

Chapter 6.1

Tribal situation in India : Biogenetic variability, linguistic and socioeconomic characteristics of tribal populations and their distribution.

Concept and Definition of Tribe

Different schools of anthropology, sociology and administrators have attempted to provide definition of tribe. However most of them are not on the same ground to explain concept and definition of tribe.

⇒ Some definitions of Tribe

① Imperial Gazetteer of India : Tribe is a group of families bearing common name, speaking common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous, though originally it might have been so.

② Ralph Linton : In its simplest form tribe is a group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity derived from numerous similarities in culture, frequent contact and a certain community of interest.

- ③ André Beteille : people having their own dialect that separate them from non-tribe, practice and follow their own religion and belief which are not common in Hinduism.
- ④ D. N. Majumdar : Tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation endogamous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, united in language or dialect recognising social distance with other tribes or castes, without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration.
- ⑤ W. H. R. Rivers : simple type of social group, with common dialect work together at time of war, have single government.
- ⑥ Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay : Tribe as a social group usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization.

⑦ National Tribal Policy (Draft) : Draft policy

Considered differences in Tribe and scheduled Tribes as policy concern is with S.T. and PVTG.

⇒ All these definitions are not enough to define all the tribal groups. Hence tribal should be understood through its characteristics :

- ↳ kinship based society
- ↳ Common territory
- ↳ Common language and dialect
- ↳ Joint ownership of resources
- ↳ Economic and technological backwardness.
- ↳ Primitive Agricultures
- ↳ customary laws
- ↳ Religious belief in supernaturals, Animism totemism
- ↳ mostly endogamous .
- ↳ Least Functional specialization.

Hence , These characteristics can be helpful while defining and identifying community or group of people as tribe.

- ↳ According to V.Xaxa considering Complexity of tribe definition , Tribe seen as stage and type of society and thus constitute simple, illiterate (relatively) and backward society .

Concept of Indigenous people and Indian Tribe

Considering diversity of indigenous people, official definition of Indigenous has not been adopted by any UN body.

Taking practical approach to issue and considering diversity, International Labour Organisation [ILO] have provided objective and subjective criteria for identifying people as indigenous people.

(i) Subjective Criteria :

↳ Self identification as belonging to an indigenous people.

(ii) Objective Criteria :

↳ Descent from populations, who inhabited the country or geographical region at the time of conquest, colonisation or establishment of present state boundaries.

↳ They retain some or all their own social economic, cultural and political institutions, irrespective of their legal status.

↳ They are from non dominant group of society

↳ Strong link with territories and surrounding natural resources.

- ↳ According to many documents of UN, also according to UN declaration of Rights of Indigenous people, fundamental criteria for Indigenous people identification is self-identification.
- ↳ This has become issue while passing UN Declaration on Rights of Indigenous people.
- ↳ This declaration is a nonlegal instrument which entitles various rights to Indigenous people.
 - Welfare and social policy measures
 - Recognising their rights - cultural, traditional knowledge
 - Land rights
 - Distinct political and electoral status.

Question of Indian Tribes as Indigenous people:

- ↳ International Labour Organisation defines criteria for tribal to differentiate from Indigenous peoples.
- ↳ Subjective Criteria : self identification
- ↳ Objective Criteria : Their social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other section of national community. their status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions.

Many criterias are similar to that of Indigenous people. Also Indian tribes are victim of Colonization too.

- ↳ Hence, ILO considers different criteria for tribes and indigenous peoples.
 - ↳ The question is who were original settlers of India? In India tribal people also known by Adivasis, Janjatis, hill tribes, Hill people, etc.
 - ↳ In India during Conference on Indigenous people their was demand for considering tribes as Indigenous people of Country on Basis of:
 - (i) As tribes were worst victim of British Colonization.
 - (ii) They have very little evidences for their land rights, birth certificates, etc. to prove their indigenous characteristics. what they have is oral myths, stones, animals, etc.
- According to Andre Beille, where historical facts are not sufficient, idea of Indigenous provides abundant scope for proliferation or relation of tribes with their surrounding.

There has been debate on whether Indian tribal population should be considered as Indigenous

people or not. The proponent demanded this Indigenous status as this will help to address certain problems of tribal population like land right, human rights, discrimination at all level in society. Also some benefits like autonomy and developmental programme can be more provided with better understanding of tribal culture.

According to V. Xaxa the demand for indigenous status is justified as tribal in India have lost power on natural resources and they are facing discrimination at all level.

According to international standard all the people living in territory before advent of Colonisation can be indigenous people. But in India such classification will not be possible as India is different than Australia, New Zealand or USA. But Tribal population (S.T.) shows many characteristics of indigenous definition along with one criteria of living pre-colonization. Hence they can claim status of Indigenous people. Andre Beteille questions the categorisation as indigenous people because there is difficulty to distinction between tribal and non-tribal population as many characteristic overlaps.

Roy Burman criticised the position^{of} government on ILO(107) 1957 Convention and he further proposed new definition of Indigenous people.

Hence, Indian tribes shows many characteristics and criteria of indigenous people but have not given status officially. In India Constitution, laws and developmental programme have provided various provision to secure the interest of tribal population. It is considered that mere definition and inclusion is not sufficient to address tribal problems and there is more ^{effort} needed for focus on solving tribal problems rather than defining tribal group as Indigenous population.

[World Bank also considers that indigenous people means Scheduled tribes in India (Roy Burman 1994), so both Concept ST & indigenous people have been used interchangeably in India].

Socio-cultural Characteristics of Indian Tribes

↳ Socio-cultural understanding is important to solve the tribal problems.

① Form of Society :

- Matriarchal society : Garo, Khasi, etc.
- Patriarchal society : Santhal, Bhil, Birhor, Mundia.

② Form of Marriage :

- Monogamy : Asur, Andamanese, Santhal, etc.
- Polygamy : Dafla, Mishmi, Toda, Khasa, etc.
- Preferential and Prohibited marriage
 - Cousin marriage - e.g. Gond (Dudh Lotawa)
 - Levirate and Sororate
- Ways of Acquiring mates :
 - ↳ By Capture
 - ↳ By Service
 - ↳ By Probation.....etc. [Paper I Marriage chapter]

③ Kinship based society : Descent, lineage,....

- ↳ paternal / maternal
- ↳ Avunculate

④ Economic organisation : with example

- ↳ Hunting and food gathering
- ↳ Shifting cultivation
- ↳ Pastoralist
- ↳ Agriculture
- ↳ Artisan
- ↳ Industrial worker
- ↳ Property ownership
- ↳ Division of labour.

⑤ Political organisation :

- ↳ Own political system (e.g. Munda Raj)
- ↳ Village Panchayat, village Council
- ↳ Central organisation (Parba Panchayat orao) Adivasi Mahasabha
- ↳ Tribal chief are first among all/equal
- ↳ Hereditary and non hereditary, Elders, etc.
- ↳ Law and justice in tribal society.

⑥ Religion of tribal population [India] :

Studied by Hutton, Elwin, Ghosey, Bose studied.

- ↳ Mixture of various religion observed :

- Animism (Koswas)
- Bongaism (Ho, Oraon, Munda)
- Totemism (Santhal), Gonds
- Naturism

- ↳ functionaries :
 - shaman, priest
 - witchcraft, sorcerer
 - medicine man

- ↳ Impact of : Hinduism, Christianity & other religion
- ↳ Superstition, Head hunting practices, sacrifice, etc.

⑦ Tribal social units :

- Family : Nuclear, Extended
- Lineage : ↳ e.g. Nagas ↳ e.g. Garo, Khasi
- Clan : Santhal
- phratry :
- moiety :

Biogenetic Diversity of Indian Tribes

Indian subcontinent is renowned for cultural, linguistic and genetic diversity of its inhabitants. This diversity has arises, in part due to human migration, social customs and the genetic drift.

There are many new studies going on to understand genetic diversities among Indian tribal which includes study of Mt-DNA, Y-chromosome. However, no clearcut classification is possible as there is huge intermixing of races occurs over the ages.

Many scholars gave classification of Indian tribes based on different anthropometric observations:

(A) B.S. Guha classification of tribes :

① Negrito group : Kadar, Irula, Paniyars, Andamanis

Features : • wide nose with narrow root
• Broad nose tip
• small head, short stature
• dark complexion, wooly hairs.

② Proto-Australoid group : Baiga, Maler, Chenchu etc.

Features : • wavy hair, platyrhine nose
• Dolichocephalic head
• short stature, Dark-Brown skin.

③ Mongoloid Group:

(a) PaleoMongoloid

↳ Long headed : Senama Naga of Assam

↳ Broad headed : Lepchas.

(b) Tibeto - Mongoloid

↳ Tibetans, Sikkim

Features: Dark to light brown skin, flat face, epicanthic folds, medium stature, straight hairs, etc.

④ Risley divided tribal population into 2 groups:

(1) Dravidian : All tribes of South India, Chota-Nagpur

(2) Mongoloid : All tribes of Himalayan region and North Eastern states.

⑤ S.S. Sarkar classified tribes into 4 groups:

① Australoid : Kadar, Urali, Kanniker [PseudoDravidian]

② Mundari speaking : Jharkhand, Orissa, Chhattisgarh

③ Far Eastern tribes : Tribes of Tuticorin Tinnelvelly

④ Mongolian : North Eastern Indian tribes, Hamalyan.

⇒ There is variation among different racial groups which shows characteristics and response differently

- e.g. • ABO Blood group distribution • Hb among tribals
 • Rh⁺ Factor distribution • Mt-DNA distribution
 • Y-chromosome distribution.

Tribal Languages

G. A. Grierson's classification shows diversity of languages in India. According to Grierson, the tribal languages in India belongs to Mundari, Dravidian and Tibeto-chinese families.

⇒ These languages includes Gondi, Kui (Khonds), Kurukh (Korku), Oraon, Toda, Ho, Garo, Lushai, Manipuri, Khasi, Nicobarese, etc.

L.P. Vidyaarthi and Rai : 4 classes of Tribal languages

(A) Austro- Asiatic (Nishad)

(a) Mon Khmer Branch : Khasi, Nicobari.

(b) Munda Branch : Santhal, Ho, Gondi, Kharia.

(B) Tibeto - Chinese family (Kirata)

(a) Siamese - Chinese subfamily : Tai group - Khampti

(b) Tibeto - Burman subfamily :

① Tibeto - Himalayan : Bhotia, etc

② Western - Himalayan : Chamba, Lahauli

③ Himalayan group : Lepcha, Toto, etc.

④ Arunachal group : Miri, Dafia, Mishmi.

⑤ Assam - Burmese Branch :

- Bodo group

- Naga group

- Kachin group : Singpho

- Kuki group : Lushai, Manipuri

⑥ Dravidian family :

- South Indian tribes
- Few pockets of Chotanagpur
- e.g. Korwa, Yarava, Badaga, Toda
Oraon, Khondi, Maler.

⑦ Indo-European family :

- Bhil, other western and north Indian tribes.

Tribal Languages Facing Extinction

↳ Importance of Tribal Languages.

↳ Under threat due to :-

- Cultural invasion from other mainstream languages
- Impact of Hinduism and Christianity.
- Migration of tribals to Urban Centre migration due to displacement e.g. Dimasa language in Assam facing threat.
- Lack of proper documentation and government effort to preserve tribal languages [school education system]

↳ 42 tribal languages are heading towards extinction.

↳ 220 Languages have died in last 50 years, 197 categories as endangered.

↳ Bhasha Research and publication Centre an NGO studied various languages under people's linguistic survey - 2013.

↳ Endangered languages are :

- Bodo, Meitei, sidi, Dimasa (Assam), Parji(Odisha)
Majhi (Sikkim), toto (West Bengal)

↳ Effort Needed : Documentation, school education system, NGO participation, Radio, TKDL, etc.

↳ Schemes :

- Protection and preservation of Endangered languages of India by Central Institute of Indian language, Mysore.
- Odisha government published bilingual dictionary of various tribal language.

Tribal Situation In India.

India ranked second after Africa in tribal diversity. 8.6 % of total population of India represented by scheduled tribes.

Population Distribution

↳ Nearly Half of tribal population in central Indian state : Jharkhand, MP, Orissa, Chhattisgarh

↳ 12 states and UTs have more than 10 Lakh population.

- ↳ Biggest concentration in Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand state. Manipur have greatest percentage of tribal population.
- ↳ Bhil, Mina, Gond, Santhal, Oraon are the dominant tribal groups in India.

⇒ Geographical Location : Distributed in 5 areas

(i) Northern Himalayan : Apatani, Mishmi, Bhotia, Tharus, etc.

(ii) Middle Indian : Juang, Khond, Ho, Oraon, Santhal, etc

(iii) Western Indian : Bhil, Mina, Siddi, Wardhi, etc

(iv) South Indian : Chenchu, Irula, Kadar, Toda, etc

(v) Island region : Andaman & Nicobar.

According to department of tribal development, the number of tribal communities in India are 613
 (According to people of India project, 1993 ⇒ 636)

Languages :

- Dravidian
- Austro- Asiatic
- Tibeto Chinese
- Indo European

Racial Groups

- Mongoloid
- Negrito
- ProtoAustraloid.

Tribe Name : with Census and History.

Tribe come from latin word *Tribus* (i.e. inhabited place) which was used to denote 3 division amongst early Romans. The word Tribe implies aggregate

of stock, which includes person and his kindred under the one chief of these kindred families.

- ↳ British administration started studying tribes of India through Asiatic Society of Bengal 1874.
- ↳ Initially Caste-Tribe were used synonymously
- ↳ Britshers treated tribals differently compare to other population and separate administration was setup for them e.g. scheduled area, excluded / partially excluded area.
- ↳ Criteria to categories group of community as tribe were often implicit and blurred.

Evolution of tribal Name :

- ↳ Census Survey 1891 — forest Tribe, people having tribal form of religion.
- ↳ Census 1901 — group with practiced Animism
- ↳ Census 1921 — Hill and forest tribe
- ↳ Census 1931 — Primitive tribe
 - ↗ Simmon Commission
 - ↗ Constitution-S.T.
- ↳ Census 1941 — Tribes.
- ↳ Census 1950 — scheduled Tribes.

Hence it is also said that tribes as "Colonial construct."

Problems facing

- ↳ Illiteracy, land alienation, poverty, malnutrition, Indebtedness, unemployment, loss of culture, etc'

Government Efforts

- ↳ Constitutional measures — 5th, 6th Schedule
- ↳ legal measures — FRA 2006, SC/ST Atrocities Act.

Youth Dormitories

Youth dormitories are present in pre-literate societies across the world. most detail description of such dormitories is given by Malinowski in his Trobriand Islander studies - called 'Bukumatula'?

⇒ Origin of Dormitories :- Different views

- According to Hodson these are 1st stage in development of home.
- Some anthropologist considered it as instrument to save children from witnessing parent intercourse, to prevent incest, It acts as training ground.

↳ These are the youth organisation present in Indian tribal societies.

⇒ Structure :

- Member age group 5-25 year (Compulsory in many tribal societies)
- Bisexual and some are monosexual dormitories
- Individual is member until his marriage.
- Housed in distinct, special building, little away from village settlement

⇒ Functions :

- Places where gossip, youth assembly, dance, sings, plays together.

- Graded by age as senior and juniors, seniors impart tribal tradition, sex education, assistance to junior.
- Training of housebuilding, harvesting, culture, etc.

⇒ S.C. Roy considered following functions:

- (i) Economic organisation for food quest]
 - (ii) Training youth
 - (iii) Magico-religious ceremonies
- study
of
Orang

⇒ Function of socialisation: as dormitories acts as secondary socialisation institution.

⇒ Indian Tribal Dormitories:

① 'Grotul' of Muria and Gond of MP studied by Verrier Elwin

- ↳ Senior girls often train younger boys in sexual act.
- ↳ Stress on magico-religious aspect.

② 'Gitiora' of Ho, Munda tribes.

③ 'Dhumkuria' of Orang tribes

④ Koyank Naga of tribe Ban - for boys
 40 - for girls

Decline of Youth Dormitories:

- Due to cultural contact of outsider
- formal education, modernisation.
- Impact of Hinduism, Christian missionaries.

Hence, there are only 'symbolic structures' of tribal dormitories present in many tribal societies.

