

## **Status of Tribal Women in India**

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The present paper discusses the status of tribal women in terms of their demography, health; education and employment. Despite constitutional protection and assurances, even after four and a half decades, their status is found to be lower than not only that of women in the general population and the Scheduled Caste women but is also lower than the status of tribal men. It is characterised by over-work, invasion of sexually exploitative market forces in tribal society, illiteracy, sub-human physical living conditions, high fertility, high malnutrition and near women is discussed and early intervention for the tribal girl is emphasized in order to improve the status of the tribal women.

### **Tribals in India**

#### **1.1 India has Largest Tribal Population in the World**

The tribal population of India (67.6 million) is larger than that of any other country in the world. In fact, it is almost equal to the tribal population of nineteen countries with substantial tribal population (Table 1, During 1993). Mynamar, with a tribal population of 14 million, has the second largest tribal population of India is much more the four times that of Myanmar and more than six times of Mexico (10.9 million) which has the third largest tribal population in the world. The tribal population of India is more than total population of France and Britain and four times that of Australia. If all the tribals of India had lived in one state, it could have been the fifth most populous state after Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal ad Maharashtra.

**Table 1:** Estimated population of Indigenous Peoples, Selected Countries,1992

Country	Population*	Share of national population
	(million)	(percent)
Papua New Guinea	3.0	77
Bolivia	5.6	70
Guatemala	4.6	47
Peru	9.0	40
Ecuador	3.8	38
Myanmar	14.0	33
Laos	1.3	30
Mexico	10.9	12
New Zealand	0.4	12
Chile	.2	9
Philippines	6.0	9
India	63.0	7
Malaysia	0.8	4
Canada	0.9	4
Australia	0.4	2
Brazil	1.5	1
Bangladesh	1.2	1
Thailand	0.5	1
United States	2.0	1
Former Soviet Union	1.4	<1

\* General excludes those of mixed ancestry.

Source: Durning, A.T. (1993). Supporting Indigenous Peoples in State of the World, 1993. A Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Toward a Sustainable Society. New York: W.W.Norton. p.83

## **1.2 Constitutional Guarantee to the Tribals in India**

Despite the protection given to the tribal population by the Constitution of India (1950), it remains the most backward ethnic group in India, on the three most important indicators of development: health, education and income.

The tribals are more backward not only compared with the General Population, but also compared to the Scheduled Caste, the other acknowledged backward social group with constitutional protection. D'Souza (1990) has examined the effects of planned developmental intervention in the tribals from 1961 to 1981. He has concluded that twenty years of intervention has not made any significant impact in improving the conditions of the tribals.

## **1.3 The Tribals in Post-Independence India**

In fact, the conditions of tribals in post-independence India has, in many ways, worsened. This has been discussed in a special issue of Social Change entitled Status of the Tribals in India (1993, vol. 2&3). The tribals are the most adversely affected ethnic group due to developmental projects of dams, factories and mines. They constitute 8 percent of the national population, but about 40 percent of displaced persons due to developmental projects are tribals.

The pace of commercial exploitation of the resources of tribal land which accounts for nearly 20 percent of the country's space with 8 percent of its population living on it has assumed a disturbing dimension. The tribal's rights in basic resources such as land, forest and water in fact in the entire environment have been seriously eroded, as non-tribal peasants, traders, businessmen and other categories of aliens have moved into tribal land, with the opening up of tribal areas, and with industrialization. Singh K.S. 1993a, p.7

The tribals have been correctly described as victims and refugees of development.

## 1.4 The Tribal Demography in India

The tribals in India constitute 8.08 percent of the total population. The following are the main demographic characteristics of tribals in India:

1.4.1 In some States and Union Territories (UTs) they constitute an overwhelming majority, e.g., Mizoram (94.75%), Lakshadweep (93.154%), Nagaland (87.70%) and Meghalaya (85.53%) (Table 2). Even though the tribals constitute a majority of the population in these States/UTs, they contribute only a small proportion to the total tribal population in India.

**Table 2:** Share of ST population to Total population and General population, 1991

Share of ST population to Total population and General population, 1991		
State/UT	%of ST population to Total ST Population	% of ST Population to General Population
States with 25% and more tribal population		
Meghalaya	2.24	85.53
Nagaland	1.57	87.70
Tripura	1.26	30.95
Mizoram	0.96	94.75
Manipur	0.93	34.41
Arunachal Pradesh	0.81	63.66
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	0.16	78.99
Lakshadweep	0.07	93.15
States with 5-25% tribal population		
Madhya Pradesh	22.73	23.77
Maharashtra	10.80	9.27
Orissa	10.38	22.21
Bihar	9.77	7.66

Guharat	9.09	14,92
Rajasthan	8.0	12.44
Andhra Pradesh	6.20	6.31
West Bengal	5.62	5.59
Assam	4.24	24.66
Sikkim	0.13	22.36
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	0.04	9.54
Daman & Diu	0.02	11.54
States with less than 5% tribal population		
Karnataka	2.83	4.26
Tamilnadu	0.85	1.03
Kerala	0.47	1.10
Uttar Pradesh	0.42	0.21
Himachal Pradesh	0.32	4.22
Goa	0.00	0.03

On the other hand, the States of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Bihar, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal account for 83 percent of the total tribal population, even though in these States the non-tribals constitute the majority population.

1.4.2 In terms of geographical location, the distribution of tribal population is classified into the following zones:

1. **North-Eastern region:** Comprising Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.
2. **Eastern region:** Comprising Bihar, Orissa, Sikkim and West Bengal.
3. **Northern region:** Comprising Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh

4. **Central region:** Comprising Madhya Pradesh
5. **Western region:** Comprising Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Gujarat, Goa, Daman and Diu, Maharashtra and Rajasthan
6. **Southern region:** Comprising Andhra Pradesh, karnataska, kerala and tamilnadu.
7. **Island region:** Comprising Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadeep.

1.4.3 The tribals live in forests and mountains somewhat isolated from the general population. Because of this have been called Girijan and Vanvasi.

1.4.4 There are four racial/genetic group among the tribal population: the Negroid, the Proto-australoid, the Mongoloid and the Caucasoid.

1.4.5 The tribals are predominantly rural (92.6%) (Table 3) 1.4.6.

**Table 3 :** Tribal population in India : Demographic characteristics

Tribal Population in India : Demographic characteristics								
State/Union Territory	Male		Female		%ST to GP	%ST to STP	%RST to STP	%RGP to TGP
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban				
India*	31755930	2607341	30995096	2400013	8.08	100.00	92.60	73.87
Andhra Pradesh	1976150	166667	190404	152560	6.31	6.20	92.40	73.11
Arunachal Pradesh	258595	16802	259627	15327	63.66	0.81	94.16	87.20
Assam	1409364	52196	1367944	44937	24.66	4.24	96.62	88.90
Bihar	3115824	241739	3037835	221516	7.66	9.77	92.99	86.86
Goa	48	151	41	136	0.03	0.00	23.67	58.99

Gujarat	2872954	258993	2790224	239604	14.92	9.09	91.91	65.51
Himachal Pradesh	107162	3078	105778	2331	4.22	0.32	97.52	91.31
Karnataka	829129	147615	800367	138580	4.26	2.83	85.06	69.08
Kerala	154979	5833	154785	5370	1.10	0.47	96.50	73.61
Madhya Pradesh	7365693	392481	7287037	353823	23.77	22.73	95.15	76.82
Maharashtra	3241782	476001	3164032	436466	9.27	10.80	87.53	61.31
Manipur	295691	27029	283239	26214	34.41	0.93	91.58	72.48
Meghalaya	659859	100375	652234	105459	85.53	2.24	86.44	81.40
Mizoram	182212	147607	175901	147845	94.75	0.96	54.79	53.90
Nagaland	478579	66577	454566	61100	87.70	1.57	87.96	82.79
Orissa	3325442	187449	3345064	174259	22.21	10.38	94.86	86.62
Rajasthan	2696437	140577	2524112	113755	12.44	8.08	95.35	77.12
Sikkim	43477	4027	40009	3388	22.36	0.13	91.84	90.90
Tamil Nadu	257853	35159	247355	33827	1.03	0.85	87.98	65.85
Tripura	426741	7484	412523	6597	30.95	1.26	98.35	84.70
Uttar Pradesh	141149	9271	128879	7602	0.21	0.42	94.13	80.16
West Bengal	183559	103396	1776889	92916	5.59	5.62	94.85	72.52
Andaman & Nicobar Island	13436	314	12832	188	9.54	0.04	98.12	73.39
Dadar & Nagar Haveli	52304	1798	53560	1718	78.99	0.16	96.79	91.53
Daman & Diu	4783	1290	4409	1242	11.54	0.02	78.40	53.20
Lakshadweep	10728	13432	10750	13253	93.15	0.07	44.59	43.69

The States of Harayana , Punjab, Chandighr, Delhi and Pondicherry do not have tribal population:

\*Excludes Jammu and Kashmir.

Source: Census of India 1991.

They are overwhelmingly illiterate. The literacy rate of the tribals is 23.63 (1991). This is lower than that of the general population (52.21) and is even lower than that of the SC population (30.6), another backward social group with constitutional protection. The literacy rate of the rural tribal female is 12.74 percent, which is lowest of all the social groups.

1.4.7 The tribals are the poorest social group. In 1987-88, 52.6 percent of the tribals were below the poverty line as compared to 44.7 percent of the SCs and 33.4 percent of the general population (Table 4, Singh, A.K. 1993, p.34).

1.4.8 The health status of the tribals is lower and inferior compared to that of the general population. Several studies have suggested higher infant mortality rate, higher fertility rate and greater malnourishment.

1.4.9 The tribal groups are engaged in various occupations: hunting, shifting cultivation to settled agriculture and rural crafts. A very negligible percent are engaged in non-agricultural activities.

**Table 4 :Percentage of Population below the Poverty Line**

Year	Total Population	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes
1977-78	51.2	64.6	72.4
1983-84	40.4	53.1	58.4
1987-88	33.4	44.7	52.6

Source: Singh, A.K. (1993). Tribes and tribal life, Vol3, Approaches to development in Tribal context. P New Delhi : Sarup & Sons. P.34.



## 1.5 The Images of Tribal Women in India

1.5.1 The women in the tribal community, as in other communities, constitute half of the tribal population. The well-being of the tribal community, as that of any other community, depends importantly on the status of their women.

1.5.2 The popular image and perception of the tribal women is that of being better off than their non-tribal counterparts. There is no child marriage, no stigma on widowhood. She enjoys the right to decide about her marriage, etc. Instead of dowry there is bride price indicating high social status of the tribal woman. A tribal woman can divorce and remarry easily. She earns and is, therefore, to a great extent economically independent.

A higher social status of women was reported by Furer - Haimendorf [1943] Hutton [1921], Hunter [1973]. And Firth [1946] among Tharus of U.P., and Nagas and Garos of the North East.

1.5.3 However, there are many facts which indicates a low status for the tribal woman. For example, she does not have property rights except in a matrilineal society which is a small proportion of the tribal population. She is paid less as wages than her male counterpart for the same work. Several taboos discriminating against tribal women exist in certain tribal groups implying impurity and low status. The tribal women cannot hold the office of a priest. There are taboos related to menstruation as in non-tribal communities. The Kharia women, cannot touch a plough nor can she participate in roofing of a house. The Oraon women is also prevented from touching a plough. The Todas of Nilgiri Hills do not touch a menstruating women for fear of destruction of harvest. In certain tribes only the males can participate in ancestor worship (Satyanarayana and Behera, 1986). The Toda and Kota women in southern India cannot cross the threshold of a temple. The Santal women cannot attend communal worship.

Rivers (1973), Dalton (1872) and Grigson (1938) have reported low status of women among Todas, Kharies and Mariya Gonds with reference to certain taboos during certain periods and ceremonies.

Majumdar (1973) has reported a higher status of tribal women on some indicators while lower on other, while Shashi (1978) has concluded that the status of tribal women varies from tribe to tribe.

1.5.4 The development projects have adversely affected the tribal women. With deforestation they have to travel a longer distance to gather forest products. Incidentally this has been one of the reasons for the participation of tribal women in Chipko movement to save the tribal the trees. There are evidences of sexual exploitation of tribal women by forest and mining contractors. The incidence of sexual assaults on tribal women have increased.

## **1.6 Inadequacy of Micro Studies of Tribal Women**

There are a large number of studies on tribal communities but only a few are focussed on tribal women. Reviewing the studies of tribal women, K.S. Singh (1988) has concluded that there is "need for generating studies which can fill the information gap about variations that exist and about the role and status of tribal women from one region to another and one community to another". Singh (1993) has also reiterated that there are material on tribals in general but the existing literature specifically on tribal women is limited. Health statistics also give an overall picture and data on gender differentiation of longevity, level of health, extent of mortality, infant mortality, nutrition, etc. are not available. Emphasising the need for base-line data on at least certain basic parameters relating to tribal women, he status that data on various tribes are needed as they differ from one another (Singh, B., 1993).

## **2. The UN International Year of the Indigenous Peoples**

The United Nations has declared 1993 as the International Year of the Indigenour Poeples, the Government of India has not signed the ILO Convention 169 of 1989 and has not accepted that the tribals in Indian are the Indigenous Peoples to the tribals of India have been discussed by K.S. Singh and B.K. Roy Burman in Status of the Tribals in India (*Social Change*, 1993, Vol. 23 Nos. 2 & 3). Notwithstanding the political difficulties in the definition of the Indigenous Peoples, there is not doubt that the tribals are among the earliest settlers in India if not the original settlers. The Hindi word Adivasi, literally means the first habitants. The UN International Year of the Indigenous Peoples is an appropriate occasion to review the Status of the Tribals of India and also the Status of the Tribal Women.

## **3. Status of Tribal Women in India: Health, Education and Employment**

The status of any social group is determined importantly by its levels of health-nutrition, literacy-education and employment-income. The tribal women,

constitute as in any other social group, about half of the total population. However, the importance of women in the tribal society is more important than in other social groups in India, because of the fact that the tribal women, more than woman in any other social group, works harder and the family economy and management depends on her.

### **Health Status of Tribal Women**

A comprehensive review of the health status of tribal women has been prepared by Basu (1993, this volume). His paper discusses, inter alia, the following dimensions: sex ratio, age at marriage, fertility and mortality, life expectancy, nutritional status, maternal mortality, mother and child health care practices, family welfare programmes and sexually transmitted diseases. The main conclusions of the paper are:

- higher infant mortality rate in the tribals compared to the national average,
- low nutritional status of the tribals,
- lower life-expectancy in the tribals than the national average,
- high incidence of Sickle Cell disease (HBss) and Glucose-to-Phosphate Enzyme Deficiency (G-6-80) in some tribal groups,
- higher fertility rate in tribal women compared to the national women compared to the national average. (Basu S., 1993, Social Change, this issue)

Chatterjee (1993, this volume) has reported increase in the incidence of diseases with increase in so-called "development". He has compared this incidence of diseases in the tribal population living in three different environments: (I) Forest-based, (ii) Denuded Forest Area, and (iii) Industrially polluted area. The incidence of disease is lowest in the first and the highest in the third.

Kar (1993, this volume) has reported that the reproductive behaviour of Nocte tribal woman in Arunachal Pradesh is intimately related to her value system and

cultural traditions. She is considered to be healthy if she can give birth to four or five children and also work in the fields.

The health status of the tribals have been discussed in Status of the Tribals in India, (Social Change,1993, Vol.23 Nos. 2&3). The factors which influence the health status of the tribal population in general, are also applicable to the tribal women, in fact, more so. For example, it has been found that illiteracy, in tribal, as also in non-tribal population, is positively correlated with ill-health. The tribal women, as women in all social groups, are more illiterate than men. The tribal women share, with women of other social groups, problems related to reproductive health.

### **Educational Status of Tribal Women**

3.1 The low educational status of tribal women is reflected in their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and higher dropouts in the school. The literacy rate of the tribal population as well as Scheduled Castes and general population for three decades (1961-1991) are given in table 5A. The following major trends can be seen from Tables 5A and 5B:

- the literacy rate of tribals is lower than that of general as well as SC population.
- the literacy rate of the rural tribal female is the lowest of all groups.
- there is gender bias in the literacy of tribal population as in other groups, the female literacy being lower than the male literacy. Through there has been five-fold increase in the literacy of tribal females it still is much lower than the national average for the females (39.29).

**Table 5A** : Literacy rates among General, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population

	General		Scheduled Caste		Scheduled Tribe	
	1981	1991	1981	1991	1981	1991

Total	36.23	52.21	21.38	30.06	16.35	23.63
Male	46.89	64.13	31.12	40.24	24.52	32.50
Female	24.82	39.29	10.93	19.03	8.04	14.50

Source: Primary Census Abstract General Population, Scheduled Casters and Scheduled Tribes, 1981, 1991.

**Table 5B:** Literacy rates among Scheduled Tribes and General population, 1961-1991

	1961	1971	1981	1991
Tribal Male	13.04	17.09	24.52	32.50
Tribal Female	2.89	4.58	8.04	14.50
General Male	34.44	39.45	46.89	64.13
General Female	12.90	18.70	24.82	39.29
Rural Tribal Female	2.62	4.06	6.81	12.74
Rural General Female	8.42	13.08	17.96	30.62
Total Tribal	7.99	10.89	16.35	23.63

Source: Primary Census Abstract for General Population and Scheduled Tribes, 1961,1971,1981,1991.

3.2 The relative ratio of girls-tribal and non-tribal-enrolled for every 100 boys is given in Table 6 (Rama Rao,1990). The data relates to four years: 1965-66,1970-71,1975-76,1980-81). Though the enrolment ratio for girls has been increasing in both the tribal and non-tribal groups, the ratio for tribal girls is much lower than that for non-tribals at all given periods of time in classes I-V as well as classes VI-VIII.

**Table 6:** Relative Enrolment Ratios of girls per 100 boys for tribals and non-tribals

Year	Classes I-V		Classes VI-VIII	
	ST	Non-ST	ST	Non-ST
1965-66	38.6	57.9	27.3	37.3
1970-71	41.2	60.7	31.5	41.6
1975-76	45.9	62.5	37.2	46.2
1980-81	48.7	64.2	38.2	49.9

Source: Rama Rao, G (1990). Growth and disparity in school enrolment of Scheduled Tribes in selected States of India, in A. Bose, U.P. Sinha & R.P.Tyagi (Eds.) Demography of tribal development. Delhi : B.R. Pbu.Cor.pp.303,308.

3.3 The drop-out rates for classes I-V, I-VIII and I-X for boys and girls are given for tribal and non-tribal population in Table 7. It can be seen from the Table that the drop-out rates for tribals are higher than those for the non-tribals at all three levels of schooling. The drop-out rates for girls are higher than those for boys in tribal as well as general population. The drop-out rate for tribals at the secondary level is as high as 87 percent and for the girls it is almost 90 percent. Consequently, there is a negligible percent (0.06%) of tribal women in institutions of higher education.

**Table 7:** Drop-out rates of girls and boys for tribals and non-tribals, 1988-89

	Total Population			ST Population		
	Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
Class I-V	46.74	49.69	47.93	61.94	68.73	64.53
Class I-VIII	59.38	68.31	65.40	76.21	81.45	78.08
Class I-X	72.68	79.46	75.36	84.87	89.91	86.72

Source : Working Papers, NCW.

3.4 There are wide variations in the literacy rates of various tribal groups. There are tribes with zero percent literacy (Table 8) and there are tribes with literacy rate as high as 40 percent (Nagas). The female literacy rates also vary from zero percent in some tribes to 33.4 percent in Khasis, Jaintias, etc.(Table 9).

**Table 8 :** Tribes with zero literacy rate by sex and residence, 1981

Tribes with zero literacy rate by sex and residence, 1981				
State/Union Territory	Male		Female	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
	2	3	4	5
Arunachal Pradesh	1. Bolok Tangsa	1. Ashing	1. Bagi	1. Ashing
	2. Karka	2. Bangro	2. Bogum	2. Komkar
	3. Khalim Tangsa	3. Janbo	3. Bolok Tangsa	3. Mikir
	4. Korang Tangsa	4. Namsang Tangsa	4. Bomdo	4. Namsang Tangsa
	5. Namsang Tangsa		5. Darok Tangsa	5. Pailabo
	6. Nonong		6. Hotang Tangsa	6. Sulung
	7. Pongkong		7. Karka	
			8. Korang Tangsa	
			9. Langkai Tangsa	
			10. Longin Tangsa	
			11. Ngimong Tangsa	
			12. Nonong	
			13. Panchen Monpa	
			14. Sanke Tangsa	
			15. Simong	

			16.Sulung Bangni	
			17.Taram	
			18.Naga tribes(Any)	
Goa	--	--	--	1. Dhodia
Karnataka	1. Dubla,Talavia,H alpati	--	1. Kattunayakan	1. Rathawa
	2. Kattunayakan		2. Maha Malsar	
	3. Vitolia,Kotwalia,		3. Rathawa	
	Barodia		4. Varli	
			5. Vitolia,Kotwalia	
			Barodia	
Kerala	--	1. Malasar,Malla	1. Palleyan	1. Malasar,Mal la
		Malasar		Malasar
Madhya Pradesh	--	--	1. Birhul,Birhar	1. Birhul,Birhar
			2. Pardhi	2. Kondh,Knon d,Kandh
				3. Pandhi
Maharashtra	--	1. Thoti	--	--
Manipur	--	--	--	1. Ralti
				2. Suhta
Mizoram	--	--	1. Dimasa,kachai	
	--	--	2. Man(Tai speaking)	
Orissa	--	1. Didayi	1. Chenchu	1. Baiga
				2. Birhor



				3. Bondo Paraja
				4. Dal
				5. Desua Bhumij
				6. Didayi
				7. Shara
				8. Kharwar
				9. Mankidi
				10. Mankirdia
Tamil Nadu	--	--	--	1. Eravallan
				2. Kochu Velan
				3. Malai Arayan
Tripura	--	1. Khasia	1. Chaimal	1. Santal
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1. Jarawas	--	1. Jarawas	--
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	--	1. Kathodi	--	--
Daman and Diu	--	--	1. Naikda Synonym	1. Varli
			Halpati Talavia	

**Table 9 :** Literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes with 500,000 plus population, 1981

Literacy rate among Scheduled Tribes with 500,000 plus population, 1981				
Name of	State	Total	Rural	Urban

Scheduled Tribe		P	M	F	P	M	F	P	M	F
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Gond: Arakh.....(1)	Madhya Pradesh	12.46	21.04	3.98	11.85	20.24	3.59	31.66	44.51	16.99
Bhil,Bhilala,Bar ela,Patelia	Madhya Pradesh	5.38	9.28	1.40	4.90	8.60	1.12	21.88	30.51	11.54
Mina	Rajasthan	13.93	25.26	1.52	13.05	23.98	1.17	36.29	53.99	11.57
Santal	Bihar	12.55	20.83	4.12	12.08	20.21	3.84	27.41	39.52	13.54
Bhil,Bhil Garasia....(2)	Gujarat	18.18	27.85	8.21	17.51	27.06	7.78	28.58	39.60	15.86
Bhil,Bhil Gaesia....(2)	Rajasthan	6.60	12.26	0.82	6.33	11.85	0.72	14.51	23.73	3.94
Santal	West Bengal	12.48	20.77	4.01	12.27	20.58	3.80	18.89	26.28	10.41
Naikda, Nayaka.....(3)	Kamataka	18.95	28.64	9.00	17.05	26.64	7.22	32.38	42.69	21.64
Gond,Rajgond, ....(4)	Maharasht ra	25.69	37.04	14.10	23.30	34.56	11.87	48.22	59.55	35.86
Sugalis,Lamba dis	Andhra Pradesh	6.02	9.94	1.88	5.27	8.84	1.51	22.67	32.75	10.52
Oraon	Bihar	23.28	32.38	14.19	19.95	29.09	10.88	48.02	56.14	39.49
Bhil,Bhil Garasia.....(1)	Maharasht ra	12.35	19.91	4.69	11.78	19.19	4.28	25.31	36.06	14.16
Khpnnd,Kond,K andha,Nanguli ,Kandha,										
Sitha Kandha	Orissa	12.38	21.70	3.32	12.10	21.31	3.18	27.24	41.75	11.54
Munda	Bihar	22.16	31.85	12.50	20.46	30.20	10.83	41.60	49.96	32.58

Koli Mahadev,Dongra ar Koli	Maharasht	29.46	42.20	16.28	26.00	38.53	13.21	50.27	63.33	35.67
Naga Tribes(Any)	Nagaland	40.15	47.12	32.86	37.27	44.32	29.96	66.25	71.29	60.50
Khasi Jaintia,Pnan,										
War,Bhoi	Meghalaya	34.11	34.87	33.37	28.61	29.25	27.97	63.19	66.23	60.48
Lyngdoh Gond	Orissa	18.73	31.39	6.33	18.48	31.08	6.17	31.50	46.07	14.99
Kawar,Kanwar										
Kaur,Cherwa,	Madhya Pradesh	19.03	32.36	5.86	18.70	31.94	5.67	41.08	57.66	20.70
Rathia,Tanwar, Chettri										
Ho	Bihar	17.71	29.30	6.41	16.34	27.60	5.53	36.48	50.18	20.03
Santhal	Orissa	14.34	24.18	4.45	13.65	23.32	3.97	29.42	41.61	15.46

Gond: Arakh, Arrakh, Agaria, Asur, Badi Maria, Bada Maria, Bhatola, Bhimma, Bhutta, Koliabhuti, Bihar, Bisonhom Maria, Chota Maria Dandami Maria, Dhuru, Dhurwa, Dhoba, Dhulia, Dorlia, Dorla, Gaiki, Gatta, Gatti, Gaita, Gond Gowari, Hill Maria, Kandra, Kalanga, Khatola, Koitar, Koya, Khirwar, Khirwara, Kucha, Maria, Kuchaki, Madia, Maria, Mana, Mannewar, Moghya, Mogia, Monghya, Mudia, Muria, Nagwanshi, Ojha, Raj, Sonjhari Jharekha, Thatia, Thetia, Vada Maria, Daroi.

Bhil, Dungri Bhil, Dungri Garasia, Mewasi Bhil, Rawal Bhil, Tadvi Bhil, Bhagalis, Bhilala, bawra, Vasava, Vasave.

Naikda, nayaka, Kapadia Nayaka, Mota Nayaka Nana Nayaka.

Gond, Rajgond, Arakh, Arrakh, Agaris, Asur, Badi Maria, Bhatola, Bhimma, Bhuta, Koilabhuti, Bhar, Bisonhorn maria, Chots Maria, dandami maria, Dhuru, Dhurwa, Dhoba, Dhulia, Dorla, Gaiki, Gana, Gatti, Gaita, Gond Gowari, Hill Maria, Kandra, Kalangs, Khatola, Koltar, Koya, Khirwar, Kucha, Maria, Kuchaki Maria Media, Maria Mans, Mannewar, Modghya, Mogis, Monghya, Mudia, Muria, Nagarchi, maikpod, nagwanshi, Ojha, Raj, Sonjhari Jhareka, Thatis, Thotya, Wade maria, Vade Maria.

Singh and Ohri in their paper entitled Educational Status of Tribal Women in India (1993, Social Change, this volume) have suggested the following measures for the improvement of the educational status of tribal women:

- On the basis of data related to education available from various sources, identifying tribal groups for initiating innovative educational programmes at the micro-level.
- Conducting Statewise and district-wise surveys of causes of non-enrolment of girl child in tribal communities in order to achieve the goal of universalisation of elementary education.
- Studying the problems of drop-outs, wastage and stagnation among tribal girls in school.
- Examining occupational mobility among tribal women as a result of modernisation, education and social change.
- Evaluating ongoing integrated tribal development programme in tribal areas under the tribal sub-plans through performance appraisal with reference to:
  - improvement in social and economic status of the people, health modernity,
  - use of science and technology in agricultural/ horticultural production, and

- environmental conservation.
- The role of mass media in educational development of tribals needs to be assessed.

Oraon has reported high rate of non-enrolment in the Oraon tribal female school students in Chotanagpur, due to the fact that the girls are required to work in the house. (1993, *Social Change*, this volume). Ambasht has argued that culturally appropriate learning materials be prepared for the tribal students to help them achieve Minimum Level of Learning. (1993, *Social Change*, this volume)

### Employment Status of Tribal Women

4.1 A very large majority of the tribals (almost 90%) are engaged in agriculture; their other economic activities being food gathering (including hunting and fishing), pastoral, handicrafts, trade and commerce, and industrial labour. Rarely are they engaged in only one occupation. The employment status of tribal women may be considered in terms of their work participation, agriculture, forests, non-agricultural activities and impact of development programmes.

#### 4.2 Work participation

The work participation rates among tribals are higher than those among Scheduled Caste and general population (Table 10).

**Table 10 :**Work participation Rates, 1981

	General	SC	ST
Male	51.62	52.60	56.66
Female	13.99	18.46	28.18

Through the work participation rate among tribal women has been increasing over a period of time (1997-1991), it is lesser than that for the tribal males, but higher than that for the general female (Table 11).

**Table 11 : Work Participation Rates, 1971-1991**

	1971		1981		1991	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
General	52.6	12.1	51.6	14.0	51.0	16.0
ST	55.0	20.8	56.7	28.2	53.7	30.0

Source :Primary Census Abstract for General Population, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes,1971-1991.

Though the work participation among tribals is greater than among the general population, within the tribals it is again the males who have a higher work participation rate than the females, as in the general population.

#### Agriculture

Through an overwhelming majority of tribal men (85%) and women (91%) were involved in agriculture, there were more cultivators among tribal males while more tribal women were agricultural labourers(Table 12).

**Table 12 : Industrial classification of Tribal Workers.**

		1961		1971		1981		1991	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
I.	Cultivators	68.2	64.9	63.0	42.7	59.6	43.8	58.6	47.0
II.	Ag. Labourers	18.4	2.3	27.3	49.0	26.1	46.2	26.4	44.3
III.	Livestock, forestry,etc.	---	---	2.3	2.4	.5	.5	2.2	1.7
IV.	Mining and quarrying	4.1	0.6	0.6	0.6	.5	.5	1.0	0.5
V.	Manufacturing Processing,								

	servicing and repairs								
	a) Household Industry	2.1	2.9	0.9	1.3	1.3	1.8	0.9	1.2
	b) Other than Household	0.9	0.5	1.2	0.9	\$	\$	2.4	1.2
	Industry								
VI.	Construction	0.4	0.2	0.4	0.3	\$	\$	1.1	0.4
VII.	Trade & Commerce	0.4	0.4	0.6	0.6	\$	\$	1.4	0.8
VIII.	Transport, Shortage and	0.5	0.1	0.2	\$	\$	\$	1.3	0.1
	Communication								
IX.	Other services	5.0	1.0	2.0	\$	\$	\$	4.8	2.6

As compared to general females, the tribal females were engaged more as cultivators but less in occupations other than agriculture (Table 13).

**Table 13** Industrial classification of Female/Tribal Workers (1961-1991)

Industrial Classification Categories	1961		1971		1981		1991	
	GF	TF	GF	TF	GF	TF	GF	TF
1. Cultivators	55.72	36.18	29.61	42.7	33.09	43.86	34.22	47.04
2. Age Labour	23.81	11.24	50.6	49.0	46.34	46.16	44.93	44.28
3. Manufacturing Processing, Servicing and repairs								
a) Household Industry	1.33	1.51	4.25	1.3	4.57	1.75	3.53	1.29
4. Other works	19.09	5.04	15.68	7.0	19.00	8.23	17.72	70.36
III+IV+V (b) VI+IX								

Source : Census Reports : 1961,1971,1981,1991.

The major role that women play in agricultural operations has been discussed by Roy Burman (1998). In the slash and burn cultivation, women join in felling and burning trees, making holes with digging stick, sowing seeds, weeding and harvesting. In plough based cultivation, transportation, weeding, winnowing and dehusking is done entirely by women while harvesting and threshing are done by both men and women. Generally the ploughing is done by men but in some tribal societies, women do the ploughing too.

#### 4.4 Women and forests

Minor forest produce forms a major source of income in many tribal communities, specially those having less than five acres of land. Women and children are almost exclusively involved in collection of minor forest produce, its storage, processing and marketing (Singh, B.,1993; Roy Burman, 1988).

Increased government control of forests has distributed tribal economy adversely affecting tribals lives, particularly that of women. Appointing of agents from outside for collecting forest produce has not only affected their livelihood, but has also made the work of women more difficult. Collection of fuelwood has become more difficult since it is less accessible and more time-consuming. The result has been less income combined with less fuelwood available for themselves and lesser nutrition. It also leaves them little time for earning wages. Government control over forests has also reduced hunting to a ritual.

#### 4.5 Non-agricultural activities

Only less than 10% of the tribal women are involved in activities other than agriculture. This is less than half the percentage of females in the general population in similar occupations (Table 13). This category includes livestock, forestry mining/quarrying, manufacturing/processing/servicing and repairs in household as well as non-household industries, trade/commerce and services.

#### 4.6 Impact of Development programmes

4.6.1 The impact of development programmes has been different on different sections of tribal women. A small number of tribal women have taken advantage of education, new opportunities for employment and self-fulfilment. In a sericulture project for tribal women in Udaipur (Brandon & Dixit, 1983) a remarkable change in the quality of life of the tribal women was reported.



Besides economic benefits they had more leisure, self-reliance, innovativeness, adaptability and a more aware social outlook.

4.6.2 However, there have been negative effects of development Programmes also, such as:

- i. the workload of women has increased,
- ii. with modern agricultural implements, unemployment of women has increased and they have been migrating to other areas as labourers,
- iii. restrictions regarding exploitation of *forests* has marginalised women,
- iv. exploitation of women in various ways:
  - with introduction of Rural Land Ceiling Act, Tribal Land Transfer Act, etc., the non-tribal men often marry tribal women to purchase land from tribal poor to avoid legal complications, or derive financial benefits received from Govt. but deny tribal women their position as wives;
  - lands are taken away by mine owners in the name of development and no land is given in lieu of it nor is any rehabilitation programme sponsored; when vacancies occur, jobs are given to menfolk who are inheritors/owners of land;
  - women are prohibited from working in nationalised mines in evening and night shifts; they are permitted in private mines but these don't employ women to avoid maternity benefits, equal remuneration, rest shelters and creches;
  - indirect retrenchment is done by introducing voluntary retirement programme for women : a woman may retire after 36 years and offer her job to any male member who continues with her Provident Fund number and gets all her PF benefits;

- tribal women are used for immoral trafficking in collieries and mines and by labour contractors;
- women labourers (rejas) are exploited socially and sexually. Almost half of them are unmarried and parents don't get them married fearing loss of substantial income. On the other hand, tribal men prefer to marry non-rejas and even wives are deserted for doing this job.

4.7 In summary, the data on tribal women indicate that;

4.7.1 Tribal women are working women almost without any exception. Working women in all social groups work harder than men. This is more so for the tribal women. They are overworked : they rise in the morning and go to the forest to collect fuel, fetch water, help in agricultural activities, cook for the family, look after the children, do the washing etc.

4.7.2 They are lower paid than men.

4.7.3 They have been adversely affected to deforestation and development projects.

4.7.4 New strategies have been devised to remove women from work.

4.7.5 Non-tribal men are marrying tribal women to get land/jobs.

4.7.6 They are sexually exploited by non-tribal men.

Much has been written about the sexual permissiveness in the tribal society, without understanding and even with an attitude of 'holier than thou'. But the permissive sexual behaviour in the tribal society is controlled by strong social customs such as Bithla in the Santals, and it is very different than the permissiveness of the contemporary Indian elite imitating the Westerners.

4.7.7 Tribal women are denied property rights.

Mawar et al. In their study of Gonds in Madhya Pradesh found that most tribal women were illiterate and tied to a primitive economy. Their income level can be increased by raising their literacy level, and giving them training for income generating activities. (1993, Social Change, this volume).

## 5. Profile of a tribal woman

5.1 The overall picture of the tribal woman that emerges from the existing materials has the following features:

- the literature on tribal women is substantially romantic and grim economic realities have been completely ignored.
- the tribal woman is a working woman and works harder than tribal men and women in any of the social groups.
- the tribal woman is illiterate.
- the tribal woman is not healthy;
- there is high fertility and greater incidence of malnutrition among them. Haria drinking is almost hundred percent.

5.2 The status of the tribal women is characterised by over-work, invasion of sexually exploitative market forces in tribal society, illiteracy, sub-human physical living conditions, high fertility, high malnutrition and near absence of modern health care facilities.

5.3 The low health and educational status adversely affects the economic status.

## **Main Conclusion**

To improve the status of the tribal woman the focus has to be on the tribal girl.

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