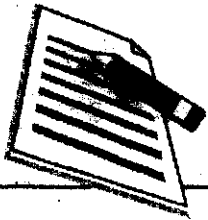


PROBLEMS OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

Do you know what a social problem is? You might have heard this term because it is frequently used by sociologists. Our society is divided into a number of sections based on caste, age and sex. Some sections have been resourceless and powerless in comparison to other dominant sections. But when they fail to adjust themselves to the changing times, the result is social disorganization leading to social problems. Thus a discriminatory and inhuman behaviour appears in society. This gives rise to social problems in the form of deprivation. Social problems are defined as a situation that has attracted the attention of a majority of people in any community and requires immediate attention of the administration and wider community for speedy solution.

Social problems thus are a condition affecting a significant number of people in ways considered undesirable, and about which it is felt that something can be done through collective social action.

In our society scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, other backward classes (OBCs), women and children constitute deprived sections. They are denied their due rights and freedom. It should be noted that a situation becomes a problem only after people become aware of it. In this lesson, we are going to learn about problems of those deprived sections, which are known as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in our country.



Notes



OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- define social problem and deprivation;
- explain untouchability;
- state the problems of scheduled castes; and
- explain the problems of scheduled tribes.

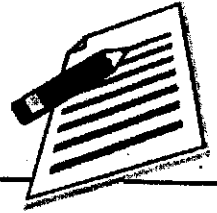
30.1 THE PROBLEMS OF SCHEDULED CASTES

Do you know who Scheduled Castes are? Scheduled Castes (SCs) are those castes which were placed at the bottom in the traditional caste system. Usually, they used to perform unclean occupations. So, they were treated as polluted or impure. The concept of pollution attached to them had made them untouchable. Various names appear for them in literature dealing with the Scheduled Castes, e.g., Shudra, Das, Chaandal, Malezhha, Untouchables and Harijans. On the recommendation of the Government of Independent India, the President in October 1950 included a number of castes as 'Scheduled Castes', in the constitution Indian Under Art. 341 (SC) and 342 (ST). With this, they enjoy benefit of development and welfare schemes. There are more than 700 scheduled castes in our country. Chamar, Dusadh, Dom, Pasi, Mehtar, Mahar, Balai, Adi-dravid etc. are numerically dominant Scheduled Castes. The scheduled castes now identify themselves as Dalit. It is the change of social norms in independent India that has elevated them to the posts of Chief minister of States like Bihar and U.P., and the President of India. SCs constitute nearly 15 percent of total population of the country. Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, show a maximum concentration of SCs. Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar each have a scheduled castes population exceeding ten millions. The state of Punjab has 29.6 percent and the state of Himachal Pradesh has 21.2 percent SC population. In fact Indo-Gangetic plain alone has 51 percent of total SC population in the country. The mountainous regions of U.P., HP., all north-eastern States, Karnataka and Maharashtra have low concentration of Schedule Castes. SCs have been given reservations in educational institutions, jobs, state assemblies and the Parliament.

We can understand the problems of Scheduled Castes under the following three sections:

a) Problem of untouchability (pollution)

The Scheduled Castes had to perform such unclean occupations as carrying night soil and dead animals, cleaning urinals and cattle shed, washing clothes and



Notes

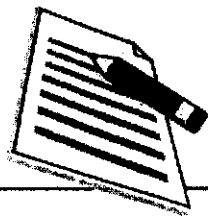
performing certain duties at places of cremation. These occupations were treated as polluted or impure. So, people performing these occupations were treated as untouchables. On account of the practice of untouchability traditionally the Scheduled Castes had to suffer from the following types of disabilities.

1. **No physical contact:** The persons belonging to untouchable Scheduled Castes did not participate in village meeting and worship. They lived in a separate hamlet. Their children did not attend school and play with children of higher castes. They had to play drum to pass through village streets.
2. **Ban on the use of common wells and tanks:** The members belonging to Scheduled Castes were not allowed to use common village wells and tanks for fetching water. They had separate wells and ponds or depend on the courtesy of some are to pour water in their kitchens.
3. **Prohibited from entering the Temple:** The Scheduled Caste persons were not allowed to enter the temple for offering worship. They were not supposed to hear religious discourses, offer prayer, and study religious texts.
4. **Did not receive service from other occupational castes:** Priests, artisan castes, dhobi (washer man) and dom (death ritual performer) did not render their services to the persons of untouchable castes Scheduled Castes.
5. **Non-acceptance of cooked food:** The food cooked by so called (Shudras) Scheduled Castes was not accepted by higher castes. Water from the hands of Scheduled Castes was also not acceptable.
6. **Status incongruence and dependence proneness:** Persistence of stigma of untouchability and the Constitutional status of scheduled castes were not congruent. They were dependent upon others for livelihood and survival.

b) Problem Poverty Generated by

The Scheduled Castes were deprived of their economic rights. So they remained poor and dependent upon others. The problems associated with the poverty of Scheduled Castes are as follows:

1. **Material Deprivation:** The Scheduled Castes were not allowed to have house, land, animals, ornaments, etc. So, they were deprived of material possessions.
2. **Landlessness:** The Scheduled Castes did not own land for the purpose of residence and agriculture. They lived in huts erected on the land of the master and worked as agricultural labour as good as a bounded labour.
3. **Educational Backwardness:** Due to deprivation and poor socio-economic condition, the Scheduled Castes did not attend school and remained backward educationally. After independence, schools have been thrown open for them.



Notes

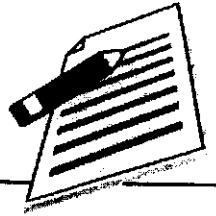
But it has not been possible to enroll all children of SC in schools.

4. **Employment and Government Service:** After independence, some of them have been employed in government jobs like sweepers, watchman, peons etc. Now, some of them have received higher education and are well placed. But majority of them survive as agricultural labourers, where they are exploited in the payment of wages.
5. **Indebtedness and Bonded labour:** A majority of families of Scheduled Caste are not in a position to take two meals daily. So they have to take loans for the purposes of consumption. Banks do not give them loan for it. They have to take loan from their employers at a high rate of interest. Because of their indebtedness, their inability to pay the capital with interest, they end up becoming bonded labourers. They lose freedom of all kind and receive nominal wages.
6. **Health and Nutrition:** The house of a SCs may not have window, urinal, latrine and drain. They live with cattle in the same room. They discharge urine and night soil on the street. They throw cow dung, ash and domestic waste in the street. They do not have pucca wells and hand pumps for drinking water. They live in unhygienic conditions. Because of poverty, they are often victims of malnutrition and undernourishment.
7. **Atrocities:** The Scheduled Castes have to face problem of atrocities. Their houses are burnt; their animals, goat and chicken are snatched away, women are subjected to humiliation. They are beaten mercilessly. They are also murdered and killed in groups. These are the forms of atrocities to which they are subjected to when they dare to resist and demand their social, economic or political rights.

C) Untouchability (Offences) Act 1955

Article 17 of the Constitution of India declares abolition of untouchability. An Act untouchability (offences Act 1955) was also promulgated declaring untouchability an offence. This Act has banned the practice of untouchability in the matters of employment, drinking water supply, offering worships, services in tea shop and hotels, journey by bus or train, use of public places, meeting of Gram Panchayat, refusing to sell goods or rendering services and admission in hospital. The Act has made the practice of untouchability punishable in the form of fine and punishment.

The untouchability (offences) Amendment and Miscellaneous Act 1976 has enhanced the punishment. For first time offence, minimum and maximum imprisonment are one month and six months respectively. The minimum and maximum fines are Rs. 100 and 500 respectively. For second time offence the fine is of Rs. 200 to 500 and imprisonment of six months. For third and subsequent



Notes

offences, imprisonment is of one year and fine of Rs. 200 to 10,000. But in spite of all such prohibitive measures, untouchability is still being practised. In rural areas, it is still a social reality. In urban areas too, it is prevalent, at least at the mental level.

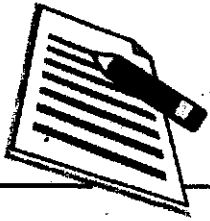
INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.1

- i) Deprivation is rights and freedom the poor and dependents (providing/snatching away)
- ii) Scheduled Castes performed occupations (clean/unclean)
- iii) Scheduled Castes had to suffer from a number of disabilities due to (touchability/untouchability)
- iv) Food cooked by Scheduled Castes was by higher castes (accepted/not accepted).
- v) Scheduled Castes used water of wells and pond (common / private)

30.2 THE PROBLEMS OF SCHEDULED TRIBES

Have you heard about the Scheduled Tribes? Scheduled Tribes are those communities who are outside the caste system of our society. They live in hills, forest and coastal and desert areas, and even on islands. They have their own culture and social organization. They also had their own political system. In course of time, some of them have adopted Hinduism, Islam and Christianity. Tribal art, dance and craft still have an intrinsic value polygamy and both monogamy are prevalent among tribals. But some tribals also practice polyandry, for example, Toda and Khasa of Jaunsar Bawar. A large number of tribal societies are patrilineal, but matriliney is also prevalent among few tribes like Khasi, Jaintia and Garo. The traditional economy of tribals is characterized by gathering, hunting, fishing, shifting cultivation and agriculture. They have their weekly markets called haat. Previously, they practiced barter, but now money has become medium of exchange. The traditional economy of tribals is for subsistence, not for profit.





Notes

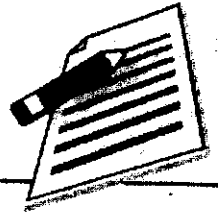
There are around 461 Scheduled Tribes in our country. Among them, 75 most backward communities have been identified as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). Identification of PTGs has been made on the basis of low population, low literacy and pre-agricultural technology. STs represent approximately 8 percent population in our country.

Most of the Scheduled Tribes today are followers of tribal religion, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. The adoption of other religious faiths has forced them to give up tribal customs, traditions, festivals, art, dance, etc. A number of tribal cultural traits have become extinct or are in disuse, for example, the institution of Akhra and youth dormitory. The marriage of tribal girls with non-tribal boys is also taking place. Entry of outsiders in to tribal areas and division of tribals in to different religious group has resulted in the identity problems. Culture contact, industrialization and urbanisation have also resulted in loss of tribal ways of life. They are also demanding autonomy of the region in which they live and employment of local people in employment and jobs.

- 1. Problems Related to Forest:** In the forests, STs lived, enjoyed hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation and artefacts made from forest-material. But forest policies and regulations have snatched away traditional rights of S. Ts. over forest. Due to this, economic activities of tribals like food gathering, hunting, shifting cultivation and cottage industry have been affected adversely. It has brought the question of existence before a number of tribes living in forest based economy.
- 2. Problem of Agriculture:** Some tribals practice agriculture and are known as agricultural tribes such as Munda, Oraon, Ho, Santhal, etc. Agricultural lands of tribals are located near the hills or at foot hills and forest. Lands cultivated are known as are Don (downland) and Tanr (upland). In Donland good variety of paddy are cultivated by wet cultivation method. But in Tanr land maize, mille, marua arahar, Tisi, Mustard etc. are sown by dry cultivation method. There is no assured means of irrigation. So, cultivation of Rabbi crops and Garma crops is negligible. In this way, agriculture too does not provide them employment round the year. It also does not provide sufficient food for the family round the year. Agricultural crops are sometimes destroyed by wild animals. PTGs. Gond. Bhil Mina, Santhal; Oraon and Munda etc. are numerically dominant tribes of our country.

As ST, they avail benefit of development and welfare programmes of the state. Special programme called Tribal Sub-plan has been introduced in our country in the Fifth Plan period, which is still going on.

Scheduled Tribes are found in Himalayan region, Middle India, Western India, South India and Island region, Nearly half of the total tribal population reside in



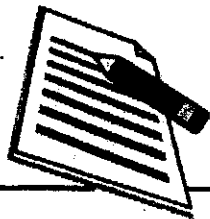
Notes

Middle Indian region comprising four states viz Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. 12 States/U.Ts have more than one million tribals. The states Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Union territories of Chandigarh and Pondichery do not have any tribal population. Six States, Madhya Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Jharkhand, Gujarat and Rajasthan have more than five million tribals each. Madhya



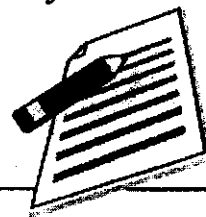
Pradesh with Chhatisgarh alone has 15.4 million tribals, i.e. 22.7% of entire tribal population of the country. Manipur state with 94.75% has a maximum percentage of tribal population while U.P. has a minimum percentage (only 0.21%) of tribal population in the State. Bhil, Mina, Gond and Santhal each have more than three million populations. STs enjoy benefits of reservation in educational institutions, jobs, state assemblies and Loksabha.

- 3. Land Alienation:** Right from the British days, the tribal lands have been acquired for road, railways, offices, colonies, market, hospital, post office, etc. The outsiders, contractors and money lenders have also purchased lands of tribals. Marriage of tribal girls with non-tribal also resulted in land alienation. Rich tribals are also purchasing the land of poor tribals. In this way, land alienation has resulted in landlessness among tribals. The State enforced tenancy laws to protect landlessness of the tribals e.g. the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act 1908 and the Santhal Pargana Tenancy Act 1948. But even these laws have not been able to prohibit the incidence of land alienation in tribal areas of Chotanagpur.
- 4. Indebtedness and Bonded Labour:** Earning daily wages are only a means through which a good number of tribal families are surviving today. But as labourers, they do not get work round the year and the payment is neither regular nor proper. As a result, a majority of them are not in a position to meet both ends. Naturally, they have to take loan from the Mahajan at a high rate of interest. When they express inability to repay their loan and interest, they are made to repay it by working as bonded labour at nominal wage.
- 5. Problem of Health and Nutrition:** Through the practice of food gathering and hunting, tribals were able to get nutrient like vitamins, minerals, protein, carbohydrate, etc. But ban on hunting and gathering coupled with the depletion of forests has resulted in malnutrition and under-nourishment. The income of majority of tribal families is not enough to feed family members properly. This



keeps them in the state of semi starvation. The environment in which they live is also unhygienic. These affect their health adversely. They visit the local traditional healers for seeking a cure of their ailments. Lack of money does not allow them to visit private clinics or even public hospitals for their treatment.

6. **Lack of Communication:** The tribals live in remote areas. Hence, one has to face a great problem in commuting. It takes much time for news related to welfare and development to reach them. As a result, they are not conscious of their rights and ignorant of a number of development programmes.
7. **Migration and its Effects:** The STs have to migrate at different places inside the State or outside the State for work and wages. They go to work at construction sites, brick-kilns, small industries, agriculture, etc. As migrant labour, they are exploited and oppressed. They do not get wages as per the Minimum Wages Act, revised by the Government from time to time. They have to work for long hours.
8. **Lack of Education:** A good number of tribal families have to struggle hard to maintain their existence. For them, bread is more important than education. Our Government has opened Ashram schools for them. But it has not been possible to enroll their children. Enrolled children too have to work in their houses, adding to the problem of absenteeism and dropouts from the schools. The case of female illiteracy is more acute. Literacy and education is higher in converted tribals than non-converted ones.
9. **Displacement of tribals:** S. Ts. have to face the problem of displacement for the establishment of major industries, thermal power and hydraulic projects. For setting up HEC at Ranchi, Bokaro Steel City, Jamshedpur Industrial Complex, Patratu Thermal Power, Durgapur, Bhilai and Rourkela Industrial Complexes, tribal villages had been acquired and the tribals displaced. They were given compensation money and covered under the rehabilitation schemes. They neither received compensation money nor were rehabilitated properly. Some of their families became extinct and some are leading a dismal life in slum areas.
10. **Problem of Identity:** The Scheduled Tribes are conscious of their identity since the British period. They had organised movements against zamindars, Jagirdars and British rule, in the form of revolts. Chotanagpur in the then Bihar state had witnessed Maler revolt (1770), Ho revolt (1821), Great Kol revolt (1831), and Santhal revolt (1855). The tribals also took part in the freedom struggle of 1857.



Notes

INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.2

Write true or false for following:

- i) Scheduled Tribes are mostly found in plain areas (True/False)
- ii) The largest concentration of STs population is in Central Indian region (True/False)
- iii) Hunting and gathering was economic activities of tribals (True/False)
- iv) Low land is called Don (True/False)
- v) Tribals have to face the problems of land alienation and displacement (True/False)



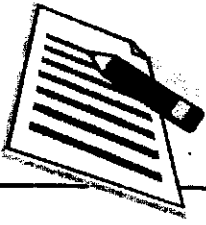
WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Scheduled castes were integral part of our society but on account of their engagement in unclean or impure occupations, they were treated as untouchables. They were deprived of their rights and freedoms. They suffered from a number of social disabilities.
- Scheduled Tribes were not an integral part of caste system. They were indigenous people who lived in hilly, forest and coastal areas. They lived in forest and lands situated around and in forest.
- Scheduled Castes were made poor because they were not allowed to have house, land, domestication of animals, and material possessions. Scheduled tribes were made poor by land alienation and displacement due to the establishment of towns, industries, big projects, etc.
- For Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes a number of poverty alleviation and welfare programmes have been launched by the Government, but they are still backward educationally and economically.



TERMINAL EXERCISE

1. Define social problems. Give examples. (100 words)
2. Explain Deprivation. (100 words)
3. Define untouchability? Enumerate five disabilities related to it? (200 words)



4. Who are scheduled castes? Name five problems related to their poverty.
5. Who are Scheduled Tribes? List their five important problems.



ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS

30.1

i) Snatching away ii) unclean iii) untouchability iv) Not accepted v) private

30.2

i) false ii) True iii) True iv) True v) True