
UNIT 3 IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC CULTURE AND GLOBALISATION ON TRIBALS

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3.0 OBJECTIVES

There are 67.8 million Scheduled Tribes people, constituting 8.74 % of India's population. Thus, they constitute almost two-thirds of the Muslim population and more than 3.4 and 4 times the Christian and Sikh population respectively. The Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) has identified 461 Scheduled Tribes of which about 172 are their segments or sub-groups. The ASI itself, however, admits that this is not a complete list of tribal communities in India. According to Draft National Policy On Tribals prepared by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs there are 698 Scheduled Tribes and many more unlisted groups of them spread all over the country speaking a variety of languages. In the States and Union Territories like Chandigarh, Delhi, Haryana, Pondichery and Punjab no Scheduled Tribe has been listed as per the Presidential Order. Scheduled Tribes are those which are notified as such by the President of India under Article 342 of the Constitution. In this Unit you are expected to understand:

- Adivasi situation in the country
- The impact of the industrial policy on the adivasis

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In India, tribals can be divided into two categories: (i) frontier tribes, and (ii) non-frontier tribes. The former are inhabitants of the North-East frontier states with 12.02% of India's Scheduled Tribes population at the borders of Burma, China and Bangladesh. They occupy a special position in the sphere of national politics. The rest of the 87.98% non-frontier tribes are distributed in most of the mainland states, though they are concentrated in large numbers in Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh. Both the tribal categories mentioned above are known as tribes, *Adivasis*, aboriginals, autochthons, etc. They have their own mother tongues, life styles, social structures, rites and rituals, values, and so on

differing in many ways from those of the non-tribal social groups in the country. Many of them are today settled agriculturists but forest still forms much of their economic resource base.

Indian Tribes

The official selection of criteria to define the Scheduled Tribes is seriously mistaken for its lack of correspondence with reality and for its deep ethnocentric bias. In his report for the year 1952, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes listed eight common features of Scheduled Tribes: (a) dwelling condition – they live in forests and hills, (b) ethnic origins – from Negritos, Australoids or Mongoloids, (c) language – tribal language, (d) religion – ‘animists’ worshipping ghosts and spirits, (e) mode of production – primitive, hunters, food gatherers, (f) carnivorous in food habits, (g) naked or semi-naked, and (h) fond of drink and dance (Sengupta 1988: 1004). This official characterisation of the tribals has remained the same to this day. Needless to say that most of the notified Scheduled Tribes population in the country today do not fit these criteria at all. The important and conscious tribal groups in the country in fact present an altogether different picture of themselves. The educated and Christianised tribals, such as, Uraons, Mundas, Kharias, Hos, Santals, Bhils, Gonds, Minas, Garos, Khasis, Mizos, Nagas, etc. are highly modernised and they would in fact consider their non-tribal neighbours in the country as primitives!

Adivasi Identity

Here, the term ‘*Adivasi*’ deserves a special attention. This is indeed the term invented and used by the Jharkhandi tribals for their self-identity. Around 1938, the Jharkhand leaders had formed a pan-tribal organisation named *Adivasi Mahasabha*, which gave rise to the *Jharkhand Party* in 1950. The term expresses a real sense of pride as against the lowly image given by terms, such as, *forest tribe*, *forest and hill tribe*, *forest and gypsy tribe*, *backward tribe*, *primitive tribe*, *forest and primitive tribe*, *Hindu primitive tribe*, *backward Hindus*, etc. The Jharkhand movement perceived well the conflict between the officially sponsored image and the self-understanding of the *Adivasis*. The tribals of India, except perhaps those of the North-East states, emotionally identify themselves with the terms ‘*Adivasi*’ and ‘*Adivasis*’. In this background, how can some groups of non-tribals use the derogatory term *Vanvasis* for the *Adivasis*? ‘*Vanavasi*’ is synonymous with ‘*Jungle*’ and ‘*Vanavasis*’ thus means ‘forest dwellers’ with a pejorative sense. Nobody has ever called the well-to-do non-tribals who have their homes in jungles and hill stations as *Vanavasis*! Why then give this name to the *Adivasis* alone?

The Adivasi society however does not have caste system. It is divided into different groups and various clans. There is no high and low social hierarchy among them. There are several fundamental differences between the Hindus and the Adivasis. Even constitutionally, the Adivasis are different from the caste Hindus because the Constitution makes provision for the Scheduled Tribes. The Hindu Marriage Act and the Hindu Succession Act make it quite clear that the Acts do not apply to the Adivasis.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) The official selection of criteria to define the Scheduled Tribes has a deep ethnocentric bias. Why?

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3.2 ADIVASI SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY

Chhattisgarh – an Example

The purpose of looking at the Adivasi situation in Chhattisgarh is that it would sufficiently reflect the impact of scientific/industrial culture and globalisation on the Adivasis of other states too. On 1st November, 2000, the new state of Chhattisgarh was formed with 2.07 crore population. There are 16 districts with over 18,000 villages in Chhattisgarh. The Adivasi population as large as 32.4% (1991 census) inhabits most of these villages.

In Nagarnar (Bastar) the district administration made use of falsified records in 2001 against the Adivasi land rights and claims and there was rampant police high-handedness witnessed in suppressing Adivasi protests against the above form of injustice. In Raigarh the Jindal Company is given free hand in using and misusing resources under the control and use of the Adivasis. In Tamnar the police fired in the air to disperse the Adivasis who were protesting against the above Company which was stealing the supply of their irrigation water for its own industrial use.

The serious problem of extremist violence in the state can only be ignored to one’s own peril. It is in the districts in the southern part of the state bordering Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and the north-eastern part bordering Jharkhand, that the problem of extremist violence, such as, MCC and PWG have grown alarmingly over the years. These districts are inhabited largely by Adivasi communities which are poor in terms of income and infrastructure This is a highly sensitive problem as the Adivasi youth are getting exposed to the extreme leftist ideology which has dangerous portents for the unity, integrity and security of people. Adivasi development plans need to be based on an area approach without injuring the rich and varied heritage of the Adivasis. Rapid socio-economic development and suitable local employment to the educated youth would have to focus on agriculture development and agro-processing, processing of minor forest produce, other rural industries and handicrafts.

Forests

As much as 44% of the land area of Chhattisgarh is under forest cover. The state has thus fortunately already more forest cover than the target proposed to be

attained by 2012 (33%). These forests are known for their rich biodiversity. They have a large variety of medicinal herbs and plants and Adivasi communities have the traditional knowledge of their medicinal qualities that could be learnt from them for use when needed. This could be a major programme for development and would make Chhattisgarh and other Adivasi inhabited states *Van-Aushadhi* (forest medicine) States of the country. It should be noted that by preserving such large forest areas the states provide the nation with green lungs, and help the rest of the nation achieve a major national and social objective of preserving and protecting its ecology.

Public Sector Enterprises

Land was provided for establishment of two enterprises in the public sector, (1) Super-thermal Power Plant in Seepat, and (2) National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) Steel Plant in Bastar. The NMDC is a public sector enterprise. Some four decades ago, it had started mining of iron ore deposits in Bailadila in the Adivasi district of Bastar, initially for export to Japan. It has by now collected huge stock of ore slack which will be used in the proposed plant taking advantage of the new technology available now.

In fact there is a strong case even otherwise for establishment of steel industry within the Bastar region rather than exporting the ore elsewhere. There were two proposals of steel plants in private sector seriously pursued in the early 1990s, (a) at Mavalibhata, and (b) at Nagarnar, inhabited by the Adivasis of the Bastar district. The proposed ventures, however, had to be abandoned in the face of strong opposition from the likely affected people. The reason was simple. The administration had failed even to present a reasonable alternative for their livelihood to the affected people. The same experience has been repeated in Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhyapradesh and other states where Adivasis live.

No lesson, however, appears to have been learnt even now by the Government of Chhattisgarh from the earlier experience. The new NMDC proposal has been pursued unilaterally in the same way as it was done earlier without any serious deliberations on basic issues at any level. In fact, even some of the basic changes in the Constitutional frame with regard to (a) management of natural resources, (b) acquisition of land, (c) rehabilitation of people, and (d) the structure of industrial enterprises in the Scheduled Areas, which have been effected in the intervening period have been totally ignored.

Accepted National Frame

The basic frame for establishment of an industrial enterprise in the Scheduled Areas as designed by the government itself from time to time broadly comprises the following elements:

Comprehensive Plan for Alternative Means of Livelihood

Preparation of a comprehensive plan for people directly displaced because of acquisition of land and those likely to be affected indirectly in the zone of influence of the concerned industry is a necessary first step in any proposal for establishing an industry in the Scheduled Areas. This plan, according to the guidelines issued by the government of India in this regard in 1974 as a part of the Adivasi development strategy still existing, had to be an integral part of the industrial project,

Gram Sabha at the Centre Stage

The community at the village level in the form of Gram Sabha is now a Constitutional body after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. In the Scheduled Areas, the position of Gram Sabha has become very strong as it has come to the centre stage after the enactment of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (in brief Extension Act). In particular, under section 4 (d) of this Act, the Gram Sabha is competent to *manage all resources within its jurisdiction in accordance with its customs and tradition*. Moreover, consultation with the Gram Sabha before acquisition of land and preparation of rehabilitation programme for the affected of all descriptions, is now mandatory under section 4 (i) of the said Act.

Environment Clearance

Environmental clearance of any project is mandatory under the notification of Government of India dated 10-04-1997 before a project can be established.

Limitations on State in Scheduled Areas

The Supreme Court of India, in a historic judgement in the Samata case in 1997, has held that the Constitution intends that all lands in the Scheduled Areas should always remain with the Adivasi people. Therefore, as per spirit of the provisions of the Fifth Schedule even the Government cannot lease out any land to a non-tribal including juridical entities like companies.

Community Ownership over Industry

The Bhuria Committee on self-governance in the Scheduled Areas recommended way back in 1995 that “the community should have full command over the industry based on local resources. ... The community should be deemed to be the owner with 50% shares in its favour by virtue of its allowing the industry to use the local resources and getting established...”

Misadventure at Hiranar

After the decision to establish a steel plant in Bastar, a site near Geedam in Dantewara was first selected. It involved lands in the neighbouring villages of Hiranar and Ghotpal. The concerned authorities did not take any action in the identification of a zone of influence and preparation of a comprehensive rehabilitation plan. Moreover, the *so-called government land located in these villages* was straightaway allotted for the steel plant ignoring the Constitutional provision about the Gram Sabha’s competence to manage all resources. *Even the process of land acquisition was started without mandatory prior consultation with the concerned Gram Sabhas*. The concerned Gram Sabhas obviously did not agree to the proposal. All efforts to persuade the people to part with their lands even at ministerial level failed. At the end it was decided to abandon the proposal.

Nagarnar: A Case of Continuing Encounter

Local administration ignored the strong case made out by the people of Nagarnar on the earlier occasion in 1992 against location of any large industry specifically at Nagarnar. The salient features of the people’s stand were:

- a) Nagarnar is one of the best agricultural tracts and one of the most densely populated areas in Bastar.

- b) The overall agricultural area in the Bastar region is limited, that is, about 30% of the total geographical area. The bulk of the remaining area comprises forest. The forest area is no longer available to the Adivasi people for agriculture, which continues to be their mainstay. Therefore, keeping in view the fact of limited agricultural area and growing pressure of population, suitable location for heavy industry should be found in other areas, including the so-called forest area. A substantial part of the forest is degraded which can be put to alternative industrial use.
- c) The establishment of a new large industry with investments of tens of thousands of crores should aim at balanced regional development.

No systematic exercise for establishing industry in Bastar has been taken up so far. The new proposals for location of plant at Hiranar and Nagarnar are facing the same opposition on the same grounds as mentioned above. From outside, it appears that the government is soft towards the the Adivasis but in reality it prefers to use its authority against them rather than going about in a rational way with informed consultation in a climate of mutual trust as envisaged in the law of the land and declared policies mentioned above.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) What is the accepted basic national frame for establishment of an industrial enterprise in the Scheduled Areas?

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3.3 INDUSTRIAL POLICY

Industrial policy is normally the presence of the “modernizing” elites of the society, formulated away from the public gaze under the assumption that it is only the financiers, industrialists and their techno-managerial advisers and hired hands who need to be “consulted” by politicians and the bureaucracy during policy formulation. There is no need for a wider democratic and public participation. This is where the combined population of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes are provided protection through special constitutional Provisions, and in a world where the United Nations have formulated a special convention for upholding the rights and according protection to indigenous tribes, to which India is a signatory. All these are apparently of no consequence to the “modernizing” elites to whom unbridled policy is the route to super-ordinate profits. It implies, why consult other sections of the population who are of no consequence, provided they get some jobs in the factories? When an industrial policy is drafted in this manner, perhaps a correct description of the process would be, “of the industrialists, by the industrialists, for the industrialists”. Such a draft deserves both qualitative as well as quantitative critical scrutiny.

Taking for example the Chhattisgarh Industrial Policy, the main text refers to various forms of public subsidy to industrialists. The term “subsidy” may be replaced by the single term “gift”. This forms the *first core* of the policy document. The *second core* of the policy document revolves essentially around the question: Who are to be the recipients of these “gifts”? Together they form, (a) an area based subsidy criteria, (b) group based subsidy criteria, (c) size based subsidy criteria, and (d) industrial importance based subsidy criteria.

Area Based Subsidy Criteria

Chhattisgarh is divided into two regions: (i) general, and (ii) most backward Scheduled Tribes dominant areas, that is, Bastar, Korla, Surguja and Jashpur. More subsidies are given to locations in backward areas.

Group Based Subsidy Criteria

There are three groups of investors identified: (i) Investors from Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes (this is a group virtually with *zero* members), (ii) Non-Resident Indians (NRI) with 100% Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), who will receive additional 5% incentives over and above the “directed incentives”, and (iii) General category investors.

Size Based Subsidy Criteria

This is based on the size of investment as: (i) Small industries, (ii) Medium and large industries (upto Rs. 100 crores investment), (iii) Mega industries (between Rs. 100 crores and Rs. 1000 crores investment) and of these, the very large industries have been directly granted the maximum level of subsidy.

Industrial Importance Subsidy Criteria

The “industrial importance” criteria simplify the identification of gift recipients into two categories: (i) General Industries, and (ii) Thrust Industries.

The *third core* of the document clearly declares the types of subsidies (gifts) to be given from the public purse to the chosen few. These are the “directed incentives” consisting of 12 subsidies: (1) Interest subsidy on term loan and working capital, (2) Capital investment subsidy, (3) Exemption from electricity duty, (4) Exemption from stamp duty both on land purchase and deeds of loans/ advances, (5) Exemption from entry tax, (6) Allotment of plots in industrial area at concessional premium, (7) Exemption from land revenue for land diversion, (8) Service charge concession for land acquisition outside industrial area, (9) Interest subsidy for technology upgradation, (10) Reimbursement of project report expenses, (11) Quality certification subsidy, (12) Technology patent subsidy.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Which process of drafting an industrial policy would be described as “of the industrialists, by the industrialists, for the industrialists”?

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2) In an industrial policy, what do the “directed incentives” mean?

3.4 CONSEQUENCES

What are likely to be the foreseeable and predictable consequences of such an industrial policy in states where the Adivasis inhabit. As the State economy grows more and more unsustainable, all welfare and development measures in the areas of education, health, nutrition support programmes, child care programmes, irrigation development, agriculture development and many others will be curtailed and ultimately halted. The bankruptcy of State finances and inability to provide welfare services and development inputs will be as an argument for privatization of these services/sectors. Under privatization, the poor of the region will be systematically excluded. Thus, needless to say, the Adivasi population will be the worst hit and their health, nutrition, life expectancy, educational access and a number of other social indicators will show a steep downward decline.

With State bankruptcy, there will be greater pressure on the Forest Department to generate revenue, leading to unsustainable exploitation of existing forests and it will ring the death-knell of the Adivasi society in the region. As the pressure to generate revenue mounts, more mining will be undertaken to increase royalties. Obstacles like impacts on forests, biodiversity, wildlife, water falls, sacred places, tourist spots, river basin catchments and cumulative impacts of industrialization, mining, transportation and industrial infrastructure on existing/remaining forests will be considered minor and overlooked to permit the process of “development”.

The law against alienation of Adivasi lands by non-Adivasis will be neatly side-stepped by the State acquisition of Adivasi land and its resale to non-Adivasi industrialists, for a nominal profit/premium. The State will develop a vested interest in taking away Adivasi lands for purposes of enhancing its own falling revenues.

With the simultaneous reduction of agricultural land, forest resources and welfare support available to Adivasi society, there will be sharp polarization and backlash of Adivasi society against non-Adivasi “outsiders” whose policies will be increasingly viewed as imposition upon Adivasi society, and rightly so, since nowhere have the Adivasis been consulted. All the concessions to Adivasi entrepreneurs in backward regions, are empty words because there will hardly be any Adivasi establishing industrial units.

Due to polarization between the Adivasis and non-Adivasis, there will be confrontation between the two groups in the region and thus State repression will inevitably follow in favour of fulfilment of all promises made in the Industrial Policy Document with respect to “directed incentives” (exemptions/concessions). There will be an increase in the social map of crime as a starving, illiterate, unemployed, alienated, resentful Adivasi population in the State will exact a measure of revenge on the non-Adivasi population.

It is a cruel myth for the Adivasis that due to their economically poor standard of living and lack of education for skilled jobs, in their own land they will become *khalasis*, drivers, peons, office boys, *chaprasis*, contract labourers, head loaders, coolies, watchmen, gardeners, cooks, caretakers, hotel boys, *rezas*, etc. Could there be a greater tragedy than this of development in areas where the Adivasis live?

From the above discussion, it looks inevitable that should such policy be implemented, it will lead to (a) unsustainable public debt of a long term nature, (b) the bankruptcy of State finance and (c) the rupture of both polity and a significantly Adivasi society, with a high degree of egalitarian ethos and gender equality, hitherto cohesive and ecologically sustainable, free of crime and free of many of the pathologically self destructive tendencies and poisonous hierarchies that afflict the “modern” society. Such policy in effect will privatize future public revenues as well as render more effective and efficient, the private appropriation of all other public resources, such as, land, forest, water, minerals, institutions and people. It is a narrow money minded, money-economy based approach to social development that excludes both nature and the Adivasis.

The notion that development has to respect physical-ecological limits, is completely absent in such a policy which recognizes no limits of either nature or society in the pursuit of unbalanced and ill-conceived industrial development. There is no wisdom in the pursuit of a pattern of industrial development that destroys natural resources and social formations at one point of time, only to have to regenerate them at a future point of time, all at social cost.

The Industrial Policy of the above kind seems completely unaware of the massive worldwide scientific concern of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It appears that atmosphere is the most limited of all the resources available to humanity and will eventually set the limits on all forms of industrialization, power generation and transportation in the future that are based on fossil fuels. The combustion of fossil fuels releases carbon as carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. This carbon, stored in the earth’s crust over many millions of years as coal, oil or natural gas, has been released into the atmosphere in increasing quantities over the last 150 years of industrial activity. A crude calculation is sufficient to indicate that the combustion products from the combustion of 1 million tonnes of coal per year require at least 50,000 hectares of dense natural forests to reabsorb the carbon dioxide. This is the lung capacity that is immobilized by a single large pollution source like a steel plant or a thermal power station, yet various states are multiplying steel plants, sponge iron plants, captive power plants, captive coal and dolomite/limestone mines and so on as if the atmosphere is an infinite resource. Worse still, the pattern of industrialization will further damage and reduce existing forests and grasslands senselessly while receiving public subsidy in the name of development.

Check Your Progress IV

- Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.
- 1) What are likely to be the foreseeable and predictable impacts on Adivasis/tribals of the kind of industrial policy discussed above?
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3.5 LET US SUM UP

The notion that development has to respect physical-ecological limits, is completely absent in globalised scientific culture which recognizes no limits of either nature or society in the pursuit of unbalanced and ill-conceived industrial development. There is no wisdom in the pursuit of a pattern of industrial development that destroys natural resources and social formations at one point of time, only to have to regenerate them at a future point of time, all at social cost.

3.6 KEY WORDS

- Adivasis** : Original inhabitants.
- Directed Incentives** : Types of subsidies (gifts) to be given from the public purse to the chosen few.

3.7 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Answers to Check Your Progress I

- 1) Most of the notified Scheduled Tribes population in the country today do not fit in the official criteria of characterising tribals at all. The important and conscious tribal groups in the country in fact present an altogether different picture of themselves.

The official terms used, such as, forest tribe, forest and hill tribe, forest and gypsy tribe, backward tribe, primitive tribe, forest and primitive tribe, Hindu primitive tribe, backward Hindus, etc. give a lowly image to tribal groups.

Answers to Check Your Progress II

- 1) The basic frame for establishment of an industrial enterprise in the Scheduled Areas as designed by the government itself from time to time broadly comprises the following elements:
 - a) Preparation of a comprehensive plan for people directly displaced because of acquisition of land and those likely to be affected indirectly in the zone of influence of the concerned industry is a necessary first step in any proposal for establishing an industry in the Scheduled Areas.
 - b) After the enactment of the Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (in brief Extension Act), the Gram Sabha is competent to *manage all resources within its jurisdiction in accordance with its customs and tradition*.

Moreover, consultation with the Gram Sabha before acquisition of land and preparation of rehabilitation programme for the affected of all descriptions, is now mandatory under section 4 (i) of the said Act.
 - c) Environmental clearance of any project is mandatory under the notification of Government of India dated 10-04-1997 before a project can be established.
 - d) As per spirit of the provisions of the Fifth Schedule even the Government cannot lease out any land to a non-tribal including juridical entities like companies.
 - e) The community should be deemed to be the owner with 50% shares in its favour by virtue of its allowing the industry to use the local resources and getting established.

Answers to Check Your Progress III

- 1) Industrial policy formulated by “modernizing” elites away from the public gaze under the assumption that it is only the financiers, industrialists and their techno-managerial advisers and hired hands who need to be “consulted” by politicians and the bureaucracy during policy formulation. There is no need for a wider democratic and public participation.
- 2) Types of *gifts* to be given from the public purse to the chosen few. They include many more subsidies of different kinds in order to attract industrialists.

Answer to Check Your Progress IV

- 1) As the State economy grows more and more unsustainable, all welfare and development measures in the areas of education, health, nutrition support programmes, child care programmes, irrigation development, agriculture development and many others will be curtailed and ultimately halted. The bankruptcy of State finances and inability to provide welfare services and development inputs will be as an argument for privatization of these services/sectors. Under privatization, the poor of the region will be systematically excluded. Thus, needless to say, the Adivasi population will be the worst hit and their health, nutrition, life expectancy, educational access and a number of other social indicators will show a steep downward decline.