State of Adivasis in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh

What is the issue?

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Despite a significant Adivasi population, the states of Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh fail to give the needed attention to the communities.

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What is the concern?

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- Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh are among the four Indian states (other than North-eastern states) with more than 20% Adivasi population.
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- Chhattisgarh, in fact, has an Adivasi population of more than 30%.
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- However, the Scheduled Tribes (STs) have hardly found a mention in the election campaigns in the two states.
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- Along with the Muslims, the Adivasis seem to be the main losers in “New India”.
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How is Adivasis' present condition?

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- In both states, the Adivasis lag behind other social groups and are losing ground, economically and educationally.
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- **Income** - The India Human Development Survey, in 2011-12, highlights their backwardness.
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- The annual per capita income of the STs in Chhattisgarh represented 51% of the per capita income of the non-STs.
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- This is a significant decrease from 2004-2005, when this proportion was 68%.
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- In Madhya Pradesh, this proportion has fallen from 65 to 55%.
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- Another such state is Gujarat where STs' annual per capita income represents only 35% of that of the others.
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- Also, in all three states, STs are poorer than SCs (Scheduled Castes).
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- In Gujarat, their per capita income is 45% of that of SCs; in Chhattisgarh, 58% and Madhya Pradesh, 75%.
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- **Education** - The appalling socio-economic condition of the Adivasis is a reflection of their lack of education.
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- Only 1.7% of STs in the two states are graduates.
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- Data suggests that quotas are not being filled in the university system as well as in the public sector.
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- **Economy** - The economic situation of the Adivasis is, in fact, closely related to their under-representation among salaried people.
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- In Chhattisgarh, only 6.2% of Adivasis are salaried.
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- In MP, only 3.5% were salaried in 2011-12, compared to 4.9% in 2004-05.
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- 34% of Adivasis in Chhattisgarh and 46% in MP are "labourers", which means that they till the land of others.
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- **Political representation** of Adivasis is also not in proportion to their population in the two states.
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- **Vulnerability** - According to the Statistical Profile of STs in India (2013), 15% of the Adivasis in the country live in MP.
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- But according to the Crime Bureau, more than 20% of the crimes against STs are committed in the state, including 40% of the murders.
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How are they in other states?

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- The fortunes of the STs in Chhattisgarh and MP as well as in Gujarat stand in stark contrast to their conditions in South India.
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- This is not because South Indian states are richer, but because they are more egalitarian.
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- In Karnataka, in 2011-12, the annual per capita income of STs represents 80% of that of the other groups, up from 62% in 2004-05.
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- In undivided Andhra Pradesh, it has jumped from 76% to 86% in the same period.
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- In both states, the annual per capita income of STs is either equivalent to (Andhra) or more (Karnataka) than that of SCs, and even of Muslims.
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- Education is a key reason for this, as the percentage of graduates among the Adivasis is 2.6% in Andhra and 3.4% in Karnataka.
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- These are proportions equal to that of SCs and superior to that of Muslims.
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How are their forest rights conditions?

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- In both states, the Forest Rights Act (FRA), that provides legal rights to Adivasis over their forestlands, has not been fully implemented.
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- More than 40% of them operate “marginal holdings” and their holdings are shrinking.
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- MP has the largest forest cover in the country, but Adivasis here have found it very difficult to obtain land titles.
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- More than 60% of the forest rights’ claims in the state have been dismissed.
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- Also, FRA allows for a maximum claim of four hectares (ha).
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- But the average size of the land distributed under the act in MP is about 1.45 ha.
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- In Chhattisgarh, Adivasis have filed more than 8,55,000 claims over land

since 2006, but 53% of this has been rejected.
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- The average land distributed here is a mere 0.85 hectare, while the Adivasis are entitled to 4 ha.
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- In a contravention of the spirit of the FRA, Section 165 of the Chhattisgarh Land Code Act has been amended.
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- This is to facilitate the acquisition of tribal land by the government.
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- Given their proportion, social justice and inclusiveness concerns, it is fair that the governments take note of Adivasi development and empowerment seriously.
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Source: Indian Express

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