



IDENTITY OF TRIBALS AND SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

There is a sizeable portion of the Indian population that identifies with a particular tribe on the basis of their ancestral home, the remote location of their communities, the economy of their civilizations, the faiths that they practise, and their centuries-long connections to the indigenous Indian culture. This segment of the Indian population is known as “tribalism” or “Adivasi”. An interest in the native cultures of the peoples they study has always been central to the work of anthropologists, and this has been true throughout the course of the discipline’s development. The reality of the issue is that European colonists, adventurers, explorers, and missionaries were the ones who conducted the first endeavours to study and chronicle the culture of the native Indians. This was done in an effort to better understand and govern the local people, which was the reason why it was done. Even if the pace of tribal population growth has lagged behind that of the overall population expansion, there is no denying that the total number of tribes has been on the rise throughout the course of history. Despite the fact that the pace of population growth within tribal communities has fallen behind that of the overall population expansion, this is still the case. In no way is this anything that can be called into question or debated.

KEY WORDS: Tribes, Population, Society, Identity, Culture.

INTRODUCTION

As a consequence, the concept of “tribe” does not have the same societal weight in modern India. It has grown to represent the political perspective of a sizeable portion of the nation’s people. As with caste and regional consciousness, tribal awareness is rapidly developing into a political weapon, symbolising special treatment and separatist leanings, and in certain circumstances serving as a hindrance to the process of national unity. The tribal as man is unassuming, humble, and has a great deal of compassion for the other villagers, the king’s men, and the people in his town. They flourish in the close-knit social environment of his neighbourhood. He believes that his close connection with the natural world is the source of his laid-back demeanour. They take pleasure in having the independence to roam the adjacent farms, forests, and countryside. He cultivates a deep affinity with the natural environment around him. In the course of new friendships and alliances, as well as during the celebration of traditional holidays, he regularly visits his own family and gets together with his

close friends. Morgan, Tylor, Perry, Rivers, and Lowie are only a few of the early anthropologists who have proposed different ways of thinking about the social unit known as a tribe. These classifications are not comprehensive, and professional anthropologists have not been able to devise a set of criteria that can be relied upon for classifying cultures as tribal or apolitical. Settlements that have formed territorial jurisdictions in distant places, such as the foothills or the forest, are typically referred to by this term. It is widely used to characterise these kinds of communities. In spite of several attempts by anthropologists, there remains no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes a “tribe.” People of various ethnicities, economics, animisms, levels of political independence, and other factors, among others, have all been used as a foundation for territory claims. It seems that there are hundreds of definitions and characteristics of ‘tribe’ floating about in anthropological literature, and these seem to be as different as the field settings that persons who provide the definitions of ‘tribe’ confront while giving them.

CLASSIFICATION OF ‘TRIBES’

To classify these people, the British administration in India came up with the classification of “tribe” (with several qualifying prefixes, such as “hill and jungle,” “aboriginal,” and “indigenous”). This was done only for the sake of categorising and numbering the items. In the past, historians from Europe made use of the term “tribe” to refer to several people groups that lived in Europe. These people groups included the Gauls and the Anglo-Saxons. In ancient India, they also used it to refer to separate people groupings like the Lichchivi, the Mulla, the Yaudheya, and the Khasa. Finally, they used it to represent distinct groups of people in Western Asia, such as the Israelites and the Arabs. Social anthropologists such as Rivers used this word to characterise the people who lived in the region of Melanesia known as Melanesia. This region consisted of a collection of islands that were inhabited by distinct tribes that were constantly at war with one another in order to assert their autonomy from the other societies. Rivers used this word to characterise the people who lived in Melanesia. Importantly, British Social Anthropologists such as Radcliffe-Brown, Evans Pritchard, Fortes, and Nadel have used the term “tribe” to describe to a politically autonomous society that owns its own territory, culture, and language completely independently of its use in India. This is an important usage of the term. This application of the word “tribe” has arisen quite separately from the context in which it is used in India. A unified definition of “tribe” as it relates to Native Americans has been sought for by a few individuals. In the report that was published for the year 1952 by the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, eight of these characteristics were described in further detail. To wit:

- They are Negritos, Australoids, or Mongoloids, and they have retreated from civilization to a remote region of the planet characterised by woods and hills.
- They all have a same tribal language, the belief in and worship of ghosts and spirits (a kind of “primitive soul” known as “Animism”).
- They subsist mostly on animal products, or “carnivores”.
- They use tree bark and leaves as clothes and either live completely nude or in a state of near nudity.
- They are nomads who enjoy drinking and partying.

DEFINING TRIBALS

Let's begin with the classic definition of a tribe, which can be found in the "Dictionary of Anthropology." According to this definition, a "tribe" is a social group that "usually has a definite are, dialect, cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organisation." Let's look at some examples of these characteristics. Incorporating a vast number of smaller organisations, such as families or towns, is something that's definitely doable. There is a possibility that the god who created everything in this universe and the deity who govern this planet are one and the same. The families or small communities forming up a tribe, are tied via economic, social, religious, or blood connections i.e. kingship bondage. Members of a tribe are typically thought of as a group of people that live in a remote section of the jungle, are completely uneducated, do not have access to modern technology, and adhere to the customs that have been passed down from generation to generation. They only marry within their own society, only eat plant-based meals (like roots, shoots, and fruits), and only eat animal-based foods (like roasted animals), and they engage in subsistence hunting and gathering activities.

- The criterion of "having a single government and acting together for such common purposes as warfare," as stated by Dr. Rivers, is also necessary.
- According to Professor Perry, "a common dialect and a common territory" should be used as the criterion for classifying a group as a tribe.
- Prof. S.C. Dube has said, "Partly because of the isolation and partly because of their limited world view, characterized by lack of historical depth and an overall tradition - orientation, they are integrated themes and special cultural focus give them a separate cultural identity and they often possess latent and manifest value attitude, and motivational system which are remarkably different from those of the other people."
- The following is a statement given by the Tata Institute of Social Science in regards to this matter. Without scientifically defined community, a tribe is only a group of households. As a social entity, a tribe can determine for itself whether or not its various parts should have their own identities. Relative economic backwardness can be somewhat elusive.
- Prof. S.C. Sinha has attempted to describe the category "tribe" as fundamentally pre-literate tribes living in relative isolation in hills and woods or on the plains surrounding the forests, who are evidently outside the threshold of "Brahmanic hierarchic civilisation."

Majumdar (1958) proposed a definition of tribe that was founded on universal characteristics that were contained in various definitions. He argued that certain of these characteristics would establish a tribe no matter where you were. "A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamy, no specialization of function, rule by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, unity in language or dialect, recognition of social distance with other tribes, caste, without any social obloquy attaching to them as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, belief and customs illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of ethnic and teeming homogeneity." The term's use in India is also a remnant of British colonial rule. Those people who did not adhere to the Hindu Varna system, who had a dark skin tone, lived in isolated highlands and woods, and were considered to be members of a tribe.

There is no term in any Indian language, including Hindu, which can be translated literally as “tribe.” This one fact alone shows that people who speak Indian languages have never been intellectually distinguished from other people.

It is possible that those official pledges of advantages made to our underprivileged castes and tribes during the years 1947–1950 were made in good faith. The fundamentals were, without a shadow of a doubt, solid. However, the current condition of unrest in our tribal lands can be directly ascribed to the manner in which it has been managed by the government and exploited by entrenched interests, both foreign and Indian. This is the case because of the method in which it has been governed by the government. We have failed to provide our “tribal” brothers with the things that they require, such as an appropriate education, proper medical care, and other necessities. On the other hand, we have conditioned people to rely on handouts, which they have learned to view as a fundamental human right rather than a consequence of their technological and economic backwardness. This has led to a fundamental misunderstanding of the relationship between handouts and economic development.

DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN TRIBES

The most number of native peoples may be found in any country's population in India, which is the case for every other country in the globe as well. Although there are a total of 537 indigenous groups in India, only 258 of those communities have been legally recognized as tribes. The remaining indigenous communities in India number in the hundreds. STs in India are “various in terms of socio-economic and political development” (Sharma, 2007), and they account for 8% of the total population of the country according to the 2001 Census. This demographic group is referred to as Scheduled Tribes. Tribes in India are not a monolithic people since they have different customs and beliefs. It shouldn't come as much of a surprise that the bulk of India's indigenous tribes call the states of Maharashtra and Orissa their home. The different ethnic subgroups that make up India are dispersed around the country in ways that exhibit a great deal of variance in terms of geography. More than 82 percent of the nation's tribes call the western and central states their home, while just 11 percent of the tribes call the southern states their home. There is no denying that the total number of tribes has been on the rise over the course of history, even if the rate of tribal population growth has lagged behind that of the overall population growth.

TRIBE IDENTIFICATION

In addition to this, there is the administrative challenge of identifying tribes for the purpose of scheduling and concurrently granting rights that have been granted to Scheduled tribes under the Constitution. Both of these challenges make it difficult to award advantages that have been guaranteed to Scheduled tribes under the Constitution. The constitution's authors meant well when they provided special protections for members of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Before the nation achieved its independence, individuals of “lower” castes and tribes were more likely to make an attempt to improve their social position and receive acknowledgment (officially from the government during the ten-year censuses). This was the case even though they were considered to be members of “lower” castes and tribes.

ISOLATION OR RELATIVE ISOLATION DUE TO SAME TOPOGRAPHY

People who are part of a given tribe have a propensity to congregate in a particular portion of the world. The people who reside in this area have both a history and a culture that is unique to the region. If the people who live in the tribal community do not have access to a central location, then they will be unable to maintain many of the aspects of their way of life that help to distinguish it from other ways of existence. These traits include the people's language, the practices they observe, and the sense of community that they have.

DIFFERENCES IN ETHNICITY FROM THE GENERAL POPULATION

Guha's system for classifying Indian tribes according to their racial characteristics serves as a template for the following categories:

The Negritos: This group is easily identifiable by the pigmy height, woolly and frizzy hair, enormous noses, and dolichocephalism head shapes that they all share. In addition to that, their hair is fuzzy and unruly. Examples of people who fall under this racial categorization are the Andamanese, the Onge (who also hail from the Andamans), the Kadar, and the Urails, all of whom live in South India.

In the Proto - Australoid family: Their lips are enormous, their noses are large, and their hair is wavy and curly. On their heads, they have dolicho-mesocephalic cranial morphology. Those who speak the Kharia, Bhumij, and Ho languages in the Singhbhum region of Bihar are proto-Australoids. The Gond people of Bastar, the Bhil people of Rajasthan, the Oraon people, the Munda people, and the Santal people of Chotanagpur are all included in this category.

The Mongols - as a people: This group may be differentiated from others by their medium stature, yellowish brown skin tone, and flat face, oblique eye slits with epicanthic folds, and sparse beards and moustaches. Additionally, their eye slits are positioned in an angle. Their hair tends to fall in a uniformly straight manner the bulk of the time. Native Americans and other indigenous peoples from the North Eastern area are included in this racial group. There are a number of tribes in the surrounding area, such as the Naga, Khasi, Garo, Lepcha, Bhutia, Dafia, Abor and Mismi, which display features that are categorised as Mongoloid. These tribes may be identified by the fact that they speak a language that is closely related to Mongolian.

The Nordics as a bloc: There is just one known example of this ethnic group in India, and they call the Nilgiri hills home. These highlands are home to the Toda people. These hills may be found in the southern region of India. These people are distinguished by their extended height, pale skin, wavy hair, prominent fine nose, and little lip, as well as by the abundance of facial and body hair that they possess. In addition to this, the hair on their faces and bodies is often denser than the ordinary person's.

UNITY FEELING

If a group of people wish to be acknowledged as a tribe, the members of that group need to have a strong sense of connection to one another that goes beyond the fact that they share a physical area and a means of subsistence with one another. Before that point, we cannot refer to the gathering as a tribe. In order to be considered a real tribal culture, there must always be a common identity. The entire life of a tribe rests upon the tribal's sense of solidarity during the times of peace and conflict. They have a strong sense of loyalty to their

neighbourhood and will draw bows and arrows in order to protect it from any invaders.

STRONG RELIANCE ON THE LOCAL ENVIRONMENT FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

In many situations, indigenous tribes have industries that have undergone extensive development with respect to of agriculture and fishing and are more matched to their natural environment than other forms of established economies. Economic transitions from pre-feudal to feudal to commercial circumstances are possible at any time in Tribal history. There is not much emphasis placed on conserving, investing, or making trades among members of Indian tribal communities; they function entirely or largely beyond of our national economic structure; and their ways of making their living fluctuate from the straightforward enticement of nomads who gather and hunt who rely on the abundance of the environment to that of more settled farmers who nurture the land.

COMMUNAL FOUNDATION FOR LAND OWNERSHIP

Some academics have argued that “a tribe is a territorial group” since each tribe is so closely associated with a certain region. Everyone in the tribe, with the possible exception of a few nomadic groups, has been reported to have a deep connection to the land. The indigenous people have traditionally resisted outside influence because of the deep emotional ties they have to their country. Past tribal revolts and the failure of multiple tribal relocation initiatives in different regions of the country are examples of tribal opposition to outside intervention in their environment and land system.

TRIBAL PEOPLE HAVE A LOW RATE OF LITERACY AND EDUCATION

Most indigenous Indians work in agriculture, although their economy is barely beyond the subsistence level. Therefore, when left to their own devices, tribe members make little to no effort to provide their children with a quality education. The efforts of the missionaries, the federal government, and the individual state governments have resulted in whatever formal education the native peoples have gotten to this point. The low literacy rate, especially among women, is largely attributable to social and cultural norms in various indigenous communities. There are further cultural barriers, such as early marriage, that make it difficult for a tribal female kid to get an education and establish herself in the workforce.

HOMOGENOUS SOCIETY

Marriage within a tribe is highly regarded and celebrated, while intertribal marriage is exceedingly unusual among tribal people. Intertribal marriage was once rare, but now it is becoming widespread as a result of the pressing consequences of changes following the forces of mobility. A tribe is a group of people who practise endogamy (as opposed to the exogamy of clans), have a common name, and participate in activities including the worship of unusual things, the hunting of tiny animals, and the rejection of visitors from other tribes. Everyone in the tribe is connected by blood, and the chief has absolute power over the other members. He can even arrange marriages between young men and women he deems marriageable.

SECURITY AWARENESS

In order to protect the people of the tribe from infiltration and invasion, a centralised political authority is established, and this authority is granted unlimited power. The tribal community relies on the wisdom and understanding of the tribal leader to ensure their own protection. When it comes to making judgements about urgent matters, the tribal chief sometimes receives assistance from a tribal committee. Within the larger tribe, there are a number of smaller subgroups, and each of these subgroups has its own chief. The group's leader follows the instructions he's given by the tribe leader.

UNIQUE POLITICAL STRUCTURE

A centralised political authority is formed and given absolute power to safeguard tribal people against infiltration and invasion. The tribal community relies on the wisdom and understanding of the tribal leader to ensure their own protection. A tribal committee assists the tribe head in making emergency decisions. There are several subgroups within the tribe, each with its own chief. The group's leader follows the instructions he's given by the tribe leader.

SHARED VALUES

Democracy and monarchy coexist in the political life of India's tribal communities. Everyone at the top of a social hierarchy, be it a clan, a town, or a region, is respected because of their position. The interests of the members of each tribe are looked after by a separate political group. A tribal chief holds absolute political power in the tribe. There is a need for tribal committees in some communities so that the tribal chief may focus on leading the tribe effectively. a lack of centralised authority, a lack of national representation, and the denial of most political rights all stem from a lack of a cohesive formal structure.

VALUE OF FAMILY TIES

The unity, language, religion, and government of a tribe all contribute to a shared culture. Tribal members who have not fully assimilated into mainstream society share a common culture that creates a unified way of life for them. There is more to the culture than just the folk art. The term "folklore" encompasses a wide range of cultural expressions, such as myths, legends, stories, proverbs, riddles, ballads, and other forms of musical expression.

LIBERAL PRINCIPLES

Tribal societies are fundamentally organised on family ties. The vast majority of societies are structured around exogamous clans and families. Tribal endogamy governs marriage within each tribe. Marriage is legally recognised as a contract, and it is possible to be divorced and remarry; kinship is used to strengthen social ties. The egalitarian idea is central to the tribal social structure. Thus there are no institutionalised inequities like the caste system or sex based inequality. This ensured that men and women both had equal rights and independence. Some discrepancy in social rank, political authority, and material possessions may exist, however, in the case of tribal chiefs or tribal monarchs. There is a lack of authority structures among males and male-dominated groups.

PRIMITIVE RELIGION / TYPICAL CULTURE / TYPICAL RELIGION

Nearly everyone thinks supernatural or extra-human abilities exist. The tribal people have come to believe in the supernatural because of their experiences with the abrupt onset of illness, death, and other occurrences that

defy explanation in the course of a normal day. They've developed some sort of intimate connection with this authority. Certain tales and a primitive kind of religion are held sacred by the tribes. Further, they believe in totems representing things having magical link with individuals of the tribe. There is no clear delineation between the outward rituals and the inner spirituality practised by each group, as each tribe is directed by a religion based on totemism, magic, and fetishism.

CONCLUSION

Each of the tribes has distinctive characteristics. Both in personality and make-up, they're not like other Indians. Because of variables such as geography, economy, and history, the non-tribal people of India display a significant deal of regional variance in their culture and customs. On the other hand, hill and forest regions, a lacklustre economy, and a strong sense of tribal tradition all give excellent conditions for the flourishing of India's indigenous tribal people. On the one hand, the geographical setting, settlement pattern, and population size, and on the other hand, the social environment, including the ethnic mix, present the most complete image of a typical tribal hamlet in India. While it's true that traditional society in India as a whole is undergoing rapid change and upheaval, and that a thaw is underway in terms of marketing the coming together of the old and new, it seems that different tribes or subgroups within a tribe will continue to respond to the change in their own unique ways, preserving the identity and richness of India's tribal cultures.

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