

Classification of Tribes

By Mr. Arvind Sirohi

Teaching Assistant

Department of Sociology

Chaudhary Charan Singh University , Meerut

introduction

- India contains an unparalleled variety of ethnic groups, patterns of culture and modes of living. The People of India Project of the Anthropological Survey of India has identified about 461 tribal communities of India out of which 174 have been identified as sub-groups
- The tribes of India are classified into different groups on the basis of geographical location, language, race and levels of their socioeconomic development.

...

- On the basis of the mode of livelihood or the subsistence pattern, Indian tribes can be divided into:
- Food Gatherers and Hunters
- Shifting Cultivation
- Nomads
- Pastoralists
- Peasants and Agriculturists
- Artist

...

- **Food Gatherers and Hunters** : Food gatherers and hunters Hunting and gathering is the oldest of human subsistence patterns. Hunting and gathering methods and tools may not be highly advanced but they are efficient for forest dwelling people to obtain a regular supply of food. Hunters and gatherers interfere with the environment to a limited extent and their social structure is comparatively flexible and egalitarian. Examples of hunter and gatherer tribes of India include the Chenchus, Challa Yanadi, Malaya Pandaram/ Hill Pandaram, Cholanaickan and the Great Andamanese

...

- **Shifting Cultivation:** Shifting cultivation is an agricultural system in which plots of land are cultivated temporarily, then abandoned and allowed to revert to their natural vegetation while the cultivator moves on to another plot. The period of cultivation is usually terminated when the soil shows signs of exhaustion or, more commonly, when the field is overrun by weeds. The length of time that a field is cultivated is usually shorter than the period over which the land is allowed to regenerate by lying fallow.

...

- The people inhabiting the hilly areas have adopted shifting cultivation methods. Hill cultivation is a seasonally regulated procedure designed to open up and bring a patch of land under cultivation. After one or two seasons of cropping, the land is left fallow for several years with the aim of restoring the fertility of the soil. Following this, the land is again cleared and burnt and likewise another cycle of cultivation begins.

...

- Simple implements like the digging stick with a metallic end, spade, sickle and axe are used. Shifting cultivation is known by various names like Jhum in Assam, Kurwa or Khallu in Santhal Parganas; Podu, Rema, Dahi, Gudia, Bringa in Orissa; Penda, Dahiya, Bewar in Madhya Pradesh; Kondapady in Andhra Pradesh.

...

- **Nomads:** Nomads are known as a group of communities who travel from place to place for their livelihood. The nomadic communities in India can be broadly divided into three groups hunter gatherers, Pastoralists and the peripatetic or non-food producing groups. Some are salt traders, Fortune Tellers, Conjurers, Ayurvedic healers, jugglers, acrobats, actors, story tellers, Snake charmers, animal doctors, tattooists, grindstone makers, or basket makers.

...

- **Pastoralists** Pastoralism usually involves a complex interaction between groups specializing in herding and those specializing in farming on a regional basis. Pastoralism is not completely independent of farming. Pastoralists are able to adapt to marginal environment where farming would be extremely risky or totally impossible. Bakarwals, Bharwads, Broqpas, Gujjars, Todas are pastoralist tribes

...

- **Agriculturist:** Agriculture is the most popular economic activity of the tribal population of India. A large percentage of the tribes are supported by agriculture who practice it as their primary source of livelihood. It is a simple form of settled type of cultivation which requires ploughing the land with two animals.

...

- An important feature of tribal agriculture is cooperation among relatives and among the villagers on a reciprocal basis during the different stages of agricultural activities. Tribal communities practicing agriculture are the Apatanis, Cheros, Deoris, Miris, Hos, Jaintias, Khambas, Kharias, Khasis, Kolams, Tiwas, Rabhas, Kinnauras, Bhumijis, Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Kharwas, Baigas, Gonds, Bhils, Minas, Warlis, Koyas; the list is endless.

...

- **Artist:** There are certain tribes in India who are traditional singers, dancers, bards, acrobats and snake-charmers. Tribes belonging to this category depend on their art for their economic survival and subsistence. Some of the tribes belonging to this category are the Nats and Saperas of Uttar Pradesh; the Mundupttas and Kelas of Orissa who are acrobats; the Pardhans and the Ojhas who are bards; the Pamulas and the Kalbelias of Rajasthan who are snake charmers; the Dommaras who are acrobats; the Gorait who are drum beaters; the Mons and the Paradhis who are musicians.

...

Thanking You