

- A universally acceptable or applicable definition is lacking.
- The British Government used the word tribe, for the sake of classification, along with prefixes like jungle and hill, aboriginal, indigenous to describe, the people who seemed to have little contact with the main culture.
- The word tribe has been used by European historians to refer to distinct groups like the Gauls and Anglo-Saxons and autonomous political groups such as Lichchavi, Mulla, Khasa, etc. in ancient India.
- British social anthropologists like Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard, Fortes and Nadel have used the word tribe to refer to autonomous political unit which lives in its own territory and possesses its own distinctive way of life.
- Efforts have been made to look for some generalisation and common denominators if not a proper definition.
- The Commissioner for, Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes in his report for the year 1952 has listed such common features.
- These are that the tribes:
 - live away from the civilised world in the inaccessible parts lying in the forest hills,
 - they belong to either one of the three stocks—Negrito, Australoid or Mongoloids,
 - They speak the same tribal dialect,
 - they profess 'primitive' religion known as 'Animism' in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element,
 - they follow 'primitive' occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest products; and
 - they are largely meat eaters.
 - their love for food and drink
- According to A.R. Desai 25 million people described as tribal only 5 millions possess these features.
- D.N. Majumdar states that, except for the tribes of Eastern India, everywhere else ethnic strains have crisscrossed in the sub-continent.
- In their social life kinship is the principal unit of organisation.
- Kinships are often the units for land ownership, economic production & consumption.
- In spite of the differences some common features do exist.
- In the subsistence economy very few tribal groups are still hunters and food gatherer but many of them practise shifting agriculture or cultivation & still others are pastoral nomads.
- Tribes do not usually take to trading or financial transactions. Thus, the society is more or less

homogeneous with little sense of hierarchy and subordination.

- Politically, tribal societies are relatively simple and egalitarian.
- Lineage, clan and kinship tend to overlap with their political organisations.
- Tribal religion tends to be less systematised, less specialised and elaborated
- F.G. Bailey thus suggests that the definition of tribe should be seen in a continuum: the tribe at one end and caste at the other end.

THE SCHEDULED TRIBES

- When the British consolidated their position in India, their expansionist operations necessitated the opening up of the entire country through an effective communication system.
- The British consolidated the money economy, acquired lands and introduced cash-cropping, land tenure, a new legal system, administration etc.
- All these measures opened the tribal land to outside influences.
- Though all these changes brought relief to the tribes these systems gradually became exploitative.
- Along with these the Christian missionaries in India exposed these communities to much quicker tempo of modern life by providing them formal, education, making them conscious about health and so forth.
- The social, cultural and economic exploitations, of the tribals prompted them to go on wars and agitations.
- With increasing feeling of deprivation their agitations, struggles & movements also increased.
- In the wake of tribal upheavals the British thought of protecting the tribes by having regulated areas for which normal rules were not applicable.
- Along with the distinct & special arrangements made for areas populated by tribals, there also emerged the concept of tribe as a social category to differentiate them from the Hindus, Muslims and other distinct religious groups.
- The Government of India Act 1933 incorporated some provisions and the policy of reservation for the tribes notified in the Schedule.
- A list of tribes was incorporated in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution.
- In 1971, the list contained names of 527 tribes.
- The reservation policy or the policy of protecting discrimination for the notified or Scheduled Tribes has been made a constitutional obligation

CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARDS

- Under Article 15(4) special provisions are made for educational advancement of the Scheduled Tribes.

- These provisions are like reservation of seats and relaxation in marks in admission to educational institutions, scholarships, etc.
- Under Article 46 the State is enjoined upon to promote with special care to education and economic interests of SC and ST and protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
- Articles 330 and 332 seats are reserved for SC and ST in Lok Sabha State Vidhan Sabhas respectively.
- Under Article 339(1) the President may at anytime appoint a Commission to report on the administration of the Scheduled Area and the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes in the State.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

GEOGRAPHICAL ZONES

- Scheduled Tribes (ST) constitute approximately 8.6% of population of India numbering around 10.4 crores.
- There are over 730 Scheduled Tribes notified under Article 342 of the Constitution of India.
- The tribal population can be demarcated in the following three geographical zones:
 - i. North-North-Eastern Zone : It includes the tribal areas of Ladakh (Jammu & Kashmir), Himachal Pradesh, Northern Uttar Pradesh, Sikkim and the North East comprising seven states (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura).
 - ii. Central Zone: It includes West Bengal, Orissa, Bihar, Southern Uttar Pradesh, Southern Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra
- Southern Zone: It includes Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and the two Union Territories of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep
- The Central zone has the largest tribal population and the tribal communities residing therein are better known than those in the other zones.
- Madhya Pradesh has the largest Tribal population. It has more than 1.6 crore Schedule Tribe population who is 21% of the state population according to the 2011 census.
- The largest population in Madhya Pradesh is that of the Bhil tribe. The second highest tribal population is that of Odisha.

RACIAL AFFINITIES

- On the basis of racial affinities the Indian people are classified into various groups.
- The ancestry of the present tribal population is traced chiefly to the following three races:
- The Negrito : – This shorter version of the Negro is found in the Andaman islands. There are four Scheduled Tribes in this area, viz., the Andamanese (now settled in Strait Island, the Onge in Little Andaman Island, the Jarawa on the western coast

of Middle and South Andaman Islands and the Sentinelese in the two Sentinel Islands.

- The Proto-Australoid : The tribes of the Middle and the Southern zones are generally assigned to this race and they form the bulk of the tribal population in India
- The Mongoloid : The tribes of the North and North-Eastern zones generally belong to this race which is divided into two subtypes, viz., Paleo- Mongoloids (long-headed & broad-headed) & Tibeto Mongoloids.
- Besides these three main racial groups, some tribal communities trace their ancestry-to the Palaeo-Mediterranean stock also.

LINGUISTIC AFFINITIES

- On the basis of linguistic affinities, the Indian people are classified into four speech families, viz., the Indo-European (Aryan), the Dravidian, The Austric (Kol or Munda) and Tibeto-Chinese.
- The Scheduled Tribes speak about 105 languages and 225 subsidiary languages, or dialects.
- The linguistic classification of the Indian tribal population is as follows:
- Sino-Tibetan : In the North and North-Eastern zones most of the tribal speak some form or the other of Sino-Tibetan and Tibeto-Burman. In certain north eastern areas there is an admixture of the Mon-Khmer (Austric) speech, e.g., among the Khasi. In Nagaland, sixteen languages apart from numerous dialects are spoken.
- Kol or Munda : In the Central zone the Austric family of languages is dominant. The Munda languages lack the verb and gender differentiation. The only classificatory device is the differentiation between animate and inanimate. Some of the important Munda languages are Santhali, Mundari, Ho, Kharia, Korwa, Korku and Gadaba.
- Dravidian :- The tribal people of the Southern zone speak some form or the other of the Dravidian languages, viz., Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Tulu. The Kedar, one of the oldest inhabitants of India, speak a Malayalam dialect. There has been Dravidianisation of significant South Indian tribes like the Chenchu and the Yenadi.
- Some of the important Dravidian tribes are Gond, Oraon, Maler, Kandh, Saora, Parja, Koya, Kolam, Paniyan, Irula, Malser and Malaryan.
- Thus, the geographical zones described earlier correspond roughly to the three linguistic zones.
- But there-is no correlation between race and language.
- People belonging to one race may speak different languages.
- Likewise, people speaking one language, or languages of one speech-family, may belong to different races.
- The Aryan languages are spoken by some tribal communities as a result of cultural contact.

- In the Middle zone most of the tribes have become bilingual, speaking their own dialect as also some form of Hindi, Oriya or Bangali as spoken by the neighbouring rural population.
- The Baigas have completely lost their original language and they speak Chhattisgarhi, though culturally they continue to maintain certain distinctive traits of their tribes.

TRIBAL ECONOMY

- They are engaged in hunting and food gathering.
- They are also pastoral people and nomads, shifting cultivators, settled agriculturists, artisans and plantation, mining and industrial labourers.
- In Koraput District of Orissa we find the spectacle of co-existence of primitive groups like Bondas and Didavaïs.
- Also, there are tribals from two different communities who work in the HAL factory at Sunabad manufacturing supersonic MIG engines.
- Thus, there is wide divergence in the economic status of the tribes from region to region and within a region.

HUNTING & FOOD GATHERING TRIBES

- These tribes depend for their livelihood on gathering food (edible roots, tubers, fruits, nuts, flowers, leaves, honey) from the forest, hunting and fishing.
- The important tribes in this category include: Jarawa, Onge, Chenchu, Birhor, Kadar, Maria, Kuki, Bonda, JuAng, Palliyan, Raji among others.
- They use poor indigenous tools like digging sticks, iron jungle knives, earthen, wooden or bamboo pots and vessels, bamboo baskets and sticks for food gathering.
- For hunting purposes they possess different types of traps like rope nets used by Birhors to catch monkeys and hares
- Pit traps are used to catch big animals like wild boar.
- Three types of weapons are used: hand missiles like bhala, barchhi, labeda (thick wooden ends), Gulel and hand operated implements like axe and knife.
- Dogs are used by Kadars and Chenchus for hunting.
- For fishing they have a variety of traps made of rope, yarn and bamboo.
- Harpoons, bhalas and sticks are also used.
- Fishing by hand is also common.

PASTORAL & CATTLE HERDING TRIBES

- The classic pastoral tribes include Todas of the Nilgiris in Tamil Nadu, Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir and Gaddis and Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh.
- In middle India Kisans or Nagesiag of Bihar and Madhya Pradesh are considered to be pastoral to a certain extent.
- Bharwad or Maldhari and Raisipotra of Gujarat and Rabaris of Gujarat and Rajasthan are the cattle

herders of western India. Gollas, Kurubas and Labadas are the herders in south India.

- Bhotias of the U.P. hills depend on cattle rearing.
- Todas of the Nilgiris have attracted worldwide attention on account of their economy and religion being centred around the buffalo and their practice of polyandry.
- Pastoralists are selling items like milk and its products, wool, hair and others rear livestock and earn their livelihood by selling animals.
- They also consume milk and milk products themselves.
- The livestock provides them food usually not so much in meat as in milk, dung for fuel, hides for leather and utensils and wool or hides for clothing.

CULTIVATORS

- Agriculture among the tribes is of simple and poor nature.
- They do cultivation at subsistence level and are unable to meet their minimum daily needs.
- In the low-lying land, raising paddy crops is easy as artificial irrigation is not needed.
- In the uplands only coarser varieties of rice as well as pulses, millets and other products of minor value are grown.
- Their agricultural implements are indigenous and made by local ironsmiths.
- A few tribes use cow dung manure as well.
- An important characteristic of tribal agriculture is cooperation seen at the time of transplanting of paddy and on other occasions.
- Help is rendered among the relatives or among the villagers or among the people of an area reciprocal basis.
- Some prominent agriculturist tribes are Khasis and Jaintias of Meghalaya; Khasas (Jaunsaris) and Tharus of Uttar Pradesh; Kinnaur, Pangwals and Swanglas of Himachal Pradesh; Bhumijis, Koras, Bhuiyas, Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Hos, Kharwars, Baigas, Gonds, etc., in middle India; Bhils, Meenas, Garasias, Damarias, Koli Mahadevs, Varlis, Thakurs, Korkus, Dublas, etc., in western India; Koyas of Andhra Pradesh; Malayalis of Tamil Nadu
- Besides these plain cultivators, there are the hill cultivators who are engaged in shifting cultivation.
- Hill cultivation is a seasonally regulated sequence of procedure designed to open up and bring under cultivation a patch of forest land.
- After one or two seasons of staple cropping the plot is left fallow for years together with a view to restoring fertility of the soil through forest growth.
- Following this the plot is again cleared and vegetations are burnt and another cycle of cultivation begins
- Hill cultivation goes under a variety of names: Jhum in North-East, Kurwa or Khallu in Santhal Parganas, Bewara in Ranchi and Palamau in Bihar, Podu, Rema, Dahi, Kaman, Bringa, Gudia, Dongarchas in

Orissa, Penda, Dahiya, Biwar, iguharh, Farha, Dippa, Marhan or Erka in Madhya Pradesh, Kandapadi in Andhra Pradesh

- Approximately more than 6 lakh Scheduled Tribe families are engaged in shifting cultivation covering about 10 million hectares of land
- Tribal people inhabiting in the hill forests of all the seven states in the North-East, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh are dependent on hill cultivation for their livelihood.

- These tribes include Garos, Tripuris, Noatias., a few Halams and Riangs, Chakmas, Mags and Nagas with their different nomenclatures in the North-East, Malers or Sauria Paharias of Santhal Parganas, Hill Kharias and a few Korwas, Parhaiyas and Birjias in Bihar, Saoras and Kutia Kondhs in Orissa, Kamars, Baigas and Maria Gonds in Madhya Pradesh, Konda Dhoras and Nooka or Mukha Dhoras and a few Bagatas in Andhra Pradesh and Malaikudis in Karnataka.



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