Chapter – 5: Understanding Marginalisation

What Does it Mean to be Socially Marginalised?

- Marginalisation – forced – occupy the sides – not to be at centre of things
- Something – everyone experiences – if you are different
- Anything you say, feel, think – not acceptable to others
- Groups of people – experience – being excluded
- Reason for marginalisation – language, customs, religion, etc
- Sometimes – considered 'low' social status – sometimes – considered hostile (dangerous)
- This exclusion – results in – no access to resources and opportunities
- They experience – powerlessness – BUT – dominant sections – own land, better educated, powerful
- Economic, social, cultural, political factors – work together – certain groups in society – feel marginalised
- Example –
  - Adivasi family in Delhi – Soma, Helen – watching Republic Day parade
  - One of them – spots an Adivasi float (decorated platform) – other wonders – Adivasis always shown as dancing
  - They wonder – people don't know anything else about their culture
  - Dadu explains – lives of Adivasis – very rich – BUT – most people – don't know
  - He further tells – he was young – village in Odisha – very beautiful – everything needed – obtained from land and forests – people respected land, forest, river
  - Suddenly – they were told – forest was not theirs – forest officials – cut down forests – beat up who protested – took them to courts – cannot win
  - Children asked him – how did he survive?
  - He told them – many of them – forced to leave – find seasonal work – nearby towns
  - Other company workers came – said there was iron ore there – they wanted to mine it
  - They promised – jobs and money – sell the land
  - Some villagers – excited – others believed – it will destroy their lives
  - Some – sold the lands unknowingly – only a few – given jobs
  - Company workers – beat up and threatened everyone – forced to sell land
  - For their 30 acres of land – Dadu received very little money
  - Money – did not lasted long – cramped into tiny rented room
  - After few years – Dadu's son – got a job in Delhi – everyone moved here – very difficult times – children didn't go to school
  - Children remember – when they went back to school – other children – made fun of them – cannot speak Hindi – BUT – now – they have few friends – even speak English
- Dadu's story – similar to lives of millions of Adivasis

Who are Adivasis?

- Literal meaning – original inhabitants (person who lives in a given place)
- Communities – lived and continue to live – associated with forests
- 8 % of population – Adivasi – India's most imp. mining and industrial centres – Adivasi areas – Jamshedpur, Rourkela, Bokaro, Bhilai, etc

- Adivasis – not homogenous – 500 different Adivasi groups
- Found in larger numbers – Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, north-eastern states
- State – Odisha – 60 different tribal groups
- Adivasi societies – very unique – very little hierarchy – different from communities – based on *jati-varna* or ruled by kings
- Adivasis – various tribal religions – different from Islam, Hinduism, Christianity
- These include – worship of ancestors, village, nature spirits
- Village spirits – worshipped at specific sacred places – within village boundary
- Ancestors – worshipped at homes
- Adivasis – influenced by – different religions – Shakta, Buddhist, Vaishnav, Bhakti, Christianity
- Adivasi religions – influenced – dominant religions – surrounding empires
- Example – Jagannath cult of Odisha, Shakti and Tantric traditions in Bengal and Assam
- 19th century – lots of Adivasis – converted to Christianity – imp. religion – modern Adivasi history
- Adivasis – their own languages (most – different from Sanskrit – as old as it) – influenced the formation of 'mainstream' languages – Bengali, etc
- Santhali – largest numbers of speakers – lots of publications

Adivasis and Stereotyping

- India – Adivasi communities – shown in particular ways
- During school functions, official events, etc – Adivasis portrayed as – colourful dresses, headgear, dancing – stereotypical ways
- We know – very little – lives of Adivasis – leads to believing – they are primitive, exotic, backwards
- Adivasis – blamed – lack of advancement – they are believed to be – resistant to change (new ideas)
- Stereotyping particular communities – people discriminate against them

Adivasis and Development

- Forests – very imp. – development of all empires, settled civilisations
- Metal ores (iron, copper), gold, silver, coal, diamonds, timber, medicinal herbs, animal products (wax, honey), animals (elephants) – all – forest produce
- Life – depended on forests – helps to recharge – many rivers – imp. for availability and quality – air and water
- Till 19th century – forests – covered most of our country
- Till mid-19th century – Adivasis – deep knowledge of and access to – forests
- These people – not ruled by empires – BUT – empires – depend heavily on Adivasis – access to forest produce
- Pre-colonial world – Adivasis – hunter-gatherers, nomads, shifting agriculture, even settled agriculture
- Past 200 years – Adivasis – forced too much – economic changes, forest policies, political force – migrate – live as workers in plantations, construction sites, industries etc
- 1st time – no control or access to forests
- Forest lands – cleared for timber, agriculture land, industry land
- Adivasi areas – rich in minerals, natural resources – taken for mining, industrial projects

- Maximum land – taken without procedures – forcefully
- Official figures – 50 % people – displaced due to mining projects – tribals
- Another survey report – 79 % people – displaced from Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand – tribals
- Lots of land – gone under water – hundreds of dams – built in independent India
- North East – tribals' lands – highly militarized – presence of armed forces
- India –
  - 101 national parks – 40,564 sq. km
  - 543 wildlife sanctuaries – 1,19,776 sq. km
- These areas – tribals original habitat – BUT – removed from here
- Losing land and access to forest – losing source of livelihood and food
- Many Adivasis – migrated to cities – search for work – employed at low wages – local industries, construction sites, etc
- This way – get looped in – cycle of poverty
- 45 % tribal groups in rural area – 35 % in urban area – below poverty line
- Many tribal children – malnourished (growth very low) – literacy rates – very low
- Adivasis – displaced from their land – lose traditions and customs – way of living
- Gobindha Maran – displaced due to refinery project, Odisha – stated –
  - their farm lost – some houses left instead
  - took their cremation ground, temple, pond, etc
- There exists – interconnectedness economic and social lives of tribals

Minorities and Marginalisation

- Constitution – provides safeguards – religious and linguistic minorities – fundamental rights
- Minority – communities – numerically small – relation to rest population
- This concept – include – issues of power, access to resources, social and cultural dimensions
- Indian Constitution – recognised – culture of majority – influences – society and government
- Such cases – size – disadvantage – leads to marginalisation – smaller communities
- Safeguards – needed – protect minorities – from domination of majority – also protects them – against discrimination
- Certain conditions – minorities – may feel insecure (not confident) – lives and well-being
- This insecurity – noticed more – if relations between minority and majority – more stressed
- Constitution – provides safeguards – protect India's cultural diversity – promote equality
- Judiciary – imp. role – enforce law and fundamental rights – every citizen – approach court – if rights are violated

Muslims and Marginalisation

- 2011 census – Muslims – 14.2 % population – considered marginalised – compared to other communities – less benefits of socio-economic developments
- 3 tables given below – situation of Muslim community – basic amenities, literacy, public employment
- Table 1 – access to basic amenities (in percentage)
- Table 2 – literacy rate (in percentage)

- Table 3 – public employment (in percentage)

Religious Community	*Pucca* House	Electricity	Tap Water
Hindu	65.4	75.2	43.7
Muslim	63.8	67.5	35.8
Christian	69.3	86.2	48.0
Sikh	91.3	96.0	49.3

All	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Buddhists	Jains
74	63	57	74	67	71	86

Population	IAS	IPS	IFS	Central Public Sector Unit (PSU)	State PSU	Banks & RBI
13.5	3	4	1.8	3.3	10.8	2.2

- Government – found out – Muslims in India – lagging behind – various development indicators
- Government – set up – committee – 2005
- Committee head – Justice Rajindar Sachar – social, economic, educational status – Muslims in India
- Report suggests – situation of Muslim community – comparable to other marginalised communities – Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
- According to reports – average years of schooling – Muslim children between ages 7-16 – much lower than other socio-religious communities
- Marginalisation experienced by Muslims – other aspects as well
- Muslim customs – very different from others – some (not all) – wear *burqa*, long beards, wear *fez* (white caps) – these ways – identify all Muslims
- This is the reason – identified differently – not like 'rest of us'
- Often – this marginalisation – excuse for discrimination
- Sometimes – this marginalisation – leads to migration – leads to hatred and violence