

# Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes: A Study of Tamilnadu State

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**Abstract:** ***Background:** Scheduled Tribe are the oldest inhabitants of their native place. Economically and technologically they are still backward. Their language, culture, beliefs and customs are different. In India there are 427 main tribal communities living and Tamilnadu accounts for 36(Rao, 1993). In Tamilnadu, majority of the tribes were illiteracy, ignorance. There is no proper awareness about the government welfare schemes. They are dominated, exploited and controlled by their mainstream in the living area and occupational area. In this context this paper addresses the “Socio-Economic Status of Scheduled Tribes: A Study of Tamilnadu State”. **Data and Method:** The paper uses the secondary data from the Census India 2001 & 2011 and Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India, 2013 and other research studies and carries out the cross classification analysis to realise its objectives. **Conclusion:** Majority of the tribal people live in below poverty line in Tamil Nadu. The result of the study shows that the educational, employment and economic conditions of the tribal people of Tamil Nadu are very poor in the present situation. Therefore, the state of Tamil Nadu needs to pay special attention to the problems of the indigenous people and improve their education, employment and economic status. Already, Aboriginal people have been given special reservations in education and employment. This is very low compared to the growing tribal population. Hence, it is the duty of the state to secure social and economic justice for the tribal people.*

**Keywords:** Tribal, Tribes, Ignorance People, Indigenous people, ST, Tamilnadu

## 1. Introduction and Earlier Literature

The English word tribe has come from the Latin word ‘tribus’ which signifies a particular type of common and political organisation which is alive in all these societies. The name ‘tribe’ refers to a category of people and designates a step of development in human society. Again ‘Tribe’ is defined as a group of families living as a community under one or more chiefs, united by languages and customs (Ramamani, 1988). Generally Scheduled Tribes live in relatively isolated hills and forests. They are the oldest inhabitants of their native place. Economically and technologically they are still backward. Their language, culture, beliefs and customs are different. Their sense of history is poor (Raizada, 2001). In India there are 427 main tribal communities living and in Tamilnadu account for 36 tribal communities. India ranks the second in having the tribal concentration in the world next only to Africa (Rao, 1993).

The percentage share of Scheduled Tribes population in India was 8.6 per cent by their total population in 2011 census whereas state wise concern Madhya Pradesh (14.65), Maharashtra (10.05), Orissa (9.17), Rajasthan (8.84) and Gujarat (8.53) had registered more than national average. Out of total states and UTs, seven states and five UTs percentage share of tribal population was less than one percentage. Among the less than one percentage state, Tamilnadu state (0.76%) is also one of the state had registered the share of less than one percentage of tribal population. The constitution of India is enriched with several provisions for schedule castes and schedule tribes to safeguard and promote their cultural, social, educational, and economic interests in order to bring them in the mainstream of the nation.

## Setting the Problem

Tribal peoples were economically very deprived in our society because most of the Tamilnadu tribes were illiteracy, ignorance (Tamilnadu Statistical Profile, 2011) and there is no proper awareness and understanding the government welfare schemes and also they are dominated, exploited and controlled by their mainstream in the living area and occupational area. The problems related to various aspects of tribal people in Tamilnadu viz. social, economic, educational, health, religion, law and order situation, they got meagre facilities from the Government as the government schemes normally designed for the average village, which is not a reality where tribes are concerned. In this context this paper addresses the socioeconomic status of the scheduled tribes in Tamilnadu and their districts.

## Objectives

The following are the objectives of this paper: to study the demographic and socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled Tribes in Tamilnadu State; to understand the caste wise dominating Scheduled Tribes in Tamilnadu State; to analyze the district wise occupational status in ST population in Tamilnadu and to suggest some solution for promoting their economic status of Scheduled Tribes in Tamilnadu.

## 2. Data and Method

The paper uses the secondary data from the Census India 2001 & 2011 and Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India and Tamilnadu, 2013, Ministry of Tribal Affairs Statistics Division, Government of India and other research studies and carries out the cross classification analysis to realise its objectives.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Demographic status of Scheduled Tribes Population Tamil Nadu is discussed in the *table-1*. Between 2001 and 2011, the percentage of Tamil Nadu's tribal population increased by 0.6 percent compared to the total population. But in comparison to India, the share of Tamil Nadu in the total tribal population has declined by 0.01 per cent in the last ten years. The total population growth rate of Tamil Nadu has increased by 15.61 per cent between 2001 and 2011 but the tribal population growth rate has increased by 22.01 per cent. This clearly illustrates that the rate of growth of the tribal population is very high compared to the growth rate of the total population.

By their residential status wise concern, majority of the tribes were living in rural areas (83.09%). There are very few tribal people living in urban areas (16.91%). When we compared to the 2001 census, the present rural tribal population has declined by 1.53 percent but the urban indigenous population has increased at the same rate. This result clearly shows the Tamilnadu is going to urbanization. By their gender category, there is no much variation between male, female and between 2001 and 2011 census. Relatively female population was just increase 0.03 per cent in 2011 census and same male population decrease (0.03%) during the same decade.

By their tribal population sex ratio wise concern, adult sex ratio is just increased (1No) from 2001 to 2011 census and child sex ratio was reduced (27Nos) with same census year. It clearly shows the tribal female children in Tamilnadu is decreasing trend. The total literacy rate of the tribal in India is 58.95 per cent whereas it is 64.8 per cent at the national level. Tamilnadu state (54.3) registered fourth place among the lower level of literacy states than the national literacy level. But we compared to previous census (2001), 12.8 per cent increased in the tribal population.

**Table 1:** Demographic Details of Scheduled Tribes Population in Tamilnadu

Demographic Details	2001	2011
<b>Population in Nos</b>		
Total Population	62405679	72147030
ST Population	651321	794697
<b>Percentage Share</b>		
% of STs in the Total Population	1.04	1.1
% of STs in the Total STs in India	0.77	0.76
<b>Decadal Growth in %</b>		
Total Population	--	15.61
ST Population	--	22.01
<b>Residential Status in %</b>		
Rural	84.62	83.09
Urban	15.38	16.91
<b>Gender in %</b>		
Male	50.50	50.47
Female	49.50	49.53
<b>Sex Ratio</b>		
Adult	980	981
Child	945	918
<b>Literacy Rate in %</b>	41.5	54.3

**Source:** Computed from Census India, 2001 & 2011

*Table-2* represents the District wise Socio Demographic status of scheduled tribes in Tamilnadu. Tribal population in Tamil Nadu is just over 1 per cent. This is very low compared to other states. The Nilgiris district is the most tribal population district in Tamil Nadu. Also, the percentage of tribal population of nine districts in Tamilnadu is less than one percentage. It is very low compared to Tamil Nadu average. Karur district is the lowest tribal inhabited district in Tamilnadu. The sex ratio of Tribal population in Tamil Nadu is 981. It is nothing but out of 981 females per 1000 males tribal is living in Tamilnadu state. Moreover, in terms of district wise, the ten districts of Tamil Nadu have higher sex ratio. This clearly depicts the the development of a society there is need for equitable and balanced progress of all these sections of human communities and for this perspective. The district with the highest sex ratio is Thiruvavur (1070) and the lowest is the Theni district (923).

**Table 2:** District wise Socio Demographic Status of Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu

Name	Percentage	Sex Ratio	Child Sex Ratio	Literacy
<b>TAMIL NADU</b>	<b>1.10</b>	<b>981</b>	<b>918</b>	<b>47.23</b>
Ariyalur	1.42	1033	1001	43.86
Chennai	0.22	932	913	75.57
Coimbatore	0.82	990	931	49.60
Cuddalore	0.60	977	901	47.66
Dharmapuri	4.18	962	892	50.41
Dindigul	0.37	969	918	45.01
Erode	0.97	985	921	41.41
Kancheepuram	1.03	1000	998	46.69
Kanniyakumari	0.39	1049	1040	71.53
Karur	0.05	936	889	73.39
Krishnagiri	1.19	961	956	39.97
Madurai	0.37	974	956	62.40
Nagapattinam	0.23	1034	840	53.43
Namakkal	3.30	942	818	53.61
Perambalur	0.46	1000	1056	58.86
Pudukkottai	0.08	983	798	58.30
Ramanathapuram	0.08	977	862	53.48
Salem	3.43	973	894	45.81
Sivaganga	0.06	1005	1120	60.13
Thanjavur	0.15	1048	889	58.92
The Nilgiris	4.46	1039	942	52.92
Theni	0.15	923	807	39.13
Thiruvallur	1.27	994	955	46.19
Thiruvavur	0.24	1070	1082	60.58
Thoothukkudi	0.28	991	1006	55.55
Tiruchirappalli	0.67	933	810	67.78
Tirunelveli	0.33	1010	968	59.19
Tiruppur	0.22	992	1082	47.65
Tiruvannamalai	3.69	979	905	40.30
Vellore	1.85	990	910	43.50
Viluppuram	2.16	993	942	37.99
Virudhunagar	0.12	941	918	54.80

**Source:** Computed from Census India, 2011

**Note:** 1. Percentage – Calculated from Concern district total population

The sex ratio of tribal children in Tamil Nadu is registered 918. By their district wise concern, 17 districts child sex ratio is more than that of Tamilnadu average. This clearly shows the Tamil Nadu tribal people give how much importance of the girl children. And the child sex ratio is over 1000 in 7 districts. This clearly shows the how much control in the case of female infanticide in Tamil Nadu state.

By their literacy rate wise concern in Tamilnadu state tribal population, Tamilnadu registered 47.23 per cent. At the same time two third of districts literacy rate was more than that of state literacy rate. The district with the highest literacy rate is Chennai (75.57%) and the lowest is the

Villupuram district (37.99%). In overall this information predicts the district wise tribal population literacy was in good status. But state wise concern, Tamilnadu is tried to reach half way only.

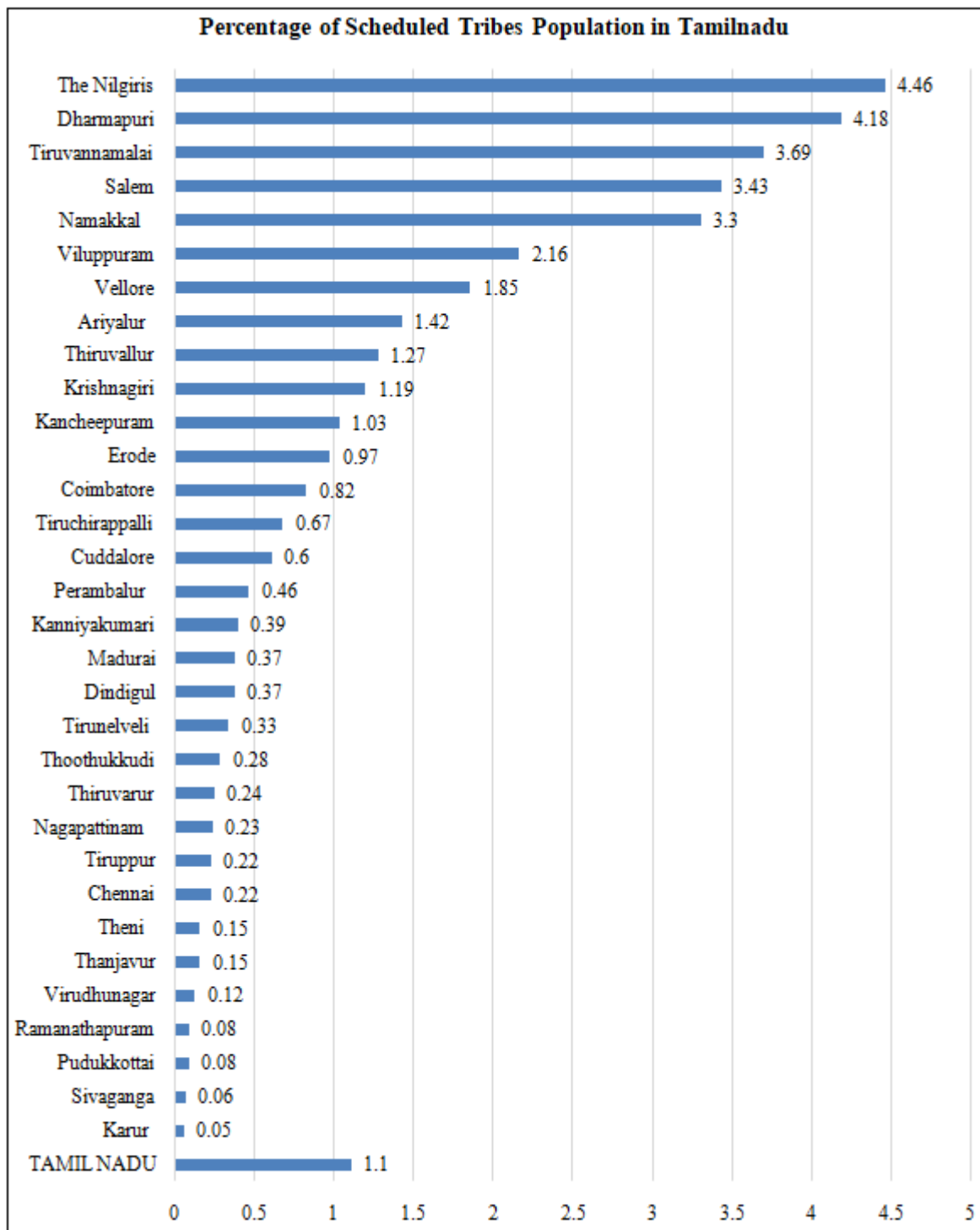
**Table 3:** Tribal Group wise Dominating Districts in Tamil Nadu

Caste	Major Number of ST Populated Districts	Number	Rank
Adiyan	Nagapattinam, Cuddalore, Villupuram	4,426	15
Aranadan	Perambalur, Ariyalur, Tiruvallur	138	32
Eravallan	Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Tiruvallur	2,871	17
Irular (25.6%)	Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram, Tiruvannamalai	1,89,661	2
Kadar	Coimbatore, Chennai, Thanjavur	650	24
Kammara	Tiruvallur, Madurai, Viruthunagar	1,052	23
Kanikaran, Kanikkar	Kanniyakumari, Tirunelveli	3,837	16
Kaniyan, Kanyan	Tirunelveli, Kanniyakumari, Tutucorin	2,137	19
Kattunayakan	Tirunelveli, Madurai, Tutucorin	46,672	3
KochuVelan	Vellore, Tiruchirappalli	7	36
Konda Kapus	Chennai, Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram	521	25
Kondareddis	Salem, Tiruvallur, Erode	9,847	8
Koraga	Kancheepuram, Thanjavur, Krishnagiri	101	33
Kota	Tiruchirappalli, Nilgiris, Coimbatore	308	27
Kudiya, Melakudi	Tiruppur, Nilgiris, Tiruvallur	66	35
Kurichchan	Krishnagiri, Dharmapuri, Nagapattinam	6,100	12
Kurumans	Dharmapuri, Vellore, Tiruvannamalai	30,965	4
Kurumbas	Nilgiris (6821)	6,823	10
MahaMalasar	Coimbatore (76)	77	34
MalaiArayan	Coimbatore, Perambalur, Tiruppur	172	31
MalaiPandaram	Villupuram, Cuddalore, Coimbatore	1,439	21
MalaiVedan	Madurai, Dindigul, Nilgiris	7,215	9
Malakkuravan	Tiruvannamalai, Kancheepuram, Villupuram	19,645	5
Malasar	Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Dharmapuri	6,431	11
Malayali (48.4%)	Salem, Namakkal, Tiruvannamalai	3,57,980	1
Malayekandi	Dharmapuri, Salem, Vellore	210	30
Mannan	Salem, Kancheepuram, Chennai	211	29
Mudugar, Muduvan	Coimbatore, Tiruppur, Chennai	1,250	22
Muthuvan	Tiruppur, Theni, Dindigul	390	26
Palleyan	Dindigul, Theni, Chennai	231	28
Palliyan	Dindigul, Theni, Pudukottai	2,252	18
Palliyar	Dindigul, Theni, Viruthunagar	5,288	14
Paniyan	Nilgiris (9824), Theni, Tiruchirappalli	10,134	7
Sholaga	Erode, Tirunelveli, Nilgiris	5,965	13
Toda	Nilgiris (1509), Salem, Kancheepuram	2,002	20
Uraly	Erode (12542)	12,986	6

**Source:** Computed from Census India, 2011

Tribal group wise dominating districts in Tamilnadu is explained in **table – 3**. There are 36 types of inner caste are available in the Tamilnadu Scheduled Tribe People. Among them, the Malayali and the Irular caste population are the largest in Tamil Nadu (74%). Among them, the Malayali tribal population (48.4%) resides in Salem, Namakkal and Tiruvannamalai districts and Irular caste tribal population resides in Tiruvallur, Kancheepuram and Tiruvannamalai Districts. The total Kurumbas caste (6821) tribal people belongs to the Nilgiris district only and the Uraly caste tribe people belongs to the Erode district only (12542). There are only seven tribal people belonging to Kochuvelan community in Tamil Nadu. Scheduled Tribes are generally they live more in the highlands. But in the case of Tamil Nadu, this claim is very wrong. This is because there are very few tribal people living in the highlands. Most of the tribal people live in plain area like Tiruvannamalai, Kanchipuram and Tiruvallur districts in Tamil Nadu.

**The table-4** examines the District wise Occupational status Scheduled Tribes in Tamilnadu. Before examining the employment situation of the tribes, certain internationally accepted definitions of employment and unemployment has been listed. ‘Work’ is defined as participation in any economically productive activity. According to this definition, the entire population has been classified into three main categories - Main workers, Marginal workers and Non - workers. Main workers are those who work for the major part of the year preceding the date of enumeration i.e. those who were engaged in any economically productive activity for 183 days (or six months) or more during the year. Marginal workers work any time in the year preceding the enumeration but do not work for a major part of the year, i.e. those who worked for less than 183 days (or six months). Non-workers are those who have not worked any time at all in the year preceding the date of enumeration (*Census, 2011*).



The average worker per tribal household in Tamil Nadu has an account of 2.2. Villuppuram district have the highest employment rate (2.5) and Ramanathapuram district (1.5) have the lowest employment rate among the tribal households. Out of total districts, seven districts mean workers per household was more than the state average. Census of India defines the Work Participation Rate (WPR), as the percentage of total workers (main and marginal) to the total population. The work participation rate in Tamilnadu is account for 54.52 per cent. Out of total district, the work participation rate is so high in Namakkal district (62.3%) and very low in Ramanathapuram district (31.4%). In this table Main workers are calculated from the total tribal population in Tamilnadu. By their main workers, Tamilnadu accounts for 44.60 per cent and one-third of districts in

Tamilnadu had more than state average. Theni, Tiruppur, Krishnagiri and Villuppuram districts percentage of main workers in tribal category were closely related to their state average.

By their marginal workers wise concern, nearly one tenth of tribal population only engaged in marginal work category in Tamilnadu (9.92%) and two-third of districts in Tamilnadu had less than state average percentage. The marginal workers are very high in Ariyalur district (17.45) and very low in Tiruchirappalli district (2.42%) among tribal category. The two districts were extreme for their percentage of tribal marginal workers but their location wise concerned both the districts were very nearby districts. 45.48 per cent of tribal population is not engaged in any work in Tamilnadu

and two-third of districts in Tamilnadu was more than state average by their non-workers tribal category. It means majority of the districts unemployment rate was so high than the Tamilnadu state average. In overall the table clearly explains the just more than 50 per cent of the Scheduled

population only engaged any of the work in Tamilnadu state and their district wise also. So Government should give some more reservation to the ST category in all types government jobs.

**Table 4:** District wise Occupational Status of Scheduled Tribes in Tamil Nadu

Name	Mean Workers per Household	WPR	Main Workers	Marginal Workers	Non Workers
<b>TAMIL NADU</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>54.52</b>	<b>44.60</b>	<b>9.92</b>	<b>45.48</b>
Ariyalur	2.2	53.11	35.66	17.45	46.89
Chennai	1.7	41.88	34.48	7.40	58.12
Coimbatore	2.1	58.92	50.90	8.02	41.08
Cuddalore	2.0	48.71	33.93	14.78	51.29
Dharmapuri	2.2	55.01	48.84	6.17	44.99
Dindigul	2.2	53.98	48.88	5.10	46.02
Erode	2.3	61.12	46.67	14.45	38.88
Kancheepuram	1.9	46.76	32.36	14.40	53.24
Kanniyakumari	1.9	48.35	32.56	15.79	51.65
Karur	1.5	42.09	38.61	3.48	57.91
Krishnagiri	2.3	51.92	43.58	8.34	48.08
Madurai	1.9	45.87	39.16	6.71	54.13
Nagapattinam	1.8	41.19	30.01	11.18	58.81
Namakkal	2.3	62.30	57.51	4.79	37.70
Perambalur	2.3	56.19	49.54	6.66	43.81
Pudukkottai	1.8	42.32	34.76	7.56	57.68
Ramanathapuram	1.4	31.49	26.70	4.80	68.51
Salem	2.3	60.23	56.26	3.97	39.77
Sivaganga	2.0	43.42	33.67	9.75	56.58
Thanjavur	1.6	38.28	32.77	5.50	61.72
The Nilgiris	2.1	53.29	45.04	8.25	46.71
Theni	1.9	50.08	44.52	5.56	49.92
Thiruvallur	1.9	50.08	35.79	14.29	49.92
Thiruvarur	1.6	39.22	33.78	5.44	60.78
Thoothukkudi	1.6	38.83	35.65	3.18	61.17
Tiruchirappalli	2.2	52.60	50.19	2.42	47.40
Tirunelveli	1.8	44.07	33.81	10.26	55.93
Tiruppur	2.0	50.93	43.68	7.26	49.07
Tiruvannamalai	2.4	56.79	42.40	14.39	43.21
Vellore	2.2	50.25	35.13	15.12	49.75
Viluppuram	2.5	56.68	43.35	13.33	43.32
Virudhunagar	1.8	46.77	41.50	5.27	53.23

**Source:** Computed from Census India, 2011

Occupational classification of scheduled tribes in Tamilnadu is explained in **table-5**. Generally tribal workers are classified in to cultivator, agricultural labour, household industry and other works category in every occupational category. Among the main workers, majority of tribal engaged in the agricultural labor followed by cultivator, other work and household industry and in both the gender also. Among the marginal workers category, nearly two-third of the tribes engaged in agricultural labor (60.30%) followed by other work category (27.42%). By their duration of works, marginal workers were classified 3-6 months' work and 0-3 months' works. More than three-fourth of the marginal workers' duration of work is 3-6 months. Among

the 3-6 months' work, most of them engaged in agricultural work (61.49%) and least of them only engaged in cultivator category (3.38%). Among the 0-3 months' works category, more or less equal number of tribes were engaged in cultivator and household industry category but in the gender wise more males (6.64) were engaged in cultivator and more females (6.94) were engaged in household industry category.

In overall the table clearly depicts the majority of the male tribes engaged in main workers category and majority of the females tribes were engaged in marginal workers category including 3-6 months works and 0-3 months' work.



**Table 5:** Occupational Classification of Scheduled Tribes in Tamilnadu (%)

Occupational Classification	Persons	Male	Female
<b>Main Workers</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(3,54,441)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(2,01,538)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(1,52,903)</b>
Cultivator	29.93	29.72	30.21
Agricultural Labour	41.11	36.68	46.96
Household Industry	1.49	1.19	1.88
Other Work	27.46	32.41	20.95
<b>Marginal Workers</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(78,858)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(38,079)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(40,779)</b>
Cultivator	8.58	9.33	7.88
Agricultural Labour	60.30	56.04	64.27
Household Industry	3.70	2.47	4.85
Other Work	27.42	32.16	22.99
<b>3-6 Months Work</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(66,737)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(32,626)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(34,111)</b>
Cultivator	9.09	9.77	8.43
Agricultural Labour	61.49	57.35	65.45
Household Industry	3.38	2.28	4.44
Other Work	26.04	30.60	21.68
<b>0-3 Months Work</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(12,121)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(5,453)</b>	<b>100</b> <b>(6,668)</b>
Cultivator	5.77	6.64	5.05
Agricultural Labour	53.76	48.23	58.28
Household Industry	5.46	3.65	6.94
Other Work	35.01	41.48	29.72

Source: Computed from Census India, 2011

## Conclusion

The rate of growth of the tribal population is very high than the growth rate of the total population. When we compared to the 2001 census, the present rural tribal population has declined by 1.53 percent but the urban indigenous population has increased at the same rate. The Nilgiris district is the most tribal population district in Tamil Nadu. The percentage of tribal population of nine districts in Tamilnadu is less than one percentage. It is very low compared to Tamil Nadu average. By their literacy rate wise concern, Tamilnadu is tried to reach half way only.

Among the total tribes, the Malayali and the Irulartype of tribes are the largest in Tamil Nadu (74%). Among them, the Malayali tribal population is high in Salem district and Irular caste tribal population is high in Tiruvallur District. The total Kurumbas caste (6821) tribal people belongs to the Nilgiris district only. The average worker per tribal household in Tamil Nadu has an account of 2.2 per cent. Villupuram district have the highest employment rate and Ramanathapuram district have the lowest employment rate. The work participation rate in Tamilnadu is account for 54.52 per cent. The work participation rate is so high in Namakkal district and very low in Ramanathapuram district. By their main workers, Tamilnadu accounts for 44.60 per cent and one-third of districts in Tamilnadu had more than state average. By their marginal workers wise concern, nearly one tenth of tribal population engaged in marginal work category in Tamilnadu and two-third of districts in Tamilnadu had less than state average percentage. Nearly half of the tribal population is not engaged in any type of work in Tamilnadu. So Government should give some more reservation to the ST category in all types government jobs. Among the main workers and

marginal workers category, majority of tribal engaged in the agricultural labor only and also below poverty line.

The result of the study shows that the educational, employment and economic conditions of the tribal people of Tamil Nadu are very poor in the present situation. Therefore, the state of Tamil Nadu needs to pay special attention to the problems of the tribal people and improve their education, employment and economic status. Already, Aboriginal people have been given special reservations in education and employment. This is very low compared to the growing tribal population. Therefore, it is the duty of the state to secure social and economic justice for them.

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