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**REASON BEHIND POVERTY OF NOMADIC TRIBES**

- Jayabrata Bardhan

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editorsabujeema@gmail.com  
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# Reason behind Poverty of Nomadic Tribes

**Jayabrata Bardhan**

**Tata Institute of Social Sciences**



## INTRODUCTION

Nomadism is a special type of activity which is mainly performed for the sake of economic activities (both primary and secondary). There is a huge connection between ‘nomadism’ and ‘pastoralism’ due to the type of this livelihood where pastoralists have to move from place to place. In the south -East Asian region, the highest number of pastoral nomads are found whereas India alone hosts almost ‘five hundred’ different communities of them. These communities are ten percent of the total India’s population. Though, in the different parts of the country, the de-notified tribes have almost settled themselves; the pastoralist remain nomadic due to requirement of their traditional livelihood which is an extensive type of livestock rearing.

In the Indian constitution there is no mentioning of Nomadic Tribes. They are considered as schedule castes or schedule tribes or backward classes. Due to this they remain excluded from the mainstream development and schemes. Though these nomadic communities live with a complete different lifestyle than the mainstream communities, government does not allocate particular schemes and programmes, and

they often can not avail the benefits of those schemes due to the different lifestyle. These causes extreme vulnerability and poverty in these communities. A study of ‘tribal Research and Cultural Foundation (TRCF)’ in 2004 claimed that almost 67% Gujjars (nomads of Jammu and Kashmir) are living under below poverty line (Kashmir times, 2004). Similarly, in 2006, a study of Himachal Consultancy (HIMCON) claimed the poorest, filthy living condition of almost 43,100 Gujjars.

## ISSUES OF CLASSIFICATION AND EXCLUSION FROM MAIN STREAM DEVELOPMENT:

These arise as the major and most difficult problem to solve. These are the main cause of most of the problems including poverty which are faced by these communities. Nomadic tribes are not considered to be categorised under the constitutional Schedule tribes (STs) and schedule castes (SCs). Though, in some state, they are categorised as ST or ST, there are lack of uniformity all over the country. For example, ‘Kaikadis’ of the Vidarbha regions of Maharashtra are categorised under the SCs but in the other part of Maharashtra, they come under VJNTs (Vimukta jatis and nomadic Tribes).

There are several reasons behind these problems. The main reason lies in the type and requirements of their livelihood which force them to migrate from place to place on the availability of the water and fodder for their animals and for other livelihood potions. This migration pattern of these communities makes it difficult to reach to them for the collection of different data which are required to provide them different benefits. They were not included under SCs and STs during the preparation of schedules in 1950 as these NTs and DNTs were



considered as 'criminal tribes' in that period. In the year 1952, the de-notification order was passed first time. Though some NTs were included in the schedules due to their merits, most of them remain excluded. Another reason may be the numbers of prescribed eligibility criteria which are need to be fulfilled to be categorised as schedules. After the modification of these criteria for a couple of time, the inequality and disparity exist. As an example there are several communities in Maharashtra which are included in the list of VJNTs as sedentary whereas some genuine communities are remained excluded. Due to this, several non-nomadic tribes are availing benefits which are particular for nomads only. The following other problems are faced by the de-notified and nomadic tribes due the problems of classification:

- Issues of protection is a considerable problem because the 'Schedule Castes' and 'Schedule Tribe' (Prevention of Atrocities) Act (1989) did not cover the NDs and DNTs. As a result, these communities face violation of human rights.
- DNTs and NTs are remained excluded for availing the central concession and reservation. In some states (like Maharashtra, karnatak etc), some communities get some state reservation and facilities. For example in Maharashtra 4 percent seats are reserved for VJNTs and 2 percent seats are reserved for 'special backward classes' (like Dhangars and Vanjaris). In the area of Melghat of Maharashtra, though the NTs (Gawlan and Gawli) and ST (Korku) are facing the same problems and vulnerability, Korkus are getting more central and state benefits due to their profile of being a ST and due to the OBCs profile in central, Gawlan and

gawlis are not getting required central benefits.

- As mentioned earlier because of the migration pattern, these communities often remain excluded from the decennial census also there is no separate enumeration of these communities like SCs and STs. So to know the exact number of population of NDs and DNTs which is very important in making different plans for them became difficult.

### **IMPLICATION OF CRIMINAL TRIBES ACT:**

From the ancient time, in Indian society crime was always present. Chouryashastra, includes 64 kalas and 18 Vidyas, is considered as the science in theft (Deshpande 2000:108-10). There were certain communities which used to practice this profession; there were existence of robbers and dacoits who belong to different short lives ethnic groups of disgruntled people. After the 1857 mutiny, British government took some steps to retain law and order. Enactment of the 'Criminal Tribes Act (CTA) of 1871 was a result of this. This Act was formed on the fallacious understanding of the Indian society where caste was equated with profession. So, certain communities were considered as criminal and crime as their caste's occupation and religion. Under these act some communities were considered as criminal tribes and every member was forced to be registered at local police station and needed to take permission before any travelling, shifting of residence etc. After being criticised and protested, this act was modified for several times. After the development of the constitution, this act became irrelevant against the article 13, 14, 19D and E of the Indian constitution. So, in 1952, this act was abolished and replaced by the 'Habitat Offenders Act' and the notified



communities became 'de-notified'. According to the new act the individuals who perform crimes, are targeted but the police department and the society still considered them as criminal tribe irrespective of the thought that one whole community cannot be criminal. So, whenever a new crime takes place, these communities face brutal interrogation. For example, 'Kanjarbhat' and 'Pardhis' communities are most vulnerable in this manner. It is difficult to solve as some members of these communities still practice criminal activities. These things make them more vulnerable in terms of performing different livelihood because of the mindset of the public who still consider these communities as criminal which indirectly affects their economic as well as social life and leads to poverty.

### **ECONOMIC ASPECTS**

The nomadic and de-notified tribes pursue livelihood from a wide range of sources, depending upon the nature and environment of different region. Change in various laws, environment, demands of the society and several other factors cause Shifting from their traditional livelihood to others. The livelihood of these NTs and DNTs can be classified into four different categories: Pastorals and hunter-gatherers, entertainer, goods and service nomads and religious performers.

Pastoral communities mainly cover shepherds and cowherd. Shepherds are found in almost all the semi-arid Deccan plateau of the country whereas the cowherds are mainly found in the deserts and the grasslands of north and north-eastern India. The hunter-gatherers perform hunting in all over the countryside. The second group satisfy the need of entertainment of rural society through tumbling and acrobating (Dombaris), strolling actors (Bahurupi), jugglers

(Karkmundi), snake charmers (garudi) etc. The third type of communities fulfil the needs of various goods and services by performing blacksmithing (Gadi Lohar and Ghisadi), stone crushing (Beldar), metal casting (Otari), weapon making and knife grinding (Shikalgar), broom and basket makers (Kaikadi) etc. Last group performs different religious activities like bards, minstrels, devotional songs, astrologers (Joshi) etc. Other than this, some communities like Ghantichoe, Uchale etc are expert in pick-pocketing and stealing and able in bearing police brutalities and extreme physical hardships (Gaikwad, 1987).

Though these communities perform various economic activities, the livelihood of these NTs and DNTs are in huge threat due to the modern process of development and also due to the competition with the sedentary communities which these communities have to face to access the resources. This developmental activity includes urbanization, commercialization, mechanization, modification of transportation, infrastructure development, shifting from agrarian to industrial economy etc.

### **REASON FOR SHIFTING FROM THEIR TRADITIONAL LIVELIHOOD TO OTHER LIVELIHOOD**

The reason behind the degradation of the livelihood of different NTs and DNTs are mentioned below. These reasons are directly affecting their livelihood and as a result of this, poverty is increasing among these communities.

- The pastorals and hunter-gatherers are losing their livelihood mainly because of losing their access to the forest lands. Overall degradation of natural resources (both quantity and quality), emergence of various competitors, restriction on the use



- of natural resources, privatization and commercialization etc.
- The entertainers' livelihood are affecting due to the introduction of modern entertainment measures and reach of these products to the remote parts of the country. As the livelihood of these communities mainly centralised around the rural areas, spreading of these measures to those areas increases the competition of them.
  - Mechanization, industrialization, introduction of new technique and procedures, introduction of various cheaper and good quality materials like cement, plastic, petro- chemical ingredients, synthetic fibres etc are affecting the livelihood of the good and service provider's communities. These cheaper new goods and modern techniques are providing competition to their traditional goods and practices.
  - The religious attributes, attitudes, practices, beliefs of the contemporary society have changed due to the modernization. Though the religious believe do not reduce, the practice of performing religious activities have been changed. This is largely affecting their livelihood and forcing them to shift in other livelihood.

These people of NTs and DNTs are popularly known for their strong physic and being workaholic. But continuous change in their lifestyle, food habits (losing of various traditional diets) and other external factors make them vulnerable to various diseases and to continue their livelihood which needs hard work. These issue of bad health also leads to the poverty.

## CONCLUSION

These DNTs and NTs are the most neglected communities in India which experienced dislocations, social isolation,

colonial legacy and unconventional occupations. The modern developmental process is hampering their traditional livelihood in one hand and also fails to include them in the mainstream development. Their problems are not attended neither by civil society and democratic polity. Due to these reasons, these NTs and DNTs became extremely vulnerable to their economic, social and cultural aspects.

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