land with family labour and rudimentary technology.
- Policy** : A set of measures legally backed with resolutions and funds towards a group or situation e.g. tribals.
- Social Differentiation** : Where there are clear aspects of separate identity and lack of homogeneity in a social group.

Social Movement : A string towards a collective goal having the support of the people economic and social.

Tribal : Historically evolved people with specific biological and cultural features usually subjugated to the dominant society.

23.11 FURTHER READINGS

Basu, N.C., 1987. *Forests and Tribals*. Calcutta Manisha Granthalays.

Bose, N.K., 1980. *Tribal Life in India*. New Delhi.NBT.

Ghurye, G.S. 1963. *The Scheduled Tribes* Bombay, Popular Prakashan

Sharma, B.D., 1984. *Planning for Tribal Development*. New Delhi: Prachi Prakashan

23.12 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) For all practical purposes a tribe that is listed as scheduled tribe is a scheduled tribe. Tribes as a whole are historically evolved entities, are biologically self perpetuating and are marked by certain common cultural features. Being exposed to the dominant society they often have to struggle to maintain their identity.
- 2) Prior to the 18th century tribals appear to have been rather passive, and had a decentralized system of governance. Colonialism forced some tribes to coalesce and revolt against the repression. During the 19th century most of the tribes with large number territories fought colonialism and feudalism e.g. the Santal, Oraon, Kol, Koya etc.
Since independence the movements were fewer but all were concerned with common grievance of dispossession and indignity.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) There are about 20 Articles and two special Schedules in the Indian Constitution concerning the welfare of tribals and development of the Scheduled Areas. All these try and ensure that tribal are protected from social injustice and exploitation of all types.
- 2) For the last few decades emulation of the dominant culture, through Sanskritization was witnessed among various tribes. This did not help them much. Studies discussed peasant like features among the tribes, however, this did not go unchallenged, and tribes as a single interest group was not in a tenable position. Further Marxists pointed out that land ownership among tribes is very unequal and has alliances with the larger capitalist sector. These ruling classes hold a key to the future.