

Chapter 7

Understanding Marginalisation-1

Presented by

Smt. Sheela Sudhakar
PGT Economics
AECS Kaiga

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Meaning

- ▶ **‘To be marginalised’** is to be forced to occupy the sides or fringes and thus not be at the centre of things.
- ▶ Marginalized Populations or groups of people are socially excluded and experience inequalities in the distribution of resources and power
- ▶ In simple words, judging and discriminating a person through appearance is called marginalisation

Social Marginalisation

MEANING; In the social environment too, groups of people or communities may have the experience of being excluded. This is known as social marginalisation.

REASONS; Their marginalisation can be because they–

- ▶ They speak a different language,
- ▶ Follow different customs and traditions and
- ▶ Belong to a different religious group from the majority community.
- ▶ They may also feel marginalised because they are poor, considered to be of ‘low’ social status and viewed as being less human than others.
- ▶ Thus economic, social, cultural and political factors work together to make certain groups in society feel marginalised



IMPACT; Marginalised groups are viewed with hostility and fear.

- Marginalised communities are not having any access to resources and opportunities
- This leads to sense of difference and exclusion
- Lack of representation and participation in governance.
- They experience a sense of disadvantage and powerlessness to assert their rights
- It results in poverty and backwardness.

Who Are Adivasis?

- ▶ Tribals are also referred to as Adivasis.
- ▶ Adivasis—literally means ‘original inhabitants’, communities who lived and continue to live, in close association with forests.
- ▶ They are distinctive because there is often very little hierarchy among them and this makes them radically different from communities organised around principles of jati-varna (caste) or those that were ruled by kings.

- About 8% of India's population is Adivasi
- Most of the country's mining and industrial centres are located in Adivasi areas like Jamshedpur, Rourkela, Bokaro and Bhilai, among others.
- Adivasis are not a homogeneous population; there are over 500 various Adivasi groups in India.
- In Odisha alone there are 60 different tribal groups
- Adivasis are numerous in states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal and in the north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.

- ▶ Adivasis practise a range of tribal religions that are different from Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. They worship their ancestors, village and nature spirits, the last associated with and residing in various sites in the landscape – ‘mountain-spirits’, ‘river-spirits’, ‘animal-spirits’, etc.
- ▶ The village spirits–worshipped at specific sacred groves within the village boundary, the ancestral ones–worshipped at home.
- ▶ Adivasis–influenced by different surrounding religions like Shakta, Buddhist, Vaishnav, Bhakti and Christianity.
- ▶ Adivasi religions–influenced dominant religions of the empires around them, for example, the Jagannath cult of Odisha and Shakti and Tantric traditions in Bengal and Assam.

During the 19th century, substantial numbers of Adivasis converted to Christianity, which has emerged as a very important religion in modern Adivasi history.

Adivasis have their own languages (most of them radically different from and possibly as old as Sanskrit), which have often deeply influenced the formation of 'mainstream' Indian languages, like Bengali.

Santhali has the largest number of speakers and has a significant body of publications including magazines on the internet or in e-zines

Adivasis and Stereotyping

- In India, we usually 'showcase' Adivasi communities in particular ways.
- Adivasis are invariably portrayed in very stereotypical ways-in colourful costumes, headgear and through their dancing
- This leads to people believing that they are exotic, primitive and backward.
- Adivasis are blamed for their lack of advancement



Adivasis and Development

- ▶ Forests covered a major part of our country until the 19th century.
- ▶ Adivasis had a deep knowledge of, access to, as well as control over most of these vast tracts at least till the middle of the nineteenth century. They were not ruled by large states and empires. Instead, often empires heavily depended on Adivasis for the crucial access to forest resources.
- ▶ In the pre-colonial world, they were traditionally ranged hunter-gatherers and nomads and lived by shifting agriculture and also cultivating in one place. For the past 200 years, Adivasis have been increasingly forced – through economic changes, forest policies and political force applied by the State and private industry – to migrate to lives as workers in plantations, at construction sites, in industries and as domestic workers. For the first time in history, they do not control or have much direct access to the forest territories.
- ▶ From the 1830s onwards, Adivasis from Jharkhand and adjoining areas moved in very large numbers to various plantations in India and the world – Mauritius, the Caribbean and even Australia. India's tea industry became possible with their labour in Assam.

Forestlands-cleared for timber and to get land for agriculture and industry. Adivasis-lived in areas that are rich in minerals and other natural resources, which were taken over for mining and other large industrial projects. Powerful forces collude to take over tribal land forcefully and procedures are not followed.



- According to official figures, over 50% of persons displaced due to mines and mining projects are tribals.
- Another recent survey report by organisations working among Adivasis shows that 79% of the persons displaced from the states of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Jharkhand are tribals.
- Huge tracts of their lands have also gone under the waters of hundreds of dams that have been built in independent India.
- India has 104 national parks covering 40,501 sq km and 543 wildlife sanctuaries covering 1,18,918 sq km. These are areas where tribals originally lived but were evicted from. When they continue to stay in these forests, they are termed, encroachers

In the Northeast, their lands remain highly militarised. Losing their lands and access to the forest means that tribals lose their main sources of livelihood and food. many Adivasis have migrated to cities in search of work where they are employed for very low wages in local industries or at building or construction sites .

When Adivasis are displaced from their lands, they lose much more than a source of income—lose their traditions and customs – a way of living and being

, 45% of tribal groups in rural areas and 35% in urban areas live below the poverty line leading to deprivation in other areas— malnourished tribal children— low Literacy rates, etc.



In support of Forest Rights Act

There exists an interconnectedness between the economic and social dimensions of tribal life. Destruction in one sphere naturally impacts the other. Often this process of dispossession and displacement can be painful and violent

WHAT TRIBALS WANT

- Land for agriculture and community ownership of forests under FRA 2006
- Review of all FRA claims for land rights rejected by administration



- Withdrawal of all criminal cases lodged for using forest produce and agitations
- Rights for self governance and development under Panchayats Act 1996
- Strong defence by govt against petition in SC seeking their eviction from forest land