

Political Science Chapter – 07

Understanding Marginalisation

Marginalisation is the process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. This is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is excluded, and their needs or desires ignored.

What does it mean to be Socially Marginalised:

- (i) To be marginalized is to be forced to occupy the sides or fringes and thus not be at the centre of things.
- (ii) Sometimes marginalized groups are viewed with hostility and fear.
- (iii) There is a sense of difference & exclusion which leads to communities not having access to resources & opportunities & in their inability too assert their rights.
- (iv) To make certain groups in society feel marginalized, there are economic, social, cultural and political factors. Thus, marginalization is seldom experienced in one sphere.

Who are Adivasis:

- (i) The term 'Adivasis' refers to the '**original inhabitants**'. They are communities who lived and often continue to live in close association with forests.
- (ii) Around 8% of India's population is Adivasi. There are over 500 different Adivasi groups in India, They are not a homogeneous population.
- (iii) Many of India's most important mining and industrial areas are situated in Adivasi areas.
- (iv) Adivasis are particularly numerous in states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and in the north-eastern states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura. Orrisa is home to more than 60 different tribal groups.

(v) Adivasis practice a range of tribal religions that are different from Islam, Hinduism and Christianity. Their religions themselves have influenced dominant religions of the empire around them.

(vi) They have most distinctive societies because there is often very little hierarchy among them. This makes them radically different from communities organised around principles of caste system.

(vii) Adivasis worship ancestors, own village and nature spirits. They have been influenced by different religions, like Shakta, Buddhist, Vaishnav, Bhakti and Christianity.

(viii) Adivasis have their own languages, which was as old as Sanskrit. Santhali has the largest number of speakers and has a significant body of publication.

Adivasis and Stereotyping:

Stereotypes are characteristics imposed upon groups of people because of their race, nationality and sexual orientation, among others.

(i) Adivasis are invariably portrayed in very stereotypical ways-in colourful costumes, headgear and through their dancing.

(ii) Adivasis are blamed for their lack of advancement as they are believed to be resistant to change or new ideas.

(iii) People believe that the Adivasis are exotic and belong to primitive and backward background.

Adivasis and Development:

(i) Forests play a crucial role in the development of all empires and settled civilization in India. As they provide with-

- Metal ores- iron & copper, gold & silver
- invaluable timber
- medicinal herbs
- animal products, like wax, lac & honey
- animals

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- (ii) Adivasis had deep knowledge of forest. Often empires heavily depended on Adivasis for the crucial access to forest resources.
 - (iii) In today's world, Adivasis are considered marginal and powerless communities.
 - (iv) In the pre-colonial world, they were traditionally ranged hunter-gatherers and nomads and they lived by shifting agriculture and cultivating at one place.
 - (v) For the past two hundred years, Adivasis have been forced through economic changes, forest policies and political force applied by State to migrate as workers in plantations, industries and as domestic workers.
 - (vi) Forest lands have been cleared for timber and to get land for agriculture and industry.
 - (vii) Huge tracts of lands have gone under the waters of hundreds of dams that have been built in independent India.
 - (viii) Losing their lands and access to the forests means that tribals lose their main source of livelihood and Adivasis have migrated to cities in search of work.
 - (ix) They get caught in the cycle of poverty and deprivation. Almost 45% of tribal groups in rural areas and 35% in urban areas live below the poverty line.
 - (x) As a result, Many tribal children are malnourished and also literacy rate is also very low among tribals.
 - (xi) When Adivasis are displaced from their lands, they lose much more than a source of income. They lose their traditions & customs.

Minorities and Marginalisation:

- (i) The term minority is most commonly used to refer to communities that are numerically small in relation to the rest of the population.
- (ii) It encompasses issues of power, access to resources and has social & cultural dimensions.
- (iii) Safeguards are needed to protect minority communities against the possibility of being culturally dominated by the majority. They also protect them against any discrimination & disadvantage that they may face.

(iv) The Constitution provides these safeguards because it is committed to protecting India's cultural diversity and promoting equality as well as justice.

Muslims and Marginalisation:

(i) Muslims are 13.4% of India's population and are considered to be a marginalized community in India.

(ii) They have over the years been deprived of the benefits of socio-economic development, of basic amenities, literacy and public employment.

(iii) Recognizing that Muslims in India were lagging behind in terms of various development indicators, the government set up a high-level committee in 2005.

(iv) The report of the committee suggests that Muslim community is comparable to that of other marginalized communities like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

(v) According to the Report of average years of schooling, for Muslim children between ages of 7-16 is much lower than that of other socio-religious communities.

(vi) Muslim customs and practices such as wearing *burqa* and *fez* make them different from others. Because of this, they tend to be identified differently and some people think they are not like the 'rest of us'. This often becomes an excuse to treat them unfairly.

(vii) This social marginalization of Muslims in some instances has led to their migration from places where they have lived, often leading to the ghettoisation of the community.

***Ghettoisation: A ghetto is an area or locality that is populated largely by members of a particular community. Therefore, a process that leads to such a situation. This may occur due to various social, cultural and economic reasons.**

(viii) The experience of all these groups point to the fact that marginalisation is a complex phenomenon requiring a variety of strategies, measures and safeguards to redress the situation.

(ix) Every citizen has a stake in protecting the rights defined in the Constitution and the laws and policies framed to realise these rights.

(x) Without these, no one will ever be able to protect the diversity that makes one's country unique.

Conclusion:

(i) There are different reasons for each of the communities being marginalised, each experiences marginalisation in different ways.

(ii) Marginalisation is often linked to experiencing disadvantage, prejudice and powerlessness.

(iii) In India, there are several more marginalised communities like Dalits.

(iv) Marginalisation results in having a low social status and not having equal access to education and other resources.

(v) Marginalized communities want to maintain their cultural distinctiveness while having access to rights, development and other opportunities.
