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# BATS201 TRIBES IN INDIA AND IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH



**BA (TRIBAL  
STUDIES)**  
**3<sup>RD</sup> SEMESTER**

**Rajiv Gandhi University**  
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## About the University

Rajiv Gandhi University (formerly Arunachal University) is a premier institution for higher education in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and has completed twenty-five years of its existence. Late Smt. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, laid the foundation stone of the university on 4th February, 1984 at Rono Hills, where the present campus is located.

Ever since its inception, the university has been trying to achieve excellence and fulfill the objectives as envisaged in the University Act. The university received academic recognition under Section 2(f) from the University Grants Commission on 28th March, 1985 and started functioning from 1st April, 1985. It got financial recognition under section 12-B of the UGC on 25th March, 1994. Since then Rajiv Gandhi University, (then Arunachal University) has carved a niche for itself in the educational scenario of the country following its selection as a University with potential for excellence by a high-level expert committee of the University Grants Commission from among universities in India.

The University was converted into a Central University with effect from 9th April, 2007 as per notification of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

The University is located atop Rono Hills on a picturesque tableland of 302 acres overlooking the river Dikrong. It is 6.5 km from the National Highway 52-A and 25 km from Itanagar, the State capital. The campus is linked with the National Highway by the Dikrong bridge.

The teaching and research programmes of the University are designed with a view to play a positive role in the socio-economic and cultural development of the State. The University offers Undergraduate, Post-graduate, M.Phil and Ph.D. programmes. The Department of Education also offers the B.Ed. programme.

There are fifteen colleges affiliated to the University. The University has been extending educational facilities to students from the neighbouring states, particularly Assam. The strength of students in different departments of the University and in affiliated colleges has been steadily increasing.

The faculty members have been actively engaged in research activities with financial support from UGC and other funding agencies. Since inception, a number of proposals on research projects have been sanctioned by various funding agencies to the University. Various departments have organized numerous seminars, workshops and conferences. Many faculty members have participated in national and international conferences and seminars held within the country and abroad. Eminent scholars and distinguished personalities have visited the University and delivered lectures on various disciplines.

The academic year 2000-2001 was a year of consolidation for the University. The switch over from the annual to the semester system took off smoothly and the performance of the students registered a marked improvement. Various syllabi designed by Boards of Post-graduate Studies (BPGS) have been implemented. VSAT facility installed by the ERNET India, New Delhi under the UGC-Infonet program, provides Internet access.

In spite of infrastructural constraints, the University has been maintaining its academic excellence. The University has strictly adhered to the academic calendar, conducted the examinations and declared the results on time. The students from the University have found placements not only in State and Central Government Services, but also in various institutions, industries and organizations. Many students have emerged successful in the National Eligibility Test (NET).

Since inception, the University has made significant progress in teaching, research, innovations in curriculum development and developing infrastructure.

# **SYLLABUS**

## **Tribes in India and in Arunachal Pradesh**

### **Unit-I Tribes, Habitats and Characteristics**

- (a) Tribes in India
- (b) Geographical distribution
- (c) Demographic Composition

### **Unit II Tribal Ecology**

- (a) Tribal Ecology
- (b) Knowledge system (health practices, resource conservation, beliefs and practices)

### **Unit-III Socio-Political Organizations**

- (a) Family, marriage, and kinship.
- (b) Types and functions of tribal polity.

### **Unit IV Socio-Political Organizations II**

- (a) Customary laws and social sanctions
- (b) Religion: Faiths, belief and practices

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# CONTENTS

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<b>Units</b>		<b>Page Number</b>
	<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Unit-I</b>	<b>Tribes, Habitats and Characteristics</b>	<b>7-64</b>
<b>Unit II</b>	<b>Tribal Ecology</b>	<b>65-81</b>
<b>Unit-III</b>	<b>Socio-Political Organizations</b>	<b>82-120</b>
<b>Unit IV</b>	<b>Socio-Political Organizations II</b>	<b>121-145</b>

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# INTRODUCTION

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A tribe is essentially a group of distinct people who are dependent on land for their livelihood, who are largely self-sufficient, and who are not integrated into the national society. India is the home to a large number of tribal or *adivasi* people, who are still untouched by the lifestyle of the modern world. Estimates put the number of tribal people in India to be around 84 million. These people are the poorest in the country and are still dependent on hunting, agriculture and fishing for their livelihood. Some of the major tribal groups in India include the Gonds, Santhals, Khasis, Angamis, Bhils, Bhutias and the Great Andamanese. All these tribal people have their own culture, tradition, language and lifestyle. The north eastern part of India especially is considered to be one of most culturally diverse regions in the world and is inhabited by more than 200 tribes.

This book – *Tribes in India and Arunachal Pradesh* - has been designed keeping in mind the self- instruction mode (SIM) format and follows a simple pattern, wherein each unit of the book begins with the Introduction followed by the Unit Objectives for the topic. The content is then presented in a simple and easy-to-understand manner and is interspersed with Check Your Progress questions to reinforce the student's understanding of the topic. A list of Questions and Exercises is also provided at the end of each unit. The Summary, Key Terms and Activity further act as useful tools for students and are meant for effective recapitulation of the text.

This book is divided into four units:

- Unit-I Tribes, Habitats and Characteristics
- Unit II Tribal Ecology
- Unit-III Socio-Political Organizations
- Unit IV Socio-Political Organizations II

## NOTES



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# UNIT-I TRIBES, HABITATS AND CHARACTERISTICS

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## NOTES

### Structure

- 1.0 Introduction
- 1.1 Unit Objectives
- 1.2 What/Who is a Tribe?
  - 1.2.1 Scope of a Tribe as Social Category
  - 1.2.2 Terms of Address of Communities before Designated as Tribe
  - 1.2.3 Tribes and Tribal India
- 1.3 Why a Community or Person is a Tribe?
  - 1.3.1 Background
  - 1.3.2 Evolution of the Term
  - 1.3.3 Academic Perspectives
  - 1.3.4 Tribe and its Constitutional Categories in India
  - 1.3.5 Beyond Constitutional Category
- 1.4 Habitats
  - 1.4.1 Tribal Village
  - 1.4.2 Scheduled and Tribal Areas
  - 1.4.3 Physical Divisions, Regions and States/UTs
  - 1.4.4 Distribution of Tribal Population
  - 1.4.5 Concentration in Districts
- 1.5 Characteristics of Various Tribes
- 1.6 Summary
- 1.7 Key Terms
- 1.8 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 1.9 Questions and Exercises
- 1.10 Further Readings

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the present unit the focus will be on the term 'tribe', tribes in Indian context, their characteristics and habitats. You will learn (i) *what/who is a tribe*, (ii) *why a community or a person is called a tribe*, (iii) *where do they live?* and (iv) *how are they distinguished?* As an answer to the first question you will learn that tribe is a social categorisation. The second question will answer the definitional and conceptual issues relating to the term tribe. Answer to the third question will inform you about tribal habitats in India. You will also learn about the concept of tribal ecology and its importance in healthcare and resource conservation practise. The fourth question will provide an outline of characteristics that have evolved from the study of tribes.

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## 2.2 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- 1..1 Define a tribe in general and in the context of India in particular
- 1.2 Define a tribe academically and as a constitutional category

## NOTES

- 1.3 Understand the scope of tribe as a social category
- 1.4 Explain the concept 'Tribal India'
- 1.5 Describe the evolution of the term 'tribe' in India in a historical perspective
- 1.6 Classify tribal habitats from different angles
- 1.7 Identify the distribution of tribes in regions, states and Union Territories
- 1.8 Enumerate the characteristics of tribes
- 1.9 Explain learn how ecology influences tribal knowledge system
  - 1..10 Understand tribal health care and resource conservation practices in terms of their ecological knowledge

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## 2.2 WHAT/WHO IS A TRIBE?

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You know that we divide human population into various groups on the basis of some criteria. The grouping of people as *tribal* and *non-tribal* is one of such divisions of human beings. In this sense, a 'tribe' is a group of human population designated differently in different countries of the world. In Australia and Canada this group is known as 'natives'. Many scholars also use the term 'aborigines' to designate them. In Africa, India and in many Asian countries the group is known as 'tribe'.

During the concluding decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in 1990s, the use of the term 'indigenous' to designate this group came in a big way. This trend still continues. However, there is disagreement over the use of the term 'indigenous' for 'tribe' in many countries. Therefore, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has accepted the use of a compound term 'tribal and indigenous people' to designate this group of people in general.

You have already learnt that the group which is designated as a tribe has its own *community name* such as Oraon, Munda, Monpa, Khampti, Baiga, Santhal, Birhor, etc. All of them have been brought under an umbrella term, namely tribe by the people who wanted to create a distinct identity for these communities.

The nomenclature for this group of population as native, aborigine or tribe originated during colonial period. Even the term 'indigenous' has a colonial overtone.

The European colonisers distinguished themselves from the people of the land they occupied by using the terms as mentioned. This was not the case in India. You will learn that the term tribe in India was used in Census record after a long period of colonial contact. Moreover, the term was not used to designate all Indians, the entire population of the territory they colonised, as they did in other countries. In fact, it was the colonial mindset of 'divide and rule' which guided the British motive of dividing Indian population on various grounds. On the basis of caste factor, based on occupation, they divided the Indian population into *tribe* (people without caste system) and (caste) *non-tribe* (people having caste system).

Gradually, anthropological studies helped in perpetuating these divisions. After Independence, the Constitution of India scheduled (listed) a number of communities under Scheduled Tribe Category following some criteria of anthropological studies. So in India, a tribe is not fully an anthropologically



identified group; rather it is a social category administratively identified and termed as Scheduled Tribe (ST). For academic purposes, a tribe is both an administrative social category (ST) and non-administrative social category (non-ST).

By now you have learnt that in independent India a tribe is a community scheduled in the Constitution (administrative category). You will also find tribe as a non-Constitutional (non-administrative) category following the tradition of anthropological perspectives. In both cases a tribe is a group consciousness with reference to a distinct community identity. This identity got a separate status in colonial strategy and continued in anthropological studies and through constitutional recognition. Obviously, while categorising a community as 'tribe' in India historical process has played an important role. You can also notice that in other countries the tribe formation has a historical context.

However, a tribe also refers to an individual when we say he is a tribe or he is, say, a Gond. This means the person belongs to a tribal community. Tribe as a person represents the collective consciousness of belonging to and sharing with other members of the same group a code, rules, regulations, belief system, social customs, practices and norms which determine their actions both at individual and group levels.

### 1.2.1 Scope of a Tribe as Social Category

A tribe as a social category is not homogenous. It does not represent one category or the other. The category has bio-genetic variability, language diversity, different levels of cultural contact, varieties of livelihood options, different faiths and practices and distinct systems of governance within and without. You will learn the scope of tribes as a social category with reference to these dimensions.

#### Bio-genetic Variability

J.H. Hutton (1931), B.S. Guha (1935) and D. N. Majumdar (1961) in their study of racial classifications have presented bio-genetic variability of Indian tribes. Among these, B. S. Guha's classification which he summed up in 1955 is scientifically sound. According to him the tribal population of India belongs to three major bio-genetic groups as follows:

1. **Proto-Australoids:** People belonging to this group are found mainly in central and eastern India. They are characterised by dark skin colour, sunken nose and lower forehead. The Munda, the Santal, the Bhil, the Oraon, the Ho, the Kondh, the Gond, etc. belong to this group. There are tribes in South India like the Chenchu, tribes spread over many regions like the Bhil also exhibit the characteristics of this group. The Kurku tribe of western India is considered to be of Australoid origin.
2. **Mongoloids:** We find people belonging to this group in the Northeast and Himalayan region of North India. The people of this group are characterised by yellowish skin colour with straight and dark hair, flat nose, prominent cheek bones and almond shaped eyes with epicanthic fold. Tribal groups like the Naga, the Adi, the Nyishi, the Bhoti, the Lepcha, the Chakma, etc. belong to this group. The Khasis of Meghalaya and Nicobarees of the

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

1. State whether the following statements are True or False:
  - (a) A tribe is also used to address an individual.
  - (b) All tribal people in India are indigenous people.
  - (c) ILO did not make any distinction between tribes and indigenous peoples.
  - (d) In India tribe is only an administrative category.
  - (e) Historical process is the right approach to study of tribes in India.

## NOTES

Car Nicobar also belong to this group though their languages belong to a different group.

The Mongoloids are divided into two groups: *Palaeo-Mongoloids* and *Tibeto-Mongoloids*. The Lepcha of Sikkim is an example of the Tibeto-Mongoloid group. The Mongoloid tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, etc. belong to the Palaeo-Mongoloid group.

3. **Negrito:** This group of people spread over many regions of the country. The people of this group are characterised by short stature, dark skin colour, black curly hair, thin lips and broad nose. The people of this group are found in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar and even in Nagaland. The Kadar, the Irula, the Paniyans, the Jarawa, the Onge, etc. belong to this group.

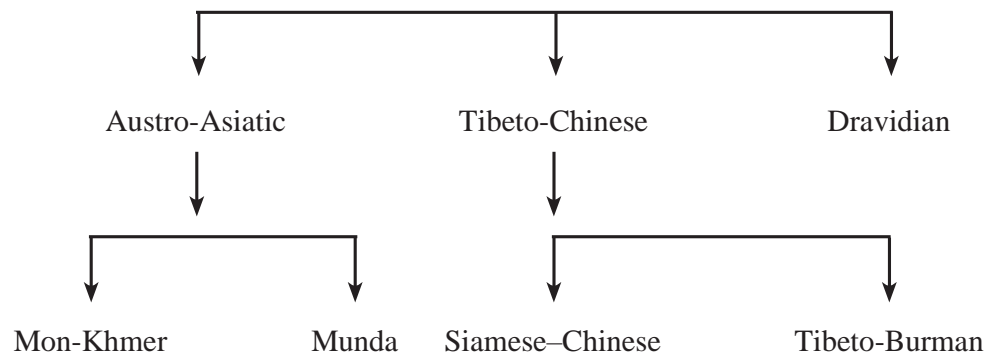
The classification of tribes on the basis of bio-genetic characteristics cannot be applied strictly in India. Since time immemorial the population groups in India have been in the process of migration and social interaction. As Majumdar (1961) remarks, India as being the 'melting pot of races'. Therefore, you will find mixed characteristics to a fairly large extent. You will learn from various works that many ethnic groups have sprung from intermarriage between different groups. Edward Balfour (1885) in *The Cyclopaedia of India and of Eastern and Southern Asia* writes that in Mewar the Grasia is of mixed Bhil and Rajput descent. R. K. Sinha (1995) in his work entitled *The Bhilala of Malwa* also mentions about the mixed origin of the Bhilala from the marriage alliances of the immigrant male Rajputs and the Bhil women of the central India.

### Language diversity

India has four linguistic families, namely:

1. Austro-Asiatic family
2. Tibeto-Chinese family
3. Dravidian family
4. Indo-European (Aryan) family

This is shown in Figure 1.1.



**Fig. 1.1** Linguistic Family of Tribes

There is no disagreement on the nomenclature of Austro-Asiatic and Dravidian group of languages. But we do not have an agreeable designation for Tibeto-Chinese family. Linguists like Kun Chang, Austin Hale suggests Sino-Tibetan designation in which Tibeto-Burman group is a sub-family. G. A. Grierson in *Linguistic Survey of India* suggests eight major divisions of Tibeto-Burman group. These are:

- (i) Tibetan
- (ii) Himalayan
- (iii) North Assam
- (iv) Burma
- (v) Kachin
- (vi) Naga
- (vii) Kuki-Chin
- (viii) Baro or Bodo

Another linguist, Paul Benedict, suggests seven divisions. Even today, different linguists use different classificatory term for these groups of language. The classification shown above is taken from Vidyarthi and Rai (1976).

The ***Austro-Asiatic*** family is classified into the Mon-Khmer branch and the Munda branch. The Khasis in Meghalaya and the Nicobarees in Nicobar Islands speak languages belonging to the Mon-Khmer branch. The Austro-Asiatic family, which sometimes called the Austric family, is different from the Dravidian family of languages. In India, the Munda speech family belongs to this group. The Munda speech family is mainly spoken by tribals of Central and Eastern India. Languages used by the Santal, Ho, Kharia, Bhumij, Savar, Khond, Gadaba, etc., belong to this group.

The ***Tibeto-Chinese*** family has two main sub-families:

- (i) Siamese-Chinese branch
- (ii) Tibeto-Burman branch

The Tibeto-Burman branch further has five sub-branches. The speakers of languages of this branch spread in the Himalayan and the Northeast regions of India. The sub-branches and the speakers in each branch are mentioned as under:

- (a) *Siamese-Chinese sub-branch*: The Tai group of people use this speech family. They are the Khamptis, the Phakials, the Ahoms, the Khamyangs, etc.
- (b) *Tibeto-Burman sub-family*: As has been said the languages of this sub-family are spoken in the Himalayan region and among tribes of the Northeast India. The speakers of Himalayan region are divided into as follows:
  1. *Tibeto-Himalayan Branch*: The Bhotias of Darjeeling in West Bengal use language of this speech family.
  2. *Western sub-group of pronominalized Himalayan group*: Tribes, such as Laamba, Lahaula, Swangla, Kinaura, etc. mainly living in Himachal Pradesh speak languages of this family.
  3. *Non-pronominalized Himalayan group*: Toto in West Bengal and the Lepcha in Sikkim use language of this family.

## NOTES

## NOTES

4. *Arunachal branch*: The tribes like Adi, Apatani, Nyishi, Aka, Mishmi, etc. use languages of this branch.
5. *Assam-Burmese Branch*: This branch has four sub-branches.
  - (i) *Bara or Bodo group*: Kachari, Garo, Tripuri, Dimasa, etc. belong to this language family.
  - (ii) *Naga group*: People belonging to Naga sub groups like Ao, Angami, Sema and Naga-Bodo sub-group like Kacha Naga, Rongmei Naga and Kabui Naga use languages of this family.
  - (iii) *Kachin group*: The Singphows of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam use Kachin branch of language.
  - (iv) *Kuki-Chin group*: The language is spoken by Kuki group of tribes, and Thadou, Ralte, etc. in Manipur. Mizo tribes in Mizoram and Manipur also belong to this language group.

The **Dravidian** family of languages is spoken by tribes living in Central and Southern India. The speeches of the Toda, the Paniyan, the Korwa, the Chenchu, the Irual, the Oraon, the Yerukula, etc. belong to this family.

Out of these four groups, scholars believe that the tribes belong to first three linguistic families. Tribes do not belong to Indo-Aryan family of languages. The adoption of Indo-Aryan family of languages by some tribes is however, due to cultural contact.

The Santal, for example, is a large Proto-Australoid tribe found in West Bengal, northern Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam and also in Bangladesh. The compactness of the tribe having been broken, they have gradually adopted languages of the areas inhabited, like Odia in Odisha, or Bengali in West Bengal and Bangladesh.

The language group and the bio-genetic group are not coterminous. For example, the Khasis of Meghalaya and the Nicobarees of the Car Nicobar belong to Mongoloid genetic group, but they speak languages that belong to Austro-Asiatic language family. It is found that Mundas and Santals who belong to Australoid bio-genetic group speak languages of Austro-Asiatic family. On the other hand, the Bhills and the Gonds belong to Australoid bio-genetic group. Interestingly, the Bhills speak languages which do not belong to any of the language families of the tribes. Their language belongs to Indo-European (Aryan) family while Gondi, the language of the Gonds belongs to Dravidian family.

### **Different Levels of Cultural Contact**

As you know tribes in India do not exist in complete isolation. They have been part and parcel of Indian civilisation even during Ramayana and Mahabharata periods. Even many tribal groups have taken part in state formation. In recent years the tribal communities form a part of Indian nation state. Obviously, you will not find tribes in an *ideal state*. Tribes have been integrated with different forces at different level of cultural contacts. Verrier Elwin (1943) with reference to different dynamics of cultural contact has classified the tribes of India into four groups in his seminal work on *The Aborigines*. The first group is considered to be the purest of tribal groups. Geographical factors have largely protected them from the debasing contact of the plains. The Jarawa tribe can be said belonging to this category.

The second category has been experiencing contact with the plains and consequently has been undergoing changes. This group though retaining their tribal mode of living exhibits the following characteristics in contrast to the first group:

- (i) Instead of communal life, this group lives a village life which has become individualistic. Their communal life and traditions are only preserved through their village dormitories (institutions).
- (ii) In contrast to first group the members in this group do not share things with one another.
- (iii) Axe cultivation has ceased to be a way of life for them.
- (iv) The members of this tribe are more contaminated by the life outside. They come in contact with the group living on the periphery, who live a more complex, viz. civilised life.
- (v) The members of these groups are less simple and less honest than members of the tribes belonging to first group.

The tribes who belong to the third category constitute the largest section of the total tribal population, about four fifths of it. Members of this class of tribal groups are in a peculiar state of transition. According to some investigations, they are tribal in name but have become 'Backward Hindus' constituting a sizeable section of the lower rung of Hindu society; one section is described as Christian. These tribes have been appreciably affected by external contacts. They have been exposed to the influence of economic and socio-cultural forces of Hindu society.

The tribals of fourth category according to Elwin consist of the old aristocracy of the country represented by great Bhil and Naga Chieftains, the Gond Rajas, a few Binshevar and Bhuniya landlords, Karku noblemen, wealthy Santhals and Oraons and highly cultured Mundas. They retain the old tribal names and their clan and totem rules and observe elements of tribal religion though they adopt the full Hindu faith and live in modern and even European style. Obviously, levels of cultural contact do not present tribes as a homogenous social category.

### **Varieties of Livelihood Options**

Tribes live in different eco-habitats. They interact differently with different natural environments and eco-habitats therein. Primarily, they interact with natural environment — forest, land, etc. to secure livelihoods. As eco-habitats in a natural environment differ, you will find difference in ways that people follow to secure their livelihoods. Securing a livelihood depends on the strategy of economic pursuits. Many scholars have categorised the tribes on the basis of different livelihood options depending on their diverse economic pursuits.

You will find that Nirmal Kumar Bose (1967) has divided the tribal people into three principal categories on the basis of their economy. These are (a) hunters, fishers, and gatherers; (b) shifting cultivators; and (c) settled agriculturists using plough and plough bullocks. He also lists two other categories, viz. nomadic cattle keepers, artisans and labourers and workers in plantation and industries. Among these groups settled agriculturists using plough and plough bullocks account for the overwhelming majority of the tribal people. The workers in plantations and industries are also recruited from these groups.

## **NOTES**



## NOTES

Vidyarthi (1976), however, has presented seven types of economic pursuits among the tribes. These are (i) forest hunting type; (ii) hill cultivation type; (iii) plains agriculture type; (iv) simple artisan type; (v) the pastoral and cattle herder type; (vi) the agricultural and non-agricultural labour type; and (vii) the skilled and white collar-job type working in offices, hospitals, factories and so on.

You will learn details of livelihood options in Unit-III of this Paper. The point which is clear is that different livelihood options do not disqualify tribal status of a tribe or a section of it. Tribe as a social category is neutral to differences in ways of pursuing economic activities.

Another point merits mention here. A tribe can be categories as hunting-gathering tribe or agriculturist tribe. But you cannot categorise a tribe as non-agricultural or agricultural labour tribe or skilled worker tribe or white collar-job tribe. This is because these types of economic engagement exists in all the tribes in different degrees and a tribe is not organised on the basis of social activities as is around hunting-gathering, agriculture or pastoral activities.

### Check Your Progress

2. What is the basis of division of Indian population in tribes and castes?
3. Mention the mind-set of colonial rulers responsible for dividing the Indian population in tribes and castes.
4. Mention the tribal groups on the basis of variation in bio-genetic traits.
5. Mention any three livelihood options of Indian tribes.
6. Write the language families which the tribal groups originally belonged to?
7. What are the divisions of tribal communities on the basis of governance?

### Different Systems of Governance

The tribes do not have a uniform system of governance. Broadly you will find two types of systems-cephalous and acephalous. The former is a system with a centralised authority which may vary from tribes to tribes. The central authority or the chief may be at tribe or village level or at both levels. You will learn about it in details in unit-II. Similarly, in acephalous system of governance, there is no centralised authority. Village councils or tribal councils are examples of acephalous system of governance.

### Different Religious Faiths and Practices

Religion is not a qualification for acceptance or rejection of tribal status. The Constitution of India also does not put any restriction. You will find tribes belonging to different religious denominations. A large number of tribes like Dimasa, Kinnaur, Juansari, etc. have been recorded as Hindus. You will find 17 tribes of Lakshadweep, Sidhi tribe of Gujarat, and Gaddi and Bakriwal of Jammu and Kashmir professing Islam. In the Northeast tribal groups like the Khasi, the Mizos, the Nagas profess Christianity. Some sections of the Oraon, the Santhal and the Ho also profess Christianity. The Monpas and Khampis of Arunachal Pradesh and the Lepchas of Sikkim profess Buddhism. In recent years there is a movement of revivalism. Many tribes or sections within identify religious affiliation with traditional faiths and practices. The Adis, the Nyishis, the Apatanis, etc. believe in Donyipoloism, the Oraons believe in Sarana faith and the Zeliangrong group of Nagas believe in Hereka faith. These are clubbed under indigenous religions. Now you must have understood that the religious denominations do not restrict the scope of tribe as a social category. You will find tribes whose members follow different faiths and practices.

By now you must have understood that a tribal community may belong to any biogenetic group, language family, religious faiths, economic pursuits, level of cultural contact or/and system of governance. The scope of the tribe as a social category is wide and is not restricted on the basis of any of the above criteria.



## 1.2.2 Terms of Address of Communities Before Designated as Tribe

The tribal communities existed before they were designated as tribes. Did they have any identity as a community or as a group? This means how these communities were addressed. In early times the communities who are now called tribes were known by their community names like the Baigas, the Oraons, the Saoras. Over the years, for the term 'tribe' in India, a number of synonyms have evolved. These are *Adivasi* (original settlers), *Girijan* (forest dwellers), *Vanyajati* (forest caste), *Adim jati* (primitive caste), *Jana jati* (folk people), *Vavavasi* (inhabitants of forest), *Pahari* (hill dwellers) and *Anusuchit jati* (Scheduled Tribes). David Hardiman (1987) notes that in Gujarat, terms like, *kaliparaja* (the 'black people') is used to refer to the tribal people. Persian terms like *qabila*, *qabilewale* were also in vogue to refer to tribes. There are empirical evidences which suggest that the term 'jati' was used as a suffix to tribal communities. Mention may be made of the appellations *Adivasi jati*, *Vanyajati*, and *Jangli-jati* (the 'kind of forest dweller'). Denis Vidal (1997) writes,

"In Sirohi [Rajasthan]... the same generic term (jati) was often used to refer indiscriminately [to] the castes or tribe".

You know that the term *jati* is used as a synonym for the term caste. This is a use in a rather restricted sense. In fact, this synonymous use is a borrowing from writings of western scholars during colonial period. Hence, we understand Indian *jati* system with reference to the conceptual frame of 'the caste'.

But the fact remains that the term 'jati' does not bear the connotation of its English equivalent 'caste'. The word connotes to 'kind or type' rather than 'caste'. In India it is used in a variety of other contexts such as *manushya jati* to mean humankind, *devta jati* and *danav jati* to mean gods and demons respectively, *stri jati* to mean women, *pashu jati* to mean the 'category' of animals or *vanaspati jati* to mean plants.

Many tribal communities were also designated through fictitious names, sometimes a common nomenclature. Often the designations by which tribes are known are outside constructs. Therefore, most of them are not known to outside world by their respective indigenous names. Contrary to the terms that the outsiders have improvised for them, tribes refer to themselves by their respective community names like Munda, Santhal, Gond, Baiga, Sahariya, Gaddi, or by the generic term *jati*, or the hybrid term '*Adivasi jati*'. The outsiders may also be neighbouring tribes or clans. The Laju Nocte, known to outsiders and to other clans of Nocte by this name, refer themselves as Olo. The Khamptis address themselves as Tai, though the term Khampti has meaning in their language system.

It becomes difficult to decipher the meaning of some names, even by the people to whom it is labelled. For example, the Tagin and Nyishi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh were designated as Dafla whose origin and meaning are still a matter of speculations. Nihar Ranjan Ray (1972) has suggested the term 'Jana', used earlier to denote tribal communities like Savaras, Bhils, Nagas, Kirat, Pulindas, Kols, etc., in place of the term 'tribe'. He argues that 'Jana' and 'Jati' are both derived from the root 'Jana' meaning 'to be born', 'to give birth to' and hence has a biological connotation. Their inhabited territories are known as 'Jana Padas' in ancient India. G. S. Ghurey, however, uses the term 'Backward Hindus' for the tribes. This connotation is in conformity with the

## NOTES

## NOTES

‘nation building’ project, which requires the national identity, essentially of a Hindu nation, through amalgamation of all peoples in a common bracket. However, Indian nation state does not believe in amalgamation; it rather believes and practises celebration of diversity.

### 1.2.3 Tribes and Tribal India

The terms *Tribal India* convey two meanings: apparent and conceptual. Apparently and literally it refers to tribes living in particular states and Union Territories of India. This meaning has a restricted territorial sense. In this sense its scope is narrowed down to include 30 states and Union Territories where Scheduled Tribe population is enumerated. In this sense you will understand tribal India in relation to the existence of tribal habitats in Indian states and UTs. You know it very well that a tribe is a state subject. Tribal India therefore, does not comprise India’s whole geographical boundary as states and UTs such as the Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Chandigarh and Puducherry do not have ST population (2011 Census). Moreover, in terms of existence of habitats tribal India presents a fragmented picture, as you already know a tribe in one state or UT is not a tribe in another.

Tribe being a state subject and some states/UTs having no ST population do not mean that tribe persons confine themselves to their habitats. In fact, you will find migrant tribal population in educational institutes and jobs of central government in states/UTs with no ST population. They are also found in institutes run or funded by central government in other states/UTs where they do not enjoy tribal status. In there a tribe person enjoys educational concessions, recreational service and promotional benefits and social safeguards. Obviously, tribal India has a meaning wider than the apparent one.

In wider sense, tribal India is a concept. The national character of many *tribal safeguards* in central government concerns extends the dimension of tribal India beyond the state/UT boundary. Moreover, there are non-ST communities in states/UTs where STs have not been enumerated. These non-ST communities are the ones who possess characteristics that enable a community to be scheduled in the Constitution. A few of these communities were also enumerated as criminal tribes during British rule. The Bangal and Nat in the Punjab belong to such groups, but not scheduled. In terms of STs and Non-STs Tribal India is coterminous with geographical and political India. Conceptually, therefore, tribal India is not a mere presentation of ST habitats; it is rather a geographical spread of both STs and Non-STs, a cultural expression of interaction and identity formation and also a national commitment.

A tribe in India is a part of the *nation state* unlike many other countries and earlier time. The concept of *nation state* is mainly a post-Independence phenomenon. Before Independence tribes existed in two periods- colonial and pre-colonial. In pre-colonial period, though they lived within a kingdom they enjoyed territorial autonomy and autonomy in the management of their internal affairs. During colonial period there were interferences to an extent in the field of encroachment of their resources and through appointment of administrative representatives in their areas. Many tribal revolts against the British were result of such interferences. Nevertheless, tribal areas were either excluded or partially excluded from the direct administrative interferences. They enjoyed

their autonomy to a large extent. But after Independence the tribes are a part and parcel of Indian nation state. In fact, during freedom struggle the tribes have contributed a lot to the Independence of the country and making of the nation state. Economically and politically a tribe is integrated with the Nation. Whatever autonomy they enjoy is guaranteed by the Constitution of India. Tribal India does not limit itself only to states/UTs where communities have been scheduled as STs in the Constitution.

## NOTES

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## 2.2 WHY A COMMUNITY OR PERSON IS A TRIBE?

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By now you know that a tribe is a social categorisation, may be a community or a person and has different terms of address. It was first the colonisers who noticed different social habits and cultural traits among the people whom they colonised. In order to distinguish these people having different life styles from their own, the colonisers put them under a different social category, called 'tribe'. This distinction has been continuing since then under different contexts. The Constitution of India recognises this distinction and designates the communities as Schedule Tribes (STs) with a welfare concern. A social group is considered a tribe because the people in it live differently from what we supposedly believe to be a *standard*, be it in social or economic or political or cultural front.

This difference is reinforced during academic pursuits. Studies of these groups generated information which is used to define and conceptualise the category already made. This distinction subsequently provides the basis of their integration and welfare in the nation state. You have already learnt about the definition of the term tribe, its variant like PTGs and the terms of reference. Here you will study these topics further to understand why a community is a tribe.

### 1.3.1 Background

In this section, you will have background knowledge of the term tribe and its use in India. You will learn how the term originated, and why, when and where the term is used in India. You will come to know that the term is used in census records, Government acts and other documents including the Constitution of India and academic works.

#### Origin of the term

There are different sources from which the term 'tribe' is believed to have originated. However, it was used by the Portuguese to designate the colonised people in Africa. Other colonisers used the term for the same purpose.

The term's origin might be found with the Latin word '*tres*' for three. The dative and ablative case forms of this word are both *tribus*. The word *tribus* could therefore mean "from the three" or "for the three".

The English word tribe occurs in 12th-century Middle English literature and refers to one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The word is from Old French *tribu*, which is in turn from Latin word '*tribus*'. In Latin the term 'tribus' refers to the threefold ethnic divisions of the ancient people of Rome: Ramnes (Ramnenses), Tities (Titienses), and Luceres, corresponding, to the Latins, Sabines and Etruscans respectively. The Ramnes were named after Romulus, leader of the

Latins, Titius after Tatius, leader of the Sabines, and Luceres after Lucumo, leader of an Etruscan army that had assisted the Latins.

### Colonial Creation

## NOTES

Before the British rule no community in India was designated as tribal community. The term was used first in Census report of 1981 to designate a group of people. However, the communities designated as tribes have/had their own terms of reference and reference by the outsiders. As the communities have their own terms of reference and you will not find any community designated as tribe, nor was there any generic social category of the sort before the colonial rule. It is therefore deduced that the term is a colonial origin. In other words, the British administrators improvised and used it for making distinctions between population in India. This is also evident when different terms were used in successive Censuses because the enumerators could not understand the prevailing Indian dynamics within their theoretical construct when they attempted to fit some section of population as tribe in it. K.S. Singh (1998) writes:

The tribe is a colonial concept, and Anglo-Saxon word, defined for the first time in the Census of 1901, in contradistinction to caste. The notion of tribe has evolved over the censuses, from a hill and forest tribe, to a primitive tribe, to a backward tribe, and finally, to the scheduled tribe.

Susana B. C. Devalle (1992) from her study of Jharkhand tribes concluded that 'tribe is essentially a construct', and is a 'colonial category'. The characteristics attributed to tribes, such as egalitarianism, subsistence economy, little or no external control, autonomy and isolation of such a unit, Devalle argued, are not found among Jharkhand people, known as *Adivasi*. There are no evidences found to prove that these characteristics existed in the past. Needless to say, according to her, there were no tribes in Jharkhand until the European understanding of the Indian reality constructed them. The category, thus devised later, evolved into an administrative concept.

### 1.3.2 Evolution of the Term

The use and evolution of the term tribe has two stages — census records of colonial India and the Constitution in Independent India. Of course, the term was used in an Act in 1871 before it appeared in census records in 1891. It was an arbitrary use, and the term did not evolve from its sense of use in Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. You have studied the motive behind such an Act in Paper-I, unit-I. The said unit also reasons out the arbitrariness in grouping communities as criminal tribes and fixes the responsibility in colonial polices that forced some people to resort to theft, looting, etc for livelihood.

### Criminal Tribes Act

You will learn that tribe as a social category is characterised in contrast to the caste. In other words, the Indian society is divided into *tribe* and *caste*. This broad division of society was administratively recorded in the Census Report of 1891. But before it the colonial government has used the term 'tribe' to create a category from law and order point of view. The name of the Act is ***Criminal Tribes Act of 1871*** of the British Government in India.

The purpose of using the term 'tribe' to people in other colonised countries does not fit in the context of some communities only as colonisers confronted all the communities in India on their arrival.

#### Denotified Communities and Criminal Tribes

The denotified communities were earlier known as criminal tribes. After they were denotified they were also known as ex-criminal tribes. It is to be mentioned that ex-criminal tribes are those tribes who were earlier listed under the British Government's Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 and in subsequent amendments. The only difference is the term denotified communities is an administrative cum social category, while ex-criminal tribe is a social category.

The term tribe has already been in the mind of colonial administrators and academics. It is evident when Mayhew (1862) used the phrase 'nomad tribes' in Indian context in the book *The Criminal Prisons of London and Scenes of Prison Life*. It was a thoughtless use of the term which the colonisers had in mind to categorise communities other than theirs. The absurdity continues through census reports till date.

You will find the use of the term for the communities even after the repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act. The Government of India repealed the Criminal Tribes Act and replaced it with Habitual Offenders Act 1952. The Habitual Offenders Act is a state Government legislation. With the repeal of Criminal Tribes Act, the communities notified under this Act as 'Criminal Tribes' were denotified and were recognised as recognized as 'Denotified Communities'. The Act being repealed, the tribes were denotified and designated as ex-criminal tribes or denotified communities (*Bimukta Jati*). In academic writings, however, you will find use of the term 'denotified tribes'. The colonial hangover, the familiarity with the term, the idea it conveys and an attitude of superiority feelings of a section, even in unconscious state of mind does not distinguish the implication of replacing communities for tribes.

#### Census Records

The term appeared second time in a government document, the Census Report of 1891. In the first Census Report of 1891, Baine, the then Commissioner for Census of India, classified some groups of people as 'Forest Tribes' under the sub-heading of Agricultural and Pastoral Castes'. Their number was enumerated at 16 million. In subsequent Census Records the nomenclature underwent successive modifications. In the 1901 Census, Risley classified them as 'Animists'. In 1911, E. Gait further classified them as 'Tribal Animists' or people following 'Tribal Religion'. Hutton categorized them as 'Hill and Forest Tribes' in the 1931 Census. By this time, these people were numbering 22 million. The term 'tribe' or 'tribal religion', however, does not have any definitional note in the above Census Reports. In the Government of India Act, 1935 these people came to be recorded as 'Backward Tribes' without a definition of the term. Similarly, in the Census of 1941 they were designated as 'Tribes' accounting for 2.47 crore people. After Independence, some of these people were listed in the Constitution of India and designated as Scheduled Tribes (STs). You shall know more about the concept of Scheduled Tribes subsequently. The preconceived notion in the mind of the enumerators of what people of a section could be called was the factor of not defining the term.

#### NOTES

##### Check Your Progress

8. Write *True* for correct statements and *False* for wrong ones:
- (a) Each tribal community has its own term of address.
  - (b) The term tribe existed in India before the British rule.
  - (c) The first reference of the term tribe in government records is found in 1871.
  - (d) In the Census Report of 1891 some group of people were classified as 'Forest Tribes' under the sub-heading of 'Agricultural and Pastoral Caste'. These people were classified as 'Tribes' in Census Report of 1941.
  - (e) Ideally a tribe is a social category in contrast to caste.



## NOTES

Though the definition of the tribe was not clear, it was more the less considered in contrast to caste which are occupational groups. In caste system the principle of caste endogamy is strictly followed, which was in Risley's opinion not the case with the tribes. Contrary to Risley's definition, the tribes in India even during that time had an occupation or set of occupations; they spoke many languages. They were mobile and had migrated to different parts of the country. For example, Santals who are the native of Chotanagpur plateau are also settled in Assam for occupational reasons for a very long time.

By now you must have understood that the term tribe has evolved from a *hill and forest tribe*, to a *primitive tribe*, to a *backward tribe* in census records and finally, to the scheduled tribe in the Constitution of India. Over the Censuses during colonial period the nomenclature referring to tribes underwent successive modifications, involving primarily changes in the *descriptive adjectives* like hill and forest tribe, a primitive tribe or a backward tribe. The Constitution of India has dropped the qualifying adjectives and has adopted the notion of Schedule Tribe for this category.

### 1.3.3 Academic Perspectives

This section will list a few definitions which emerged from studies of tribal communities from academic perspectives. You will be able to understand the characteristics of tribes better in section 1.4 outlined with reference to these definitions. Besides, you will also learn other terms used in different contexts to address the communities who are now designated as tribes.

#### Definitions

This section presents some definitions of the term tribe drawing on the study of different scholars.

##### Imperial Gazetteer

A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous though originally it might have been so.

##### J. Lewis Gillin and J. Philip Gillin

Any collection of preliterate local group which occupies a common territory speaks a common language and practices a common culture, is a tribe.

Budhadeb Chaudhuri in the introduction to a set of five volumes entitled *Tribal Transformation in India* provides the following definition of a tribe:

Anthropologically, a tribe is a social group, the members of which live in a common territory, have a common dialect, uniform social organization and possess cultural homogeneity having a common ancestor, political organization and religious pattern.

##### Paul Hockings

... a tribe is a system of social organization which embraces a number of local groups or settlements, which occupies a territory, and normally carries its own distinctive culture, its own name and its own language.



...it is small, usually preliterate and pre-industrial, relatively isolated, endogamous (with exogamous sub-tribal divisions), united mainly by kinship and culture, and in many places also territorial boundaries, and strongly ethnocentric ('We are the people').

#### D.N. Majumdar

A tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations.

#### George Peter Murdock

It is a social group in which there are many clans, nomadic bands, villages or other/subgroups which usually have a definite geographical area, a separate language/a singular and distinct culture and either a common political organization or at least a feeling of common determination against strangers.

It is evident from these definitions that a tribal community possesses some characteristics which we shall discuss in 1.5. It should be made clear that all the characteristics may or may not be found in a particular community.

You will not come across a tribal community having all the above characteristics which are advanced to define a tribe. There is a gap between the conceptualization of the term tribe and the empirical evidences. As Anthropology usually studies individual communities, the definitions would apply to the individual tribes at large. Its cross cultural implication therefore becomes weak and so there is no agreement on a universal definition of the term tribe.

### Conceptual Perspectives

Academicians have tried to understand 'tribe' from different perspectives. You will learn the following three perspectives.

- a. **Evolutionary perspective:** This perspective has three dimensions, namely 'tribe' as
  - (i) Stage in the Process of Social Evolution
  - (ii) Primitive Social Formation
  - (iii) Segmentary Society
- b. Tribe-Caste-Peasant Continuum
- c. Tribe in Transition

#### a. Evolutionary Scheme

The definition of the term tribe in empirical situation deviates substantially from the ideal definitions because the tribes are in the process of transformation. Moreover, the tribes and civilizations also coexist. In such a situation due to the process of interaction the definition of the tribe would be substantially different from the one living in relatively isolation. The ideal type definition informs us about the tribes living outside the state and civilization. Therefore, André Béteille in his articles written in 1960, 1980 and 1992 has argued that the definition of the term tribe should be historically approached to understand the gap between the ideal type definition and the deviations. He suggests considering, while defining a tribe in historical

## NOTES

## NOTES

perspective, 'a particular mode of human grouping' in which many tribes were living in different parts. According to him mode of human grouping reminiscent of a stage in social evolution appeared to be the two essential elements in a definition. Obviously, he suggests for a definition of tribe situating tribe as a stage in the scheme of evolution of society.

- (i) **Tribe as a Stage in Social Evolution:** Earlier anthropologists like Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-81), Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) and other evolutionists defined tribes as type of society and regarded them representing a particular stage of evolution. Morgan attempted to demonstrate the stages of social evolution by the comparison of contemporary primitive societies. Tribe was seen as primitive social formation; primitive because they were supposed to represent the earlier stages through which the contemporary western civilization has evolved.

The evolutionary explanation is also evident in the writings of Marshall Sahlins (1961) and Elman Service (1962). Service defined four stages of social evolution which are also the four levels of political organizations: hunter-gatherer, tribe, chiefdom, and state. According to their scheme, socio-politico development has occurred through four stages and the tribe represents the second level in the pre-state social organization. Their scheme was:

**Band → Tribe → Chiefdom → State**

**Band:** It is a small group of people related through the ties of common descent. Members have face to face interaction and migrate together within a specific locality. Bands are generally exogamous and other than marriage partner each band is self-sufficient and independent of the other.

**Tribe:** For certain strategic significance like conflict or exploitation of resources some bands are believed to have come together to form a tribe. A tribe represents more than a mere collection of bands; it differs from bands in terms of nature of integration of society. Other than kinship affiliation, association was based on age groups, religious congregation and ceremonial parties. In the absence of any centralized authority, social order was maintained through the relative differences of statuses and roles. This perspective on tribe puts chieftain type communities outside the group. But tribes with chieftain type of authority are considered as tribes beyond evolutionary frame. This marks the existence of chiefdom as a distinct stage in social evolution redundant.

**Chiefdom:** A third stage of pre-state social organization was marked by emergence of a ruler. In the initial stages the chiefdoms were theocracies, with the ruler or the member of his family also serving as a high religious official. When the chief died the role was filled by someone from a particular line of descent.

**State:** It is a system of social organization marked by stratification with separation of political power from religious power. The centralized government bestowed with political power, i. e. the State, had the right to collect taxes, drag citizens for work and for war, and enact and enforce law.

## NOTES

- (ii) **Primitive social formation:** Godelier (1977) also argues that the tribe is a type of social organization which can only be understood if we view it as a stage in social evolution. The 19<sup>th</sup> century evolutionists readily believed that the development of a more complex or a more advanced type of society would automatically lead to the effacement of the tribal type. For these scholars of tribal studies, it is a truism that tribes have preceded states and civilizations on the broad scale of social evolution. That is why Godelier and his associates placed tribes as opposites to civilisations. Ideally, they saw a tribe as an isolated, self-contained primitive social formation, but not part of civilization by force or by choice. It was defined on the basis of absence of those characteristics which we associate with civilization.

In the study of the tribes; the concept of civilization has its own connotation. Henry Lewis Morgan's work of 1877 (1944) emphasises on the 'practice of reading and writing'. It is also understood in the presence of 'great tradition' as defined by Robert Redfield in 1947 (1956). Naturally, the tribes do not have a 'great tradition', but have their local specific cultural behaviour, i.e., the 'little tradition'. In the sense of absence of the 'practice of reading and writing' they are not illiterate, but are 'preliterate'. So while putting the tribes in the scale of civilization they would not feature in the binary oppositions of 'civilized' and 'literate', i.e. they should not be designated as 'uncivilized' and 'illiterate'. Rather they should be designated as 'non-civilised' or 'preliterate'. Therefore, B eteille has suggested for a flexible attitude towards the definition of the term tribe.

- (iii) **Tribe as a Segmentary Society:** Marshall Sahlins (1968) places tribe as a stage of evolution. But he associates the term tribe, i.e., the stage with Segmentary lineages as distinguished from centralised chiefdoms. According to him, a tribe is a segmental organization. It is composed of a number of equivalent, unspecialized multifamily groups, each being the structural duplicate of the other - a tribe is a congeries of equal kin group blocks. The segments are the residential and proprietary units of the tribe. It is held together principally by likeness among its segments and pan-tribal institutions, such as system of intermarrying clans, of age grades, or military or religious societies, which cross cuts the primary segment.

### b. Tribe-Peasant-Caste Continuum

As has been said, tribes in India have never lived in isolation. So a tribal community is not static. In other words, the community is in transition. There is another dimension to understand the tribal interaction with non-tribals (caste-based societies). Tribes learned from caste-based societies and castes also learned some aspects of life of the tribals. Due to this process of interaction assimilation, acculturation and adaptation have taken place between tribals and non-tribal communities in different degrees.

This interaction has been a feature of Indian society from early period and can be traced back to the days of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharat*. The groups were referred to as *Jana* in *Ramayana*. When Rama reached the borders of the forests of central India during his exile, the land was introduced to him as *Jana-sthan*, the land of tribal people. His meeting with Guha and the Bhil woman *Savari* is a popular episode in *Ramayana*. In *Mahabharat*, there are references to *kiratas*, Bhim's marriage with a

tribal girl, Hidimbika, Krishna's fight with Banasura, etc. These in fact point to the prevalence of contact between tribes and non-tribes during that period.

Thus, in the process of this interaction the tribals have adopted some aspects of non-tribal ways of life. The converse is also true.

## NOTES

There is a legend in Odisha about the incorporation of a tribal god into the Hindu tradition which evolved into 'Jagannath Cult'. The Badaga of the Niligiri Hills were influenced by neighbouring tribes. The Karma festival of the Oraons has also become a festival of many neighbouring communities in Jharkhand and Odisha.

We do not have sound logic to put tribal communities at one end of a pole and the non-tribal peasant communities at the other end. If we place tribal and peasant communities at opposite ends of a pole, there will be many tribal communities displaying characteristics of peasant and caste-based communities and many caste-based communities displaying characteristics of tribal communities at different degrees. There will not be a vacuum between tribal and caste-based societies placed at the end of opposite poles. That is why it is said that there is a continuum between tribal and caste-based societies, known as tribe-caste and tribe-peasant continuum.

We can cite some examples of such continuum. Anthony Walker (1998) working among the Toda of the Niligiri Hills for several years, arrived at the conclusion that in comparison to 'tribe', the term 'caste' has a 'considerable value', for it helps in placing them in the context of the south Indian cultural matrix, to which they actually belong. He finds it confusing when the Toda are designated as a 'tribe' in the sense in which this term has been used in anthropological and sociological literature. In a similar methodological perspective Hockings (1998) after working among the Badaga of the Niligiri Hills finds that the Badaga have been called 'tribe', 'caste', and 'Hindu race' in the literature on them starting from 1922. He argues like Walker that instead of focusing on a unit and labelling it, the entire system of which the unit is a part needs scrutiny. The Badaga had migrated to the Niligiri Hills from the plains to the north. Theirs is an example of a caste group which adopted a tribal model through its regular interaction with the Toda, the Kurumba, and the Kota, the Scheduled Tribes of the Niligiri Hills. Hockings considers the Niligiri peoples as a 'case of a caste society' displaying 'several distinct indigenous cultures' which have their 'respective origins in pre-caste social formation'.

F. G. Bailey (1961), proposed this continuity in his concept of Tribe-Caste continuum, where he showed there are societies with both characteristics of tribes as well as caste. Surjit Sinha (1965), similarly proposed a continuum between the tribe and peasant societies in India. Further, with several changes occurring among them in independent India because of government programmes of planned change, many of the tribes have undergone rapid transformation.

### c. Tribe in Transition

As it is repeatedly expressed, tribes in India were never in isolation. The communities at different levels of civilisation have co-existed with non-tribal communities since time immemorial. Because of this co-existence, the tribal communities have been interacting with non-tribals (caste societies) at different levels. Needless to say, tribal communities in India are not static; they are always in the process of adoption and

#### Check Your Progress

9. Answer the following in brief:
- What are the sources of origin of tribe as a social category?
  - Who are denotified communities?
  - What are four stages of social evolution?
  - What do you mean by tribe-caste continuum?

change. The process is more visible when these communities, whether scheduled or non-scheduled are integrated to the Nation's development agenda. A.R. Desai (1969) has, therefore, aptly remarked that the tribes in India are in transition. According to A. R. Desai (1969), in India majority of tribes should be viewed as 'tribes in transition'. To define them as tribe one has to take a historical perspective. Beteille (1992: 76) advocates a historical perspective to define a tribe. According to him, only by going into antecedent of a group we can say whether or not it should be considered as tribe.

The transition concept can also be understood with reference to syncretism or adaptation to different livelihood strategies. This concept portrays tribal society against the background of self-contained and static nature as was attributed in earlier writings on tribes.

Among the Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh one would find a syncretic tradition of Buddhism and indigenous practices. They belong to the *Theraveda* cult of Buddhism, but also believe in the deities of mountains, forests and many other of animistic traditions. Ancestor worship is a practice of their curative system. Such a syncretic tradition is noticed in the study of Subhadra Mitra Channa on the Jad of Harsil (one of the five ST groups of Uttarakhand included within the generic category of Bhotiya). The people do not subscribe to any clearly bounded social or religious category; rather display a tradition betwixt and between the Hindu and Buddhist tradition. Tribe as a 'closed cultural group' is not evident in Khampti or Jad communities. Subhadra Mitra Channa further writes that Jad, being the pastoralists, shifts with their animals from one location to another as an adaptive strategy to different ecological niches. Obviously, they do not follow a singular adaptive strategy for themselves and their animals. Appropriately, she labels them as a 'mode of adaptation', a way of life with adjustment to different ecological conditions rather than a bounded unit as a tribe is understood in conventional scholarship.

Changes have been occurring in 'tribal' communities of India at different perceptible levels. Tribes do not stick to one locality. They migrate when the resource base is depleted. Against this background 'tribes in transition' is one of the characteristics to explain the tribal communities in India.

### **1.3.4 Tribe and its Constitutional Categories in India**

The Constitution of India accepted the term 'tribe' to designate a social division. While scheduling the communities it used terms like 'caste' and 'tribe'. However, you will come to know that there is no definition of the term tribe in the Constitution, though it has accepted the communities earlier listed as tribes in its Scheduled Tribe category following the parameters laid down by Lokur Committee.

In India the tribe is largely an administrative concept. It refers to Scheduled Tribes, i.e. the tribes and communities listed in the Constitution of India. Other than the Scheduled Tribe we come across another term, namely Particularly Vulnerable Tribes. Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (earlier known as Primitive Tribal Groups; both abbreviated as PTGs) is a sub-category of STs. In this section we shall discuss the concept of tribe with reference to Scheduled Tribe and Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs).

## **NOTES**



## NOTES

### Scheduled Tribes

With the attainment of independence, a large number of communities enumerated in census records were found backward in terms of development indicators like literacy, access to health care, nutrition, income and poverty. These communities came to be known as Scheduled Tribes as per Art.342. Certain pockets in India are largely dominated by these ST communities. These pockets were known as ‘excluded area’ during the colonial rule and later designated as Scheduled Area. The tribes and other communities, especially in ‘scheduled area’ were listed in Indian Constitution in order to provide them special assistance.

There was a debate on the use of a term for these communities. In the debate of Constituent Assembly, Jai Pal Singh, a tribal leader, favoured the term *Adivasi* in place of Scheduled Tribe. But Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, who was the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, argued that *Adivasi* is a general term, which has no special legal *de jure* connotations. On the other hand, the term Scheduled Tribe has a fixed meaning, because it enumerates the tribes, and so he favoured its use.

The Constitution of India, Article 366 (25) defines Scheduled Tribes as “such tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be the scheduled Tribes (STs) for the purposes of this Constitution”. It is to be noted that only those tribes which have been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes are given special treatment or facilities envisaged under the Constitution. The Scheduled Tribes are specified by the President under Article 342 by a public notification. The Parliament may, by law, include or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes any tribal community or part thereof in any State or Union Territory. In Article 342, the procedure to be followed for specification of a Scheduled Tribe is prescribed.

Article 342 of our Constitution states that:  
The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor on... thereof, by public notification, specify tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purpose of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory, as the case may be.

In exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 342 of the Constitution of India, so far *nine* orders specifying the Scheduled Tribes in relation to the state and union territories have been promulgated. Out of these, eight are in operation at present as mentioned in table 1.1 in their original or amended form.

**Table 1.1** Orders Specifying the Scheduled Tribes

S. No.	Name of Order	Date of Notification	Applicability to States/ UTs
1	The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order 1950 (C.O.22)	6-9-1950	Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Goa, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Tripura And West Bengal.



**NOTES**

2	The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) (Union Territories) Order, 1951 (C.O.33)	20-9-1951	Daman & Diu, Lakshdweep
3	The Constitution (Andaman And Nicobar Islands) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1959 (C.O. 58)	31-3-1959	Andaman and Nicobar Islands
4	The Constitution (Dadra & Nagar Haveli) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1962 (C.O. 65)	30-6-1962	Dadra & Nagar Haveli
5	The Constitution (Uttar Pradesh) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1967 (C.O. 78)	24-6-1967	Uttar Pradesh
6	The Constitution (Nagaland) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1970 (C.O.88)	23-7-1970	Nagaland
7	The Constitution (Sikkim) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1978 (C.O.111)	22-6-1978	Sikkim
8.	The Constitution (Jammu & Kashmir) Scheduled Tribes Order, 1989 (C.O. 142)	7-10-1989	Jammu & Kashmir

No community has been specified as Scheduled Tribe in relation to the States of Haryana and Punjab and Union Territories of Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry.

One order namely the Constitution (Goa, Daman & Diu) Scheduled Tribes order 1968 has become defunct on account of reorganization of Goa, Daman & Diu in 1987. Under the Goa, Daman & Diu reorganization Act 1987 (18 of 1987) the list of Scheduled Tribes of Goa has been transferred to part XIX of the Schedule to the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 and that of Daman & Diu II of the Schedule of the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) (Union Territories) Order, 1951.

The criteria followed for declaring an area as Scheduled Area are preponderance of tribal population; compactness and reasonable size of the area; under-developed nature of the area; and marked disparity in economic standard of the people. The Orders, by which communities have been scheduled as tribes, do not contain the criteria for the specification of any community as Scheduled Tribe. These criteria are not spelt out in the Constitution of India either. However, these criteria have become well established. It subsumes the definitions contained in 1931 Census, the reports of first Backward Classes Commission 1955, the Advisory Committee (Kalelkar), on Revision of SC/ST lists (Lokur Committee), 1965 and the Joint Committee of Parliament on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 (Chanda Committee), 1969.

However, the criteria laid down were not very precise and it would have been difficult to go about identifying tribes with it. For example, what is meant by primitiveness was nowhere defined. The Draft National Policy of Tribals, 2006 admits, "The criteria laid down by the Lokur Committee are hardly relevant today. For instance, very few tribes can today be said to possess 'primitive traits'." The Presidential Order, 1950 declared 212 tribes located in fourteen states as Scheduled Tribes. In fact the list was more or less similar to the list prepared in the 1931 census. Their number increased to 427 in 1971, 437 in 1981, and

## NOTES

to 621 in 1991. Communities can be excluded or included in the list based on the recommendation of the President. The National Tribal Policy, 2006 puts the figure around 700 while in the First Draft, 2004, the number of ST communities was given 698.

According to V.K. Srivastava (2005), today when the anthropologist uses the term tribe in the context of India, they include all the communities included in the list of the Scheduled Tribes although some of them may not be in accordance with the anthropological conception of tribe.

### **Ambiguity in ST category**

Scheduled Tribe is an administrative and political concept and applies to individual communities and to territories as is the case of Kinnaur, Jaunsar-Bawar and Pangwal. In these territories people irrespective of their social categories have been declared as Scheduled Tribes.

The territorial dimension of the concept of Scheduled Tribe needs an explanation. Though Kinnauras are a territorial group which forms their socio-cultural identity, the Constitution of India has treated them differently unlike the Jaunsar-Bawar. T.S.Negi (1976) writes, originally there was the Kinnaura tribe, by legendary belief as well as some historical evidences and deduction, to be the descendant of the Kinnaura Tribe of Hindu Mythology. But the tribe is stratified on caste basis as Khashia, Chamang and Domang on the basis of specialised occupation. Those who followed the profession of shoe making are called Chamang, and those who followed the profession of iron works are called Domang. Khashias are equated with Rajput. Consequent of these occupational divisions, the Rajputs are known as 'Sawarn'- the high caste, and Damang and Chamang as 'Harijan'. Interestingly, all these groups have their socio-cultural identity as Kinnaura. Strangely, in Indian Constitution the Khashias are enumerated as Scheduled Tribes and the Damang and Chamang as Scheduled Castes.

Some of the areas like Jaunsar Bawar in Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand were declared Scheduled Area in 1967. As such the communities living there were scheduled as Jaunsar Bawar. Jaunsar is derived from the name Jamunasar meaning Jamuna tract of the District. The communities living there have three distinct social divisions. These three divisions are Khasa, which includes Rajput and Brahmins. The second one is the middle division under which Luhar, Sunar, Badi, Ode, Bajigi—the artisan communities are included. The third division is categorised as *harijans* and includes such communities as Dom, Koli, Kolta, Koiar, Angi, etc. The Jaunsar Bawar tribe in fact has a complete social categorization, in addition to it being a territorial construct. The territorial dimension of the tribal status is also reflected in case of many other tribes. The Malai Kuravar is a Scheduled Caste community in Tirunelveli district and ST community in Kanya Kumari district of Tamilnadu. Another interesting case of territorial dimension of identification of a tribe is the Bharia which is a primitive tribal group in Patalkot valley of Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. Outside the valley but within the district they are recognized as ST community. Further, outside the district the community is not scheduled. Similarly, Rabari community enjoys Scheduled Tribe status in Gujarat but Other Backward Class in Rajasthan.

## NOTES

The territorial dimension also emerges from the fact that ST is a state concept. The tribe of one state does not enjoy the same status in another state. The Adivasis of Central India who belonged to Munda, Santhal, Saura, and other tribal communities were brought as tea plantation labourers to Assam during British period. They are designated as Adivasis in Assam, the place to which they migrated, but without the status of ST. This ambiguity stems from the Constitutional provision as is read in Article 342 (1).

Article 342 (1): The President may with respect to any State or Union Territory, and where it is a State, after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities, which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory as the case may be.

Article 342 (2): Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes specified in a notification issued under clause (1) any tribe or tribal community or part of or group within any tribe or tribal community but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification.

In early anthropology literature tribe is depicted as a community outside the state. But in India there are tribal communities scheduled in the Indian Constitution which participated in State formation. Raj Gond, Jaintia, Tripuri and Bhuyan are examples.

Hugh Chisholm (1910), informs us in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

“... The 16th century saw the establishment of a powerful Gond kingdom by Sangram Sah, who succeeded in 1480 as the 47th of the petty Gond rajas of Garha-Mandla, and extended his dominions to include Saugor and Damoh on the Vindhyan plateau, Jubbulpore and Narsinghpur in the Nerbudda valley, and Seoni on the Satpura highlands ...”.

It is to be mentioned that the tribal chiefs were not the rulers of their own communities only. There are ‘non-tribal’ communities which were also ruled by them. The Khamptis of present Arunachal Pradesh were rulers of Sadiya outpost of the Ahom kingdom some times during first half of 19th century. Interestingly, Sadiya was not the inhabited land of the Khamptis.

R. Singh (2000) in his book entitled *Tribal Beliefs, Practices and Insurrections* writes,

...The Gond rajas of Chanda and Garha Mandla were not only the hereditary leaders of their Gond subjects, but also held sway over substantial communities of non-tribals who recognized them as their feudal lords ...

Raji, a small primitive tribe in central Himalaya claims to be the rulers of northern half of Pithoragarh district. They are descendents of Eskt’s dynasty. Similarly, the history of Jaintia kingdom of Meghalaya is an example of participation of the Jaintia tribe in state formation. The Tripura state is named after the Tripuri tribe who once ruled the land through Debarman clan.

During British period the construct of tribe was basically in contrast to caste which is a construct of occupational groups. But there are scheduled tribal communities within which occupational diversification is clearly visible. Kolcha, a *primitive* tribal group in Valsad and Panchmahals districts of Gujarat are basket makers, agriculture and forest labourers. But traditionally, this community was handling carcass.

## NOTES

The ST group also includes communities with class formation. The Bhoksa tribe of central Himalayas lives in two territorial divisions. Dehradun Pauri Gharwal and Bijnor districts constitute the first zone, while Nainital district constitutes the second one. The Bhoksas of second zone are economically better off as compared to those in first zone and consider themselves superior. The territorial dimension of ST is also reflected in their nomenclature. You will study about it in unit-IV of this paper. The Khampti tribe of Arunachal Pradesh has derived its name from a place full of gold (*Kham-gold; ti- land*). The Tangsa tribe of the same state derives its name from a place called *Tang*, Tangsa meaning the children of *Tang*. The Nyishi tribe identify themselves as the people living in a territory lying between *Nyeme* (Tibet) and *Nyipak* (plains). The Scheduled Tribe communities do not exist in all the states of India. In states of Punjab, Delhi and in Union Territory of Chandigarh there are no communities identified as STs. This does not mean that there is no ST population in these places. Thousands of students and members from ST communities come to these places for study and work. It is to be mentioned that ST category is not synonym of the social category called tribe in anthropological literature.

By now you have learned the following:

- (i) ST communities include societies with social hierarchy;
- (ii) they do not have only social dimension;
- (iii) these communities include societies which have participate in the process of state formation; and
- (iv) accommodate communities displaying occupational divisions;

### Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs)

The Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PTGs) is not a Constitutional category different from the Scheduled Tribes. It is a category within the ST category. The distinction between PTGs from within the STs is a matter of degree of development. The Shilu Ao Committee constituted by the Planning Commission in 1969 had observed that the impact of planned 'change and development' has not been uniform on all the tribal communities. Within the Scheduled Tribes, conditions of some of the communities have not improved. They remained extremely backward and some of them continued to be in the primitive food gathering stage. In view of this, in 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups. In 2006, the Government of India renamed the PTGs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups but retained the abbreviation PTGs.

The Ministry of Tribal Affairs use the abbreviated form of PTGS and PVTGs interchangeably for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

In view of this, in 1975, the Government of India identified 52 most vulnerable tribal groups as a separate category called PTGs. Further, in 1993 an additional 23 groups were added to the category, making it a total of 75 PTGs out of 705 Scheduled Tribes, spread over 17 states and one Union Territory (UT), in the country (2011 census). Table 1.2 below provides information on distribution of PTGs in states and UTs.

#### Check Your Progress

10. Write short answer of the following:
  - (a) What are Constitutional categories of tribes?
  - (b) Which Articles relate to the definition of ST?
  - (c) Mention the states and UTs where STs have not been enumerated.
  - (d) What are social categories corresponding to tribes which are not scheduled in the Constitution?

**Table 1.2 State and Union Territory-wise Distribution of PTGs, Census,2011**

Name of States/UT	Name of PTG with population in parentheses
Andhra Pradesh & Telengana	1.Chenchu (64227), 2. Bodo Gadaba (38,081, This includes the Gadaba Group), 3.Gutob Gadaba, 4.Dongria Khond (103290 Includes Khond grpuo except Khon Porja), 5. Kutia Khond, 6. Kolam (44912), 7. Konda Reddi (107747) 8. Kondasavar (139424), 9. Bondo Porja, 10. Khond Porja, 11. Parengi Porja (36502), 12. Thoti (4811) ( <i>Population figures of Bono Porja and Khon Porja not avial-ble</i> )
Bihar	13.Asur (4,129), 14. Birhor (377) 15.Birjia (208) 16. Hill Kharia (11,569), 17. Korwa (452), 18. Mal Paharia (2,225), 19. Parhaiya (647), 20. Sauria Pahari (1,932), and 21. Savar (80)
Jharkhand	13.Asur (22,459) 14. Birhor (10,726) 15.Birjia (6,276) 16. Hill Kharia (196,135), 17. Korwa (35,606) 18. Mal Paharia (135,797) 19. Parhaiya (25,585) 20. Sauria Pahari (46,222), and 21. Savar (9,688)
Gujarat	22. Kolgha (67,119), 23.Kathodi (13,632), 24.Kotwalia (24,249), 25.Padhar (30932), and 26.Siddi/Sidhi (8661)
Karnataka	27. Jenu Kuruba (36,076), and 28. Koraga (14,794)
Kerala	29. Cholonaikaqyn(124), 30. Kadar (2,949), 31. Kattunayakan (18,199), 32.Koraga (1,582) & 33. Kurumba (2,586)
Madhya Pradesh & Chatishgarh	34. Abujh Maria (5,093,124), 35. Baiga (414,526), 36. Bharia (193,230), 37. Birhor (52), 38. Hill Korwa ( <i>not available</i> ), 39. Kamar (666), & 40. Sahariya (165)
Maharashtra	41. Kathodi (285,334), 42. Kolam (194,671), & 43. Maria Gond (1,618,090)
Manipur	44. Maram Naga (27,524)
Odisha	45.Chuktia Bhunjiya (2378), 46.Birhor (596), 47. Bondo (12231), 48.Didayi (8890), 49. Dongria Khond (6306), 50. Juang (47095), 51. Kharia (222844), 52. Kutia Khond (7232), 53. Lanjia Saura (5960), 54.Lodha (9785), 55. Mankidia(2222), 56. Paudi Bhuyan (5788), & 57. Soura(534751)
Rajasthan	58.Saharia (1,11,377)
Tamil Nadu	59. Irular (189,661), 60. Kattunayakan (46,672), 61. Kota (308), 62. Korumba (6,823), 63. Paniyan (10,134), & 64. Toda (2,002)
Tripura	65. Riang (1,88,220)
Uttar Pradesh	66. Buksa (4,710), & 67. Raji (2,241)
Uttarakhand	66. Buksa (4,710), & 67. Raji (1,295)
West Bengal	68. Birhor (2,241) , 69. Lodha (1,08,707) &70. Toto (66,627)
Andaman & Nico-bar Islands	71. Great Andamanese (44), 72. Jarwa (380), 73. Onge (101), 74. Sentinelese (15), & 75. Shom Pen (229)

**NOTES**

According to Census 2001 the total population of PTGs in the country is 2,768,322. The figures for 2011 census are not available due to non-availability of population in three tribes. But the total population figure of PTGs excluding these three tribes stands at 10,709,967.

The Abhuj Maria tribal group in Madhya Pradesh has the highest population which stands at 5,093,124 and the Sentineles the lowest at 15. Similarly, the population of PTGs in Madhya Pradesh is 5,701,763, highest among the states, and in Andaman & Nicobar Islands it is the lowest at 769. Further, Odisha has



recorded the highest number of PTGs at 13 followed by 12 in Andhra Pradesh (Telengana was not created by then). States like Manipur, Rajasthan and Tripura have one PTG each.

## NOTES

PTG is an administrative category used for those Scheduled Tribe communities who were identified as more isolated from the wider community and who maintain a distinctive cultural identity. These hunting, food-gathering, and some agricultural communities, have been identified as less acculturated tribes among the tribal population groups and that is why these are in need of special programmes for their sustainable development. In these communities the development indicators are most vulnerable. Understandably, these groups are more vulnerable to hunger, starvation, malnutrition, and ill health. Some groups like the Andamanese, Shom Pan, Cholanaiakan and Sentineles are on the verge of extinction.

### 1.3.5 Beyond Constitutional Category

There are tribal communities which are outside the Constitutional category. Further, the shifting nomenclature of the communities designated as tribe has not got a place in the Constitution. These communities adopt the name of a dominant tribe (see Unit-IV). What we will discuss here is about two terms address - Non-ST for communities who are not scheduled and 'indigenous' which does not have Constitutional approval as a synonym for the term 'tribe'.

#### Non-Scheduled Tribes

As has been discussed, in India the tribe is an administrative and political concept. The concept whether we accept or reject, has both administrative and political overtone. ST, Denotified Tribe, and PTG are examples. Though the term indigenous is not accepted administratively, its origin and debate on it has colonial shadow. All these concepts do not cover all the communities which anthropologists designate as tribe. There are communities possessing all the characteristics which have been the criteria to enlist a community as ST. But still they are not scheduled in the Constitution. These communities are called Non-Scheduled tribes and unfortunately are deprived of the benefits which accrue to STs according to Constitutional provisions. Members of these communities feel that they are tribes. At the same time, they feel that they are deprived of what their counterparts enjoy having been scheduled in the Constitution. It is not a surprise that the Gujars in Rajasthan and Koch Rajbanshi in Assam claim for ST status. The Dhankuts of Bahraich district of Uttar Pradesh have all the characteristics of a tribe but are not scheduled in the Constitution. Similar is the case with Badaga of Nilgiri Hills who do not enjoy ST status. However, in Census 2011, many such communities including earlier SCs have been enumerated under ST category.

#### Indigenous People

You have studied already that native people of many countries did not like to continue the use of the term 'tribe'. The communities whom the blanket term 'tribe' is applied in fact have their own appellation. Moreover, they are designated differently in different countries in contrast to colonial settlers. In Australia these people are recognised as 'Aborigines', in New Zealand as 'Maaori', in Canada, as 'First Nations' and in Americas as 'Indigenous people'. All these appellations point

to their original/earlier settlement. This originality again is related, as you will know, to the colonial contact. These people existed in their countries before the colonisation of their territory. Therefore, they are indigenous. Indigenous movement has been a global phenomenon. In countries like India, China and some other Asian countries different groups lived together before colonial contact. Nevertheless, some groups of people from these countries who somewhat resemble to the original people of Australia, Americas, Africa in social, cultural and economic life also have become a part of indigenous movement.

**Historical Background:** The issue of indigenous people was almost non-existent in the Indian academic as well as political world before 1993. The United Nations declared 1993 as the ‘International Year of the Indigenous People’. Arguments against and in favour of considering tribes in India as indigenous people have come up with the same degree of intensity. Many of those who defended the term ‘indigenous’ for tribes happened to be activists. The slogan – ‘The adivasi of the world unite’ – acquired popularity. This slogan was printed on the cover of the booklets that the Indian Conference of Indigenous and Tribal People brought out in 1993 on the occasion of the UN Year of the Indigenous Peoples of the World.

However, the indigenous movement that culminated in 1990s can be traced back to 1923. During this year, the Cayuga Chief Deskaheh, a representative of the Iroquois of Ontario in Canada went to the League of Nations to represent the “Six Nations of the Great River”. He carried a passport issued by the “authority of his people”. However, two years before this event in 1921, the General Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) had showed concern for indigenous workers, who were among the most exploited. In 1926 its Governing Body adopted Convention No.50 “Concerning the Regulation of Certain Special Systems of Recruiting Workers”. In 1939 it adopted Convention No.64 “Concerning the Regulation of Certain Special System of Recruiting Workers”.

It is to be noted that the real indigenous rights movement began only with decolonisation after World War II. Autonomy movement began in several independent countries. Most such movements were in Latin America whose indigenous populations were feeling doubly exploited. On one side foreign companies controlled their wealth and on the other the national elite collaborated with those foreign corporations. Many indigenous communities of the Americas asked question about the genocide of their own ancestors. Additionally, European indigenous peoples began to become more aware of their rights.

These movements created heightened awareness in some international organizations, especially ILO whose mandate is protection of workers’ rights. The result was ILO Convention 107 of 1957 “Concerning the Populations in Independent Countries”. In this Convention term ‘indigenous people’ came in. The convention used the term as a ‘population of special category analogous to the tribal and semi-tribal population’. Later, the ILO adopted a revised Convention 169, where the concept of indigenous has been overtly de-linked from the concept of tribe. By implication, however, they have been treated as synonyms.

The General Assembly of the United Nations also accept the term indigenous in the sense of tribal people in relation to colonial contact. Later it has modified the definition to include tribes of every country because the State structure incorporates national, social and cultural characteristics alien to theirs.

## NOTES

## NOTES

**Indigenous People in contrast to colonisation:** The term ‘indigenous’ to designate original people of a territory was born in the Americas, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand where a clear line divides them from the colonial conquerors. In Australia and Africa for example, the natives who inhabited the land before colonial contact and the new migrants including the colonisers live together in post-colonial period. Obviously, the population is divided into earlier settlers and new migrants. In countries of South Asia, however, different ethnic groups lived for millennia. As a result, there is difference of opinion on who is indigenous to these countries.

The use of the term ‘indigenous’ as synonym of ‘tribe’ lacks definitional clarity when its universal applicability is concerned. Because of this ambiguity the ILO Convention 169 (Article 1) recognises both indigenous and tribal people. This means those who live in a way that sets them apart from the national community, whether or not they are descended from “first inhabitants.” For instance, in several Central American countries, garifunas (or maroons, or other terms) are descendants of escaped African slaves, and thus are not indigenous in the literal sense, but they are tribal and are covered by the Convention.

It is to be noted that the definition of Daes on indigenous is taken as unofficial UN definition of the term indigenous people. However, Miquel Alfonso Martinez (1999) does not agree to the universality of its application.

While working on a UNESCO report entitled *Study on Treaties, Agreements & Other Constructive Arrangements between States, and Indigenous Populations* he has questioned the usage of the term indigenous people in Asian countries in general and in India in particular. We know that in India not only tribal communities but all the communities which form into Indian nation state in post-colonial era were inhabitants even before the colonial contact. Needless to say, the parameter of colonisers contact put all the communities in India including the tribals under indigenous category.

### **Tribe and Indigenous Interface in India**

In India, the use of the term ‘tribe’ as synonymy to ‘indigenous’ is contested. In India those who live in post-colonial state also lived together during pre-colonial period.

But some scholars apply the concept to tribal communities considering their domination by nation state. The state power is considered to be dominating the marginalised people including the tribals. It is often highlighted that these peoples are reduced to a colonial situation and are dominated by a system of values and institutions maintained by the ruling groups of the country.

However, this type of explanation of the relations between the power of the state and the marginalised communities is too partial an understanding. The dominating role of the state as ‘colonial invasion and domination’ does not hold to the principles of welfare commitments of the nation state like India. Policies and programmes are formulated for the general welfare of marginalised people with compensatory discrimination and affirmative action to raise their level of development at par with national level.

The definition of the term ‘indigenous’ by applying the ideological principle of colonisation, in which ‘intent of dominance’ is inherent, to include the tribal people of India does not have a stand.

## NOTES

There are other concerns which need scrutiny when one addresses the issue of the 'indigenous'. The moot issue is whether to consider tribes that includes ST, non ST and denotified tribes as indigenous people or only the ST category under it. If we consider ST category, it becomes problematic. There are migrants from plains to hills like some communities of Jaunsar Bawar and Gaddi of Himachal Pradesh who are included in the ST category. Moreover, the ST being a state specific category, the same community across the political boundary may not be considered as indigenous. As we have discussed earlier, the Rabari community enjoys Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in Gujarat but Other Backward Class (OBC) in Rajasthan. Similarly, the Malai Kuravar is a Scheduled Caste (SC) community in Tirunelveli district and a Scheduled Tribe (ST) community in Kanya Kumari district of Tamil Nadu. If the tribe is called indigenous, then that indigeneity is lost if they migrate to other places. The Santhals and Mundas, who are called Adivasis in their respective earlier settlements and in Assam to which they migrated, belong to tribal category in an Anthropological sense. These people migrated to Assam which was then inhabited by the Assamese people. So in comparison to them, the Assamese population are early settlers in Assam. Being Adivasis they could not be indigenous while non-tribe Assamese would come under the definition of indigenous as they are early settlers.

Many ethnographical studies on tribals point to the migratory nature of Indian population in general and tribes in particular at different points of time. The *Tani* groups of tribes in Arunachal trace their migration in different batches from a place in Tibet over centuries till they came to their present habitation with short sojourn en route. This context's the remarks of Ludwig Gumplowicz and Irving Louis Horowitz (1980) in their work entitled *Outlines of Sociology* is worth mentioning. They inform us that,

... The Negritos were the earliest inhabitants of India ... The Proto-Australoids who followed them had their type more or less fixed in India and therefore may be considered to be the true aborigines. Thereafter the Austro-Asiatic peoples came ... the Indo Aryans came and settled in India; so, too, did the Dravidians... This being the state of our knowledge regarding the peopling of India, it would be hazardous to look upon one particular section of the population as the aborigines of India ...

On the basis of the findings of the People of India Project, K.S. Singh (1997) writes:

Four hundred and nine tribes (64.3 per cent) claim to be migrants to their present habitat. In fact, all our tribal people have been migrants. Their migration is recorded in oral tradition and historical accounts. About eight per cent of the tribes record their migration in recent years.

The migration has led to various levels of interaction of different communities. In this context S.C. Dube (1998:5) notes:

The Kol and Kirda of India have had a long association with later immigrants. Mythology and history bear testimony to their [tribals'] encounters and intermingling.

It is a known fact that the indigenous debate is a recent origin. It has political overtone and colonial intention. So the point is that the tribal world should be understood in

## NOTES

the context of its cosmology and the thoughts of the people. In this context Andre Béteille observes:

Where historical records are scarce and historical memory is short, the idea of 'indigenous people' provides abundant scope for the proliferation of myths relating to blood and soil.

Does it then mean that the term 'indigenous' does not have any use in the Indian context? The term *Adivasi* is analogous to the term indigenous. The *Adivasi* concept was accepted by the communities much before the indigenous issue emerged. Whereas, the term indigenous has international dimension that of *Adivasi* has India specificity. When two communities co-exist in a particular place there is the possibility that one community could be the earlier settler. If this earlier settler is a so called tribal community, then the *Adivasi* appellation has some meaning. If two communities are so called Aryans, for example, the *Adivasi* identity does not have any meaning for the earlier settlers. For all practical purposes *Adivasi* word was used to refer to the tribal groups, who identified themselves in their community names like Gond, Bodo, etc. To bring all of them to one category the generic *Adivasi* term has been coined. In this sense indigenous as an equivalent to the term *Adivasi*, perhaps will have a meaning in India. On the other hand, the term indigenous with its international connotation is a misnomer.

To conclude, in India, the term tribe is essentially a politico-administrative concept. Certain techno-economically backward communities, mostly inhabiting forests, hilly and remote interiors, have been administratively determined as such for uplifting them to higher standard of life in consonance with provisions of Indian constitution. But, in academic parlance the concept signifies socio-cultural homogeneity, a lower stage in the techno-economic parameter, practice of animism, lack of recorded history and literary tradition, Segmentary social structure and a lack of elaborate division of labour other than these based on age and sex criteria. (Behura,1997).

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## 2.2 HABITATS

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Habitats ordinarily refer to natural environments and therefore, are physical environments. In this sense tribal habitats refer to ecological base of tribal settlements and tribal way of life. However, information on tribal habitats and dependent life style is not available for all tribes in India. There are micro studies, but for tribes as a whole a comparative presentation of habitats and life style is not available in details. You will have an idea of tribal habitat with reference to the following:

- 1..1 Tribal village
  - 1..2 Scheduled and Tribal Areas according to the provisions of V<sup>th</sup> and VI<sup>th</sup>Schedules of the Constitution of India.
- 1..3 Physical divisions
- 1..4 Regional distribution
- 1..5 Distribution of tribal population
- 1..6 Concentration in districts



### 1.4.1 Tribal Village

As you know the habitat of a tribe has a territorial boundary. This boundary is notional according to tribe's perception. However, often natural objects like streams, rivers, big trees, or boulders mark the boundary. In this sense the smallest territorial unit of tribal habitat is a village with its own spread. The territorial spread or the physical dimension includes all the available resources-forests, hills, rivers, lands, etc. Resources are common property and individual ownership is defined within the frame of community ownership based on customs and practices. Resource perception is an important characteristic of understanding a habitat. Each tribe has its own perception. For example, the Galo tribe of Arunachal Pradesh use the term *Gida-isi* or *Kode-isi* to mean all the natural resources in Galo area and in village territory. *Gida* literally means land and forest, whereas '*Kode*' means land and '*isi*' means water. In general, '*Kode-isi*' includes land including hills, water and forests.

The tribal habitat has also a cultural dimension. The village territory is dotted with sacred places and objects. Caves, big trees, deep gorges, etc. are revered as abode of spirits. Myths, legends, tales and associated heroic deeds and migration stories attach a sense of belonging to the territory. The village territory has social and political dimensions also. The members of the village have well defined ways of social interaction as individuals and in groups. The tribal system of governance, whether cephalous or acephalous, decides upon development works, hunting and fishing, raids and settles disputes.

A tribal habitat also is an extension beyond village to include adjacent villages of the same tribe or different tribes. In this case a tribal habitat is the sum total of individual village territories while in a chieftainship tribe the habitats present the sum total of individual village territories and territorial tracts under the direct control of the chief. Such tracts do not fall under the jurisdiction of any village. For example, the Khampti tribe of Arunachal Pradesh is a chieftainship type of society. Traditionally they claimed a vast area in the foot hills of Lohit district even though they lived in some 20 villages. They claimed the eastern boundary of their territory from Diban to Parshuramkund, northern boundary from Pashuramkund to Sadiya along the river Lohit, the western boundary from Sadiya to Lajum and the southern boundary from Lajum to Diban. But at present hundreds of villages of non-Khamptis, both of tribes and castes have been set up within this perceived territory of the Khamptis.

In such large tribal habitats, in recent years, other groups have settled. You will not find the continuity of a tribal habitat with tribal villages and land tracts outside village boundary. In Jharkhand you will find Oraon villages within the traditional Munda territory. The Oraons who migrated from Rohtasgarh some 300 or more years ago; established settlements in the territory which was inhabited by the Mundas. The tribal habitat then is a sum total of Oraon and Munda habitats. Besides the Oran and the Munda tribes, will be found settlements of other caste communities in the territory. Census of India 2011 does record tribal villages, but, with the habitation of people from non-tribal communities. Therefore, it is found that 110118 villages consist of tribal population more than 50 per cent and 35504 villages consist of tribal populations between 25 and 50 per cent. In 124114 villages tribal population is less than 100 per cent.

## NOTES

By now you have come to know that a tribal habitat cannot be understood in exclusive sense. In recent years, Constitutional recognition of tribal and scheduled areas in India would be of much help to understand tribal habitat administratively.

## NOTES

### 1.4.2 Scheduled and Tribal Areas

The V<sup>th</sup> & VI<sup>th</sup> Schedules of The Constitution of India have defined and identified scheduled and tribal areas. Administratively these areas can be called as tribal habitats.

**Fifth Schedule and Scheduled Areas:** The term ‘Scheduled Areas’ has been defined in the Indian Constitution as “such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas.” Paragraph 6 of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution prescribes procedures for scheduling, rescheduling and alteration of Scheduled Areas. So, specification of Scheduled Areas in relation to a particular State/Union Territory is by a notified Order of the President, after consultation with the concerned State/UT Governments.

The criteria followed for declaring an area as Scheduled Area embody principles followed in declaring Excluded and Partially-Excluded Areas under the Government of India Act 1935. These embody principles followed in Schedule B of recommendations of the Excluded and Partially Excluded Areas Sub Committee of Constituent Assembly and the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, 1961.

The Fifth Schedule covers Tribal areas in 9 states of India namely Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Rajasthan. The scheduled areas in these states have been shown in Table 1.3.

*Table 1.3 List of Scheduled Areas in Nine States*

State	Areas
Andhra Pradesh	Visakhapatnam, East Godavari, West Godavari, Adilabad, Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Mahboobnagar, Prakasam (only some mandals are scheduled mandals).
Jharkhand	Dumka, Godda, Deogarh, Sahabgunj, Pakur, Ranchi, Singhbhum (East & West), Gumla, Simdega, Lohardaga, Palamu, Garwa, (some districts are only partly tribal blocks, such as Rabda and Bakoria Panchayats of Satbarwa Bolck in Palamu district, Bhandaria Block in Garhwa district and Sunderpahari and Boarijor Blocks of Godda district).
Chhattisgarh	Sarbhuja, Bastar, Raigad, Raipur, Rajnandgaon, Durg, Bilaspur, Sehdol, Chindwada, Kanker.
Himachal Pradesh	Lahaul and Spiti districts, Kinnaur, Pangi tehsil and Bharmour sub-tehsil in Chamba district.
Madhya Pradesh	Jhabua, Mandla, Dhar, Khargone, East Nimar (khandwa), Sailana tehsil in Ratlam district, Betul, Seoni, Balaghat, Morena.
Gujarat	Surat, Bharauich, Dangs, Valsad, Panchmahl, Sadodara, Sabarkanta (parts of these districts only).
Maharashtra	Thane, Nasik, Dhule, Ahmednagar, Pune, Nanded, Amravati, Yavatmal, Gadchiroli, Chandrapur (parts of these districts only).

Odisha	Mayurbhanj, Sundargarh, Koraput (fully scheduled area in these three districts), Raigada, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Boudhkondmals, Ganjam, Kalahandi, Bolangir, Balasore (parts of these districts only, Khondmals tahsil of Khondmals sub-division, and Balliguda and G. Udayagiri tahsils of Balliguda sub-division in Boudhkhondmals district).
Rajasthan	Banswara, Dungarpur (fully tribal districts), Udaipur, Chittaurgarh, Siroi (partly tribal areas).

You know that the President of India by Orders called the Scheduled Areas (Part A States) Order, 1950 and the Scheduled Areas (Part B States) Order 1950 set out the Scheduled Areas in the States. Further by Orders namely the Madras Scheduled Areas (Cesser) Order, 1951 and the Andhra Scheduled Areas (Cesser) Order, 1955 certain areas of the then east Godavari and Visakhapatnam districts were rescheduled.

Later these Scheduled Areas were extended to be coterminous with Tribal Sub-Plan Areas in some states. At the time of devising and adopting the strategy of Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) for socio-economic development of Scheduled Tribes during the Fifth Five Year Plan (1974-79), certain areas besides Scheduled Areas, were found having preponderance of tribal population. Therefore, in August 1976 it was decided to make the boundaries of the Scheduled Areas coterminous with the Tribal Sub-Plan areas. Accordingly, the President has issued from time to time Orders specifying Scheduled Areas afresh in relation to the States of Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan. Areas in Himachal Pradesh were scheduled on 27.11.1975. Thus, presently the Tribal Sub-Plan areas (Integrated Tribal Development Projects/Integrated Tribal Development Agency areas only) are coterminous with Scheduled Areas in the States of Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan. However, in Andhra Pradesh the Scheduled Areas are not coterminous with the Tribal Sub-Plan Areas.

**The Sixth Schedule and Tribal Areas:** Tribal areas mean areas where provisions of Sixth Schedule are applicable. The Constitution of India refers tribal areas within the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram. Tribal Areas of these states as specified in Parts I, II, IIA and III are as under:

Part I	Part II	Part IIA	Part III
1. The North Cachar Hills District	1. Khasi Hills District	Tripura Tribal Areas District	The Chakma District
2. The Karbi-Anglong District	2. Jaintia Hills District		The Mara District
	3. The Garo Hills District		The Lai District

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

11. State whether the following statements are True or False:
  - (a) Lepcha is an example of Tibeto-Mongoloid group.
  - (b) Khasis are Mongoloids but speak a language that belongs to Austro-Asiatic family.
  - (c) Tribal villages have only territorial sphere.
  - (d) The designation 'indigenous people' has a colonial context.
  - (e) You can also study distribution of tribal habitats on the basis of rural-urban divide.
  - (f) A Scheduled Tribe in Odisha is also Scheduled Tribe in Arunachal Pradesh.
  - (g) Tribal dominated states have more total population than non-dominated states like Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha, etc.

## NOTES

### 1.4.3 Physical Divisions, Regions and States/UTs

In a general sense, tribal habitats are areas where tribes live. These areas are found across the physical divisions of the country. Further, these areas are located in different states. You will study tribal habitats with reference to distribution of tribes in different physical divisions and political units of India. This will give an understanding of the location of tribal areas which tribes inhabit.

Tribes normally inhabit hills and forests. You will also find some tribal habitats in the plains. The tribal habitats in the plains, for example, are found in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar etc. Similarly, the habitat of a tribe may be found in more than one state. To cite an example, the habitats of Bhils belong to Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Tripura and Madhya Pradesh. On the other hand, the habitat of Khasi tribe belongs to the state of Meghalaya only. Often, India is divided regionally on the basis of its directional spread. You already know about South India, North India, Western India and so on. Moreover, the tribal areas which include tribal habitats are constitutionally defined. Therefore, we will discuss tribal habitats with reference to physical, political and regional divisions along with constitutionally defined areas. As a result, you will be able to understand tribal habitats from different angles. For example, you will understand that the political territory of a tribe is not co-terminus with cultural territory. The habitat of a tribe across two or more states has a cultural territory which is divided politically. Further, the cultural territory of a tribe is not always in continuity when the habitat spreads in many states like that of the Bhils. The tribe lives along with other cultures, even in a *cultural territory* and develop micro cultural habitats.

In recent years the political economy of a state affects the life of tribal communities. If a state government allows MNC activities in tribal areas of the state; then quite naturally the life of the tribal communities is greatly affected. Tribal habitats in different geographical areas influence occupation, food, dress, house type and even the culture in general. The interaction with the natural environment defines a culture to a great extent. In different geographical areas the strategy of interaction differs. The tribes living in hills practise shifting cultivation or cattle herding or hunting and gathering. But tribes living in plains practise settled cultivation or pursue activities drawing on available resources. The Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh practise settled cultivation while the Mishmis living in the same district in the hills practise shifting cultivation. The tribes, living in Netrahat area in Jharkhand pursue blacksmithy. The staple food of tribes living in the Himalayas is traditionally maize, millet and roots. Speaking of the types of houses especially in the Northeast part of India, the houses are built on raised platforms unlike tribal houses in the Deccan plateau. The dress pattern of tribes living in desert region also differs from that of cold Himalayan region. That is why we have discussed tribal habitats under physical divisions, political divisions, etc.

You know that tribes do not exist in an ideal state. You will not find a tribe that fulfils all the characteristics. They live in diverse conditions and in recent years they have been exposed to development forces. Tribals migrate to urban areas for livelihood options. Further, you will not find a compact territorial area for a large tribe. Under the habitat section a discussion on tribal concentration will be useful to understand that the tribes are in the process of integration with national territory.

#### Check Your Progress

12. State whether following statements are True or False:
- (a) A community living in two states is enumerated as ST community of the said two states.
  - (b) Definition of the term 'tribe' differs as tribal communities are homogenous.
  - (c) Tribes in India live in isolation.
  - (d) Any tribe in India is a stateless society.
  - (e) STs having declining or stagnant population are grouped as PTGs.

## Geographical or Physical Divisions

The Commission for Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes (The Dhebar Commission) has divided the tribal settlements in India under three geographical divisions. These are:

- (i) The tribes living in the Himalayan Region including North-Eastern zone in the mountain valleys and Eastern frontiers of India;
- (ii) Those occupying the central belt of the older hills and plateaus along the dividing line between peninsular India and Indo-Gangetic plains; and
- (iii) Those scattered over extreme corners of South-Western India and converging lines of the Western Ghats.

Here you will understand the physical divisions according to geographical features as follows:

India is divided into six physical divisions, namely the Himalayas and other Mountain Ranges, Great Plains, Plateau, Desert, Coastal Plains and Islands. You will find tribal habitats in all these six divisions. In fact, in all these divisions there are mountains and hills inhabited by tribes. We have included them within the broad physical division. For example, we have considered the tribes living in Nilgiri Hills as tribes in plateau region.

**The Himalayas and other Mountain Ranges:** The Himalayas extend from Kashmir in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east. The tribal communities living in Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim and in Arunachal Pradesh share Himalayan habitats. Important tribal communities living in the Himalayas are Gaddi, Lahaula, Beda, Brokpa, Mon, Purigpa, Gujjar, Tamang, Bhutia, Lepcha, Buksa, Juansari and many others.

As you know, the Himalayas run from west to east. But there are mountain ranges from north to south that runs almost as a continuity of Himalayan ranges. These are the Naga Hills, Mizo Hills, etc. which form parts of Patkai ranges. Quite a number of tribal communities live in these mountains. Beside Nagaland and Mizoram, other states such as Manipur, Meghalaya and Tripura are also mountainous states. In these mountains a large number of tribes have been living from time immemorial. Some of them are Chakma, Jamatia, Tripuri, Riang naga, Kuki, Mikir, Garo, Khasi, Hajong, Hmar, Paite, Synteng, Dimasa, Anal, Angami, Ao, Gangte, Chothe, Thangal, Kom, Ralte, and Vaiphei.

**Great Plains:** The plains formed by the Gang and the Brahmaputra along their tributaries are known as Great Plains. Assam is an extension of this Great Plains. In Assam the Barmans in Cachar, Bodo, Bodo-Kachari, Deori, Hojai, Miri (Mishing) Kachari including Sonowal, Lalung, Rabha and Mech are plains tribes. In Uttar Pradesh tribal communities like Buksa in Balia and Gazipur districts, Juansari in Varanasi, and Gond in Deoria, Balia, Varanasai and Basti districts live in plains.

**Plateau:** The region is triangular in shape. Its northern side stretches from the Aravallis in the west to the Raj Mahal Hills in the east. Its eastern and western sides form boundaries of coastal plains and terminate almost on a point in Cardamom Hills. The Vindhya, the Anaimalai Hills, the Nilgiri Hills, the Satpuras are hill ranges in the plateau and home to a number of tribal groups. The Chotanagpur plateau that consists of a large area in Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Jharkhand has a large concentration of a number of tribal communities. The tribal communities in

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

13. Fill in the blanks:
  - (a) There are --- PTGs
  - (b) Tribe is the ---stage in the scheme of social evolution.
  - (c) Tribal Sub-Plan and Scheduled Areas are not coterminous in the state of ---.
  - (d) --- Schedule defines Tribal Areas and --- Scheduled Areas.
  - (e) --- recommendations are behind the creation PTGs.
  - (f) Scheduled Tribe is a-----subject.



## NOTES

a plateau habitat are Gond, Bhil, Baiga, Munda, Oraon, Lohar, Yenadi, Yerukula, Bonda, Gadba, Nagesia and many others.

**Desert:** Deserts are found in Rajasthan. Bhil, Lambadi, Gadia, Lohar, Garasia and Rabari are tribal communities in desert habitats.

**Coastal Plains:** The plains starting from West Bengal to the Kutch of Gujarat via Kanyakumari are coastal plains and include famous Coromandel Coast, Malabar Coast, and Kankan Coast. Santhal habitats are found in the coastal plains of West Bengal. In the western coastal plains you will find Kokna, Dhodia, Varli and Nayaka tribal groups.

**Islands:** India has a group of islands in the Bay of Bengal and in the Arabian Sea. The Andaman and Nicobar group of Islands in the Bay of Bengal is the home of Andamanese, Jarawa, Onge, Sentinelese and Shompen tribes. In the Lakshadweep group of islands in Arabian Sea, all the 17 communities living there have been scheduled as tribes.

### Regional divisions

In earlier works tribal habitats in terms of settlement of tribal communities and their population have been divided region wise. In these works, we do not have the distribution of tribal communities on the basis of physical or geographical divisions of India, though regional divisions are often equated with geographical divisions. You know that a region may have different geographical features or a geographical feature may appear in more than one region or zone. You will see that the regional or geographical divisions include physical features unevenly. But divisions suggested by B. S. Guha include plains and partially plateau region while grouping the states of tribal habitats. B.S. Guha (1955) has classified Indian tribes into three zones as follows:

- (i) **The Northern and North Eastern Zone:** This consists of the sub-Himalayan region and the mountains and valleys of the eastern frontiers of India. The tribal people of Assam, Manipur, Tripura, and other states of North East India were included in the eastern part of this geographical zone. In Northern zone tribes of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and present Uttarakhand were included. Guha's classification draws on data available around Independence. In Post-Independent India organization and reorganization of states have affected state-wise distribution of the tribal habitats.
- (ii) **The Central or the Middle Zone:** This zone consists of plateaus and mountain belts between the Indo-Gangetic plain to the north and roughly the Krishna River to the south. Diverse physical features have been clubbed together in this classification. Moreover, the South India which forms a part of this region was dealt separately.
- (iii) **The Southern Zone:** This zone consists of that part of the southern India which falls south of the river Krishna stretching from Wynaad to Cape Comorin, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Coorg, Travancore, Cochin, Tamil Nadu, etc. are included in this zone.

Guha did not include the Island region in his classification. A new classification considering the political and regional factors became due. In Independent India two more scholars attempted such classifications. One is that of B. K. Roy Burman's

(1971). He divided the tribal communities living in different region into five territorial groups, taking into consideration their historical, ethnic and socio-cultural relations.

- (i) North-East India comprising Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Tripura.
- (ii) Sub-Himalayan region of north and north-west India comprising the northern submontane districts of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh.
- (iii) Central and East India comprising West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh.
- (iv) South India comprising Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka.
- (v) Western India comprising Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.

In B. K. Roy Burman's division the Island region is absent. Sub-Himalayan region has taken geographical criterion while other divisions have political dimensions.

L. P. Vidyarthi (1976) classified the tribes of India into five regions as follows:

- (i) The Himalayan Region, with three sub-regions, viz. 1) North-eastern Himalayan region, 2) Central Himalayan region, and 3) North-western Himalayan region. Assam, Meghalaya, the mountainous region of West Bengal (Darjeeling area) Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura fall in the North-eastern Himalayan region whereas the Tarai areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar come in the Central Himalayan region. Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir constitute the North-western Himalayan region.
- (ii) Middle India Region: It comprises Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Madhya Pradesh.
- (iii) Western India Region: It includes Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and Dadra and Nagar Haveli.
- (iv) South India Region: It comprises Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.
- (v) The Island Region: The islands of Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea constitute this distinct sub-region.

In his classification the Northeast is grouped with sub-Himalayan regions. The Northeast however, stands out as a category in itself as at least six states are predominantly tribal. Moreover, the Fifth and Sixth Schedule areas have been overlapped in this division. This classification also does not mention the territory of Daman and Diu. In the meantime many former states have been bifurcated and data are available for the newly constituted states.

A fresh classification of regions is made taking into consideration the contemporary situation. The guidelines of Roy Burman and Vidyarthi have been followed and updated. Besides, the region is delineated considering the locational position of states and union territories. The confusion of earlier classification clubbing geographical and political features has been removed.

A 'Region' generally conveys the idea of a geographical zone with physical characteristics. It can also mean an administrative zone. In earlier works and in our present discussion the region is defined combining states and union territories in terms of their locational position. Needless to say, a region or zone has a political

## NOTES

dimension. You will learn state and UT-wise distribution of tribal population and thus their habitats.

Table 1.4 shows tribal regions in India. As you know these regions are classified on the basis of locational position of states and union territories. We have five regions in the mainland according to directions and another off the main land lying to its east and west.

## NOTES

**Table 1.4** Distribution of Tribal Population in Regions, States and UTs (2011 Census)

Region (State/UT)	Total Population (In State/UT)	Total Tribal Population (In State/UT)	Rank	% of Total Tribal Population to Total Population	Rank	% of Total Tribal Population to Tribal India
<b>North India</b>	<b>229,915,114</b>	<b>3,517,961</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>1.5</b>	<b>VI</b>	<b>3.4</b>
Jammu & Kashmir	12,541,302	1,493,299	14	11.9	17	
Himachal Pradesh	6,864,602	392,126	23	5.7	25	
Uttarakhand	199,812,341	1,134,273	17	0.6	30	
Sikkim	10,086,292	291,903	24	2.9	26	
	610,577	206,360	25	33.8	08	
<b>Central &amp; Eastern India</b>	<b>368,509,926</b>	<b>48,009,010</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>46.0</b>
Odisha	41,974,218	9,590,756	03	22.8	12	
Bihar	104,099,452	1,336,573	15	1.3	28	
Jharkhand	32,988,134	8,645,042	06	26.2	11	
Chatishgarh	25,545,198	7,822,902	07	30.6	10	
Madhya Pradesh	72,626,809	15,316,784	01	21.1	13	
West Bengal	91,276,115	5,296,953	09	5.8	24	
<b>Northeast India</b>	<b>44,876,207</b>	<b>12,208,694</b>	<b>III</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>I</b>	<b>11.7</b>
Arunachal Pradesh	1,383,727	951,821	19	68.8	05	
Assam	31,205,576	3,884,372	10	12.4	16	
Manipur	2,570,390	902,740	20	35.1	07	
Meghalaya	2,966,889	2,555,861	12	86.1	04	
Mizoram	1,097,206	1,036,115	18	94.4	02	
Nagaland	1,978,502	1,710,973	13	86.5	03	
Tripura	3,673,917	1,166,813	16	31.8	09	
<b>Western India</b>	<b>243,407,959</b>	<b>29,009,123</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>11.9</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>27.8</b>
Rajasthan	68,548,437	9,238,534	04	13.5	15	
Gujarat	60,439,692	8,917,174	05	14.8	14	
Maharashtra	112,374,333	10,510,213	02	9.4	19	
Goa	1,458,545	149,275	27	10.23	18	
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	343,709	178,564	26	52.0	06	
Daman & Diu	243,243	15,363	30	6.3	23	

## NOTES

<b>South India</b>	<b>251,229,165</b>	<b>11,446,596</b>	<b>IV</b>	<b>4.6</b>	<b>V</b>	<b>11.0</b>
Andhra Pradesh & Telengana	84,580,777	5,918,073	08	7.0	21	
Tamil Nadu	72,147,030	794,697	21	1.1	29	
Karnataka	61,095,297	4,248,987	10	7.0	22	
Kerala	33,406,061	484,839	22	1.5	27	
<b>Indian Islands in the East &amp; West</b>	<b>445,054</b>	<b>89,650</b>	<b>VI</b>	<b>20.1</b>	<b>II</b>	<b>0.1</b>
	380,581	28,530	29	7.5	20	
Anadaman & Nicobar Islands Lakshadweep	64,473	61,120	28	94.8	01	

1. **North India:** This region includes five states namely Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Sikkim. These states were earlier included under the Sub-Himalayan Region along with the Northeast region. Moreover, even the Darjeeling area of West Bengal was a part of it. This region records 3,517,961 tribals who constitute 1.5 per cent of total population in the region. Clearly, tribal habitats are significantly less as compared to total habitats. Tribal habitats in this region belong to Bhot, Bhutia, Jad, Lamba, Khampa Bakarwal, Jannsari, Bhotia, Lepcha, Buksa, Raji, Tharu. Bot, balti, Borkpa, Changpa, Gaddi, Gujjar, Kanaura, Kinnara, Lahaula, Pangwala, Swangla and some other tribes. Some tribes are found in more than one state while others are state specific. For example, the Lahaula tribe is found in Himachal Pradesh while Gujjar in both Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.
2. **Central and Eastern India:** Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal form the regions of central and eastern India.
3. **Northeast India:** This region is also known as Seven Sisters and includes Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.
4. **Western India:** Four states and two union territories namely Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu form this region.
5. **South India:** The region includes Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. On 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2014, the former Andhra Pradesh was bifurcated into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. By that time census enumeration was over and so the figures relate to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana combined together.
6. **Indian Islands in the East and West:** Two union territories off the mainland namely Andaman & Nicobar group of islands to the east in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep group of islands to the west in the Arabian Sea form the island regions.

The Table 1.4 shows both region wise and state/UT wise distribution of tribal population. The Central and Eastern India region records highest concentration of tribal population, 46.0 per cent of total tribal population of the country. This is followed by Western India. This region records 27.8 per cent. The third concentration is noted at 11.7 per cent in the Northeast India. The concentration in South India

## NOTES

trails behind the Northeast with a record of 11.0 per cent. The island region has the lowest concentration. In this region the tribal population constitutes only 0.1 per cent of the total tribal population of the country. The second lowest concentration is noted at 3.4 per cent in the North India Region.

This variation is mainly due to the variation in tribal habitats and number of tribal population in states which form the region. For example, in Madhya Pradesh, which lies in Central and Eastern India the total tribal population is recorded 15,316,784 as against a total of 12,208,694 in seven states of Northeast India put together. Another factor of such variation is the number of states/UTs included in a region. This mainly holds for island regions consisting of two small union territories.

By now you have learnt that tribal habitats are found in mountains, plains, plateaus, deserts and in islands. Even in plains, plateaus and in islands they live in mountains and forests.

### 1.4.4 Distribution of Tribal Population

The Scheduled Tribes are notified in 30 States/UTs and the number of individual communities notified as Scheduled Tribes is 705. The ST population of the country, as per 2011 census, is 104.3.43 million, constituting 8.6 per cent of the total population. The ST population has increased from 30.1 million (6.9%) in 1961 to 104.3 million (8.6%) in 2011. Notably, the decadal population growth from Census 2001 to 2011 has been 23.66 per cent against the 17.69 per cent of the entire population.

Over the years, the ST population has migrated to urban areas. In other words, tribal habitats are located in urban areas too. Obviously, the tribal habitats display rural urban divide. You will find that 89.97 per cent of them live in rural areas and some 10.03 per cent live in urban areas. Population in the Rural Areas has increased from 10.4 per cent to 11.3 per cent whereas the Urban Tribal Population has increased only marginally (from 2.4% to 2.8%). With respect to districts, Kurung Kumey district of Arunachal Pradesh has the highest concentration of Scheduled Tribes (98.58) and Kanauj in Uttar Pradesh has the lowest concentration of Scheduled Tribes (0.0009).

You will learn the distribution of habitats of the STs with reference to the distribution of population and number of ST communities inhabiting a state/UT. You will find instances of a community living in two or more states but scheduled in only one or two or in all the states. The community enjoys ST status only in the state for which it is scheduled. Despite having more than one entry corresponding to more than one state, the community is enumerated as one. For example, Raji is an individual community, but is enumerated as STs in Uttar Pradesh and in Uttarakhand. You have also read that an individual community inhabiting different states has different status. The Munda for example is an ST in Jharkhand, but not in Assam.

The distribution of tribal population and thus their habitats is concentrated in Central and Eastern India Region accounting for 46.0 per cent of tribal population with regard to total tribal population in the country. This is followed by Western Region accounting 27.8 per cent. The Region of Indian Islands in



the East & West has the lowest concentration accounting 0.1 per cent only. However, Lakshadweep, the UT, in the island region has 94.8 per cent of total tribal persons which is the highest in the country. But among the states, Mizoram has highest concentration of tribal population accounting for 94.4 per cent. In fact the states of Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh have more than 60 per cent tribal populations. These states are tribal dominated states. In spite of the lower concentration of tribal population in Assam (12.4%) and Tripura (35.1%) the Northeast India region has highest concentration of tribal population accounting for 27.2 per cent, though it accounts for only 11.7 per cent of country's tribal population.

In terms of concentration of tribal population the Island Region stands second accounting for 20.1 per cent followed by 13.0 per cent in the Central and Eastern India Region.

On the other hand, in terms of total tribal population in the country, the Central and Eastern regions in India rank first with a population record of 368,509,926 followed by 251, 229,165 persons in the Southern Region. Islands Region records 445,054 persons, lowest among the regions, and less than the total tribal population in any of the mainland states. In terms of total population, states having first (Madhya Pradesh with 15,296,953 persons) to seventh (Chhattisgarh with 7,822,902 persons) ranks fall in the Central & Eastern and Western Regions of the country. Already you know that the number of communities in a state and number of states/UTs included in a region accounts for this variations. If you consider distribution of habitats in terms of number of STs inhabiting a region you will find the Central and Eastern Region ranks first with 255 ST groups followed by the South India Region with that of 195. Islands Region occupies the bottom rank with 23 ST groups followed by 47 such groups in the Northeast Region.

You will also be interested to know the distribution of habitats according to economic backwardness of STs. As you know, PTGs were created as a category on the basis of vulnerability and backwardness. So knowledge of the distribution of PTGs will be useful to understand the distribution of tribal habitats of economically backward ST groups.

The PTGs, 75 in numbers, inhabit 17 states and one Union Territory, according to census, 2011. As you know, an individual tribe is scheduled more than once in different states. Asur is an individual tribe, though it is scheduled both in Bihar and Jharkhand, as a community it is one but in terms of ST groups it presents two groups in two states. That is why number of communities and state and UT-wise scheduled communities differs.

The PTGs vary in terms of population figures, from 15 of Sentinels in Andaman and Nicobar Islands to 5,093,124 of Abhuj Maria in Madhya Pradesh. You will find 16 PTGs having less than 1000 persons in five states and one union territory. Interestingly, in the UT out of six tribes, five tribes are PTGs with a total of 769 persons, less than even 1000. Further 17 PTGs, 22.7 per cent of total PTGs, in 10 states have been recorded with a population of one lakh and more. In other words, more than 50 per cent (58.8% to be exact) of states have PTGs with a population of more than one lakh.

## NOTES

**Table 1.5** State-wise Largest & Smallest PTGs in terms of Population

**NOTES**

State	Name of the PTG		Total Population	
	Largest	Smallest	Largest PTG	Smallest PTG
Andhra Pradesh	Konda Savar	Thoti	139,424	4811
Bihar	Hill Kharia	Savar	11,569	80
Gujarat	Kolgha	Siddi	67,119	8,661
Jharkhand	Hill Kharia	Birjia	196,135	6,276
Karnataka	Jenu Kuruba	Koraga	36,076	14,794
Kerala	Kattunayakan	Cholonaikayan	18,199	124
Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh	Abhuj Maria	Birhor	5,093,124	52
Maharashtra	Maria Gond	Kolam	1,618,090	194,671
Manipur	Only One PTG, Maram Naga with a population of 27,524			
Odisha	Saura	Birhor	534751	596
Rajasthan	Only One PTG, Saharia with a population of 111,377			
Tamil Nadu	Irular	Kota	189661	308
Tripura	Only One PTG, Riang with a population of 188,220			
Uttar Pradesh	Buksha	Raji	4710	2241
Uttarakhand	Buksha	Raji	4710	1295
West Bengal	Lodha	Birhor	108707	2241
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	Jarawa	Sentinels	380	15

You will see from Table 1.5 that 15.1 per cent of tribal persons in the Central and Eastern Region is recorded under PTGs followed by the Western (8.1%) and Sothern (7.6%) Regions. In the Northeast Region only two STs have been recorded as PTGs constituting 1.8 per cent of total tribal population in the region. The Northern India has only 0.4 per cent of STs as PTGs. In terms of total population; the Central and Eastern Region records 7,255,529 persons, the highest among regions, followed by 2,354,065 in the Western Region. The island region records, as you know, only 769 persons under PTGs.

In terms of number of PTGs, 32 groups inhabit the Central and the Eastern Region, 25 Southern Region and 9 Western Region. The belt, covering part or complete regions of Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand. West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Rajasthan accommodate 66 PTGs accounting for 88 per cent of the groups. The large PTGs are found in this belt. You can say that the tribal habitats of this belt are comparatively economically backward. Interestingly, no PTG is listed in tribal dominate states like Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and Lakshadweep.

You can sum up the above discussion as follows:

1. In India you will find ST habitats in twenty-six states and four UTs according to the Census of India, 2011. Two states, namely Punjab and Haryana and three UTs such as Delhi, Chandigarh and Pondicherry/Puducherry do not have any ST habitats.

The habitats of PTGs, however, are located mostly in Fifth Scheduled areas. The tribal dominated and Sixth Scheduled areas of the Northeast account for two PTGs, one in Manipur and the other in Tripura.

2. The Central and Eastern Region has highest tribal population accounting for 368,509,926 persons in the country and Island Region has the lowest, which accounts for 445,045 persons.
3. Among the states, Madhya Pradesh has the highest population, 15,316,784 and Daman & Diu the lowest, recording 15,363 persons.
4. In terms of the number of habitats of tribes Odisha ranks first followed by Karnataka. There are 62 tribes inhabiting Odisha and 50 in Karnataka. In each of Uttarakhand, Nagaland and Daman & Diu five tribes have been recorded, but no PTGs. The PTGs have been recorded more in the regions having more ST groups. You will find 32 PTGs in the Central and Eastern region.
5. In terms of tribal (ST) concentration, i.e. percentage of tribal population with reference to total population, Mizoram ranks first (94.4%) from among the states (Lakshadweep, a group of Islands and a UT ranks first in the country accounting for 94.8 per cent) in the country followed by Nagaland (86.5%). Uttar Pradesh has the lowest concentration accounting for 0.6 per cent. You will find that except island region, the Northern Region has the lowest concentration of ST population accounting for 1.5 per cent.
6. Tribal dominated states in the Northeast (11.7%) and UTs in the Island Region (0.1%) have less population as compared to states in the Central and Eastern Region (46.0%) and Western Region (27.8%).
7. State total of STs accounts for 744; in terms of tribal communities the number stands at 507. This means some STs in two or more states have been considered one community. This is also the case for PTGs. For example, the Buksas are two ST communities in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, but in terms of community they form one identity.
8. The population of PTGs varies between 15 and 5,093,124 in the country. However, in each state the variation between the large and small group is quite noticeable as is shown in Table 1.5. Siddi, Birijia, Cholonaikayan, Raji, Birhor, Kota in main land have very less population. You will also find three PTGs in Island Region having population figure less than 100.
9. Though recorded in a zone, some tribes are practically confined to a state, as for example Sugalis to Andhra Pradesh; Boros to Assam; Koli Mahadev to Maharashtra; and Tripuri to Tripura. Some ethnic groups spread over many states but they may not be ST population in all the states. The Khamptis of Assam do not have ST status in Assam though they are STs in Arunachal Pradesh. The Bharias in Madhya Pradesh have different constitutional status. In Patalkot valley of Chindwara they are enumerated as STs, while beyond Patalkot, but in the same district and in the same state, they are Non-STs. Munda group of people is recorded in the Central and East India and Northeast India regions. Except in Tripura; the Munda people in Assam do not have the ST status.

## NOTES

## 1.4.5 Concentration in Districts

Out of 640 districts in India, in 50 districts of Punjab, Chandigarh, Haryana, Delhi and Puducherry, there is no Scheduled Tribes population, as no Scheduled Tribe is notified there. As per the Census of India, 2011, there are 640 districts in the country out of which 631 are rural districts. There are 5879 sub districts, (Tehsils), 597483 villages, 8398 towns and 82251 wards.

At the district level, The Census of India, 2011, reveals that there are 90 districts where ST population is 50 per cent or more (Table 1.6). As per Census 2001, this number was 75 districts. Out of these 90 districts, 48 districts are in seven North Eastern States. All the districts in Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland have more than 60 per cent of ST Population.

You will also find tribes with more than five lakh population along with their habitat distribution in table 1.7 as per 2001 census enumeration. The table also shows male female distribution of these major tribes. Table 1.8 shows habitat distribution and concentration of tribes in each zone. Table 1.9 shows state-wise districts where the ST population constitutes more than 50% and between 25% and 50% according to Census 2011. In table 1.10 you can compare PTGs with reference to STs and total population in different regions.

*Table 1.6 Concentration of ST Population Across Districts*

Sl. No	Percentage of ST population	No. of Districts
1.	Less than 1 per cent	55
2	Between 1 and 5 per cent	282
3.	Between 5 and 20 per cent	134
4	Between 20 and 50 per cent	79
5	50 per cent and above	90

*Table 1.7 List of Tribes with more than 5 Lakh of Population and their usual Place of Habitation per Census 2001*

Tribe name	Population			Zone & State of Residence
	Person	Male	Female	
Bhil	12689952	6428757	6261195	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Madhya Pradesh & Chhattisgarh; <b>Western India:</b> Rajasthan, Gujarat & Maharashtra; <b>South India:</b> Andhra Pradesh, Telangana & Karnataka; and <b>Northeast India:</b> Tripura
Gond	10859422	5441476	5417946	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Odisha, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh & Madhya Pradesh; <b>Western India:</b> Gujarat; and <b>South India:</b> Andhra Pradesh & Telangana and Karnataka

## NOTES

**NOTES**

Santal	5838016	2945209	2892807	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Bihar , West Bengal, Odisha & Jharkhand; and <b>Northeast India:</b> Tripura
Mina	3800002	1976425	1823577	<b>Western India:</b> Rajasthan; and <b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Madhya Pradesh
Naikda, etc.	3344954	1696530	1648424	<b>South India:</b> Karnataka; and <b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra , Rajasthan, Gujarat, Goa, Daman & Diu, and Dadra & Nagar Haveli
Oraon	3142145	1580607	1561538	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Bihar, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh Madhya Pradesh, Odisha & Jharkhand; and <b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra
Sugalis, etc.	2077947	1071589	1006358	<b>South India:</b> Andhra Pradesh
Munda	1918218	966070	952148	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Bihar & Madhya Pradesh; and <b>Northeast India:</b> Tripura
Naga, etc.	1820965	937444	883521	<b>Northeast India:</b> Nagaland
Khond	1397384	689330	708054	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha
Boro, etc.	1352771	682710	670061	<b>Northeast India:</b> Assam
Koli Mahadev etc.	1227562	625019	602543	<b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra
Khasi, etc.	1138356	564412	573944	<b>Northeast India:</b> Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam
Kol	991400	508920	482480	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Odisha, Chhattisgarh & Madhya Pradesh; and <b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra
Varli	974916	484893	490023	<b>Western India:</b> Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Maharashtra, & Goa; and <b>South India:</b> Karnataka
Kokna	926763	466087	460676	<b>Western India:</b> Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Rajasthan, Gujarat, & Maharashtra; and <b>South India:</b> Karnataka
Kawar	812770	405524	407246	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Odisha, Chhattisgarh, & Madhya Pradesh; and <b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra
Ho	806921	401913	405008	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha
Gujjar	799344	418655	380689	<b>North India:</b> Jammu & Kashmir & Himachal Pradesh



NOTES

Korku, etc.	774196	395334	378862	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Chhattisgarh, & Madhya Pradesh; and <b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra
Bhumij	765909	387336	378573	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha
Garo	725502	366629	358873	<b>Northeast India:</b> Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya, & Assam, Tripura; and <b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> West Bengal
Koya	692435	345040	347395	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Odisha; <b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra; and <b>South India:</b> Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka
Any Mizo (Lushai) Tribes, etc.	667764	334983	332781	<b>Northeast India:</b> Manipur, Mizoram, Meghalaya, Assam
Halba, etc.	639094	319254	319840	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Chhattisgarh, & Madhya Pradesh; and <b>Western India:</b> Maharashtra
Dharua	630469	316877	313592	<b>Western India:</b> Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Maharashtra, & Goa; and <b>South India:</b> Karnataka
Dubla, etc.	627599	316502	311097	<b>Western India:</b> Gujarat, Daman & Diu, Dadra & Nagar Haveli, Maharashtra, Goa
Mising/ Miri	587310	299790	287520	<b>Northeast India:</b> Assam, Arunachal Pradesh
Tripuri, etc.	543848	275784	268064	<b>Northeast India:</b> Tripura
Rathawa	536135	273754	262381	<b>Western India:</b> Gujarat, & Maharashtra; and <b>South India:</b> Karnataka
Saharia, etc.	527015	271471	255544	<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b> Chhattisgarh & Madhya Pradesh; and <b>Western India:</b> Rajasthan

Table 1.8 Zones & Tribes

Zone	Inhabited Tribes
<b>Central &amp; Eastern India:</b>	Bhil, Santal, Mina, Oraon, Munda, Kol, Kavar, Ho, Korku, etc., Bhumij, Garo, Koya, Halba, etc., Saharia, etc.
<b>Western India</b>	Bhil, Gond, Mina, Naikda, etc., Oraon, Koli - Mahadev, etc., Kol, Varli, Kokna, Kavar, Korku, etc., Koya, Halba, etc., Dharua, Dubla, etc., Rathawa, Saharia, etc.
<b>South India</b>	Bhil, Gond, Naikda, etc., Sugalis, etc. Varli, Kokna, Koya, Dharua, Rathawa,
<b>Northeast India</b>	Bhil, Gond, Santal, Naga, etc., Munda, Khasi, etc., Garo, Any Mizo tribes, etc., Mishing/Miri, Tripuri, etc.
<b>North India</b>	Gujjar

**Table 1.9** State wise Districts where the ST Population is more than 50% and between 25% to 50 % as per Census 2011

**NOTES**

State	Name	Total Population	ST Population	Percentage of ST	More than 50% ST Population	Between 25% to 50% ST Population
01	Jammu & Kashmir	12541302	1493299	11.9	2	3
02	Himachal Pradesh	6864602	392126	5.7	2	1
08	Rajasthan	68548437	9238534	13.5	3	3
11	Sikkim	610577	206360	33.8	1	3
12	Arunachal Pradesh	1383727	951821	68.8	13	3
13	Nagaland	1978502	1710973	86.5	11	0
14	Manipur (Excl. 3 Sub-Divisions of Senapati Dist.)	2570390	902740	35.1	5	0
15	Mizoram	1097206	1036115	94.4	8	0
16	Tripura	3673917	1166813	31.8	1	3
17	Meghalaya	2966889	2555861	86.1	7	0
18	Assam	31205576	3884371	12.4	2	5
19	Jharkhand	32988134	8645042	26.2	5	8
20	Odisha	41974218	9590756	22.8	8	6
21	Chhattisgarh	25545198	7822902	30.6	7	6
22	Madhya Pradesh	72626809	15316784	21.1	6	13
23	Gujarat	60439692	8917174	14.8	5	4
24	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	343709	178564	52.0	1	0
25	Maharashtra	112374333	10510213	9.4	1	3
26	Andhra Pradesh	84580777	5918073	7.0	0	1
27	Lakshadweep	64473	61120	94.8	1	0
28	Andaman & Nicobar Islands	380581	28530	7.5	1	0
	<b>Total</b>				90	62

**Table 1.10** Comparative Region wise Distribution of STs and PTGs

Region	Total ST population	Total Population of PTGs	% to Total ST Population	State Total of PTGs in the Region	PTGs – Community-wise
<b>North India</b>	3,517,961	12,956	0.4	47	4
<b>Central &amp; Eastern India</b>	48,009,010	7,255,529	15.1	255	32
<b>Northeast India</b>	12,208,694	215,744	1.8	114	2

**NOTES**

<b>Western India</b>	29,009,123	2,354,065	8.1	110	9
<b>South India</b>	11,446,596	870,904	7.6	195	25
<b>Indian Islands in the East &amp; West</b>	89,650	769	0.9	23	5
<b>Total</b>	104,281034	10,709,967*	10.3	744**	75

\* This figure excludes population of three tribes which is not available. So, the percentage is just indicative.

\*\* Figure is calculated by adding total numbers of STs in each state/UT. But the communities are 507 as ST groups in two or more states with the same name is considered as one community.

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## 2.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF VARIOUS TRIBES

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We have already discussed that the concept that a ‘tribe’ is a colonial construct and does not fit well into Indian context. Nevertheless, the concept of ‘tribe’ has its contribution to the growth of academics.

You know that academics and academic administrators studied communities which were listed as tribes in census reports. These were heterogeneous communities and included such communities as hunter-gatherers, pastoralists, shifting cultivators, artisans and many others. These groups also inhabit different topography. Definition of a tribe therefore, differs from one tribe to another. Obviously, their culture is not homogenous. But within the heterogeneity there are some commonalities that give a meaning to the concept ‘tribe’. As you know there are two visible interests on tribes—one is for academics, and the other for development imperatives. Both are combined to understand the characteristics of tribe in Indian context. So we have presented the characteristics both from general and Indian contexts. The general context presents academics view point more in an ideal situation.

In ideal situation the characteristics of tribes have been enumerated with reference to some criteria. These criteria are definite territory, sense of unity, common language, kinship bond, endogamy, common culture, faiths and practices, age sets, rites of passage, emblems of allegiance, common name, and political organization. The criteria to characterise tribal communities are in the process of change. Moreover, these criteria were never accepted completely even in earlier days.

In India a tribe is always in the process of interaction and we have a constitutional nomenclature for it. Though the tribes are in the process of interaction, still they differ in respect of their level of interactions, place of habitation and so on. You can outline the characteristics of Indian tribes in three different categories- as ST, as PTG and as Non-ST. If you combine the features of these three categories, you will have an idea about the characteristics of Indian tribes in general.

### Characteristics of STs

As you know, criteria are not specified in the Constitution to declare a community as ST. You also know that Lokur Committee has evolved some criteria for declaring a particular community as ST. Obviously, at an ideal level these criteria are characteristics of STs. The characteristics of tribes which enable them for

**Check Your Progress**

14. Who are the tribes in the Western Region?
15. Which district in the country has highest concentration of tribal population?
16. Which region has highest concentration of tribal population?
17. Which states are tribal dominated states? Why?
18. Which Commission created PTGs?

recommendation of state governments for scheduling in the Constitution are as follows:

- *Geographical isolation* - they live in cloistered, exclusive, remote and inhospitable areas such as hills and forests.
- *Backwardness* - their livelihood is based on primitive agriculture, a low-value closed economy with a low level of technology that leads to their poverty. They have low levels of literacy and health.
- *Distinctive culture, language and religion* - communities have developed their own distinctive culture, language and religion.
- *Shyness of contact* – they have a marginal degree of contact with other cultures and people.
- *An ensemble of primitive traits.*

### Characteristics of PTGs

PTGs are special groups within the ST category. They display the characteristics present in STs along with some additional traits. These groups are regarded as the poorest of poor amongst the STs. The criteria fixed for identification of such PTGs are:

- (i) Relatively physically isolated;
- (ii) Homogenous with a small population;
- (iii) Economic and social backwardness;
- (iv) Absence of written language and a very low level of literacy;
- (v) Declining or stagnant population; and
- (vi) Relatively simple Pre-agricultural level of technology and slow rate of change.

### Characteristics in the frame of academic generality

Indian scholars have their schema of characterising a community as tribe. All characteristics may or may not be present in a community but these are general features for our understanding of what a tribe stands for.

S.C. Dube (1990) has listed the following characteristics which we have discussed here with reference to present situation:

1. Their roots in the soil date back to a very early period. If they are not original inhabitants, they are among the oldest inhabitants of the land. However, their position is different from the American Indian, Australian aborigines and the native African population. They were there much before the white settlers arrived in these countries. There is no doubt of their being the indigenous population of these places.

However, this cannot be said so in the case of tribes in India. Tribes have been living in close interaction with the non-tribals for centuries. Some tribes like the Mizos and Khamptis are even late comers to their place of habitation.

2. They live in the relative isolation of the hills and the forests. This was not always so. There are evidences of their presence in the Gangetic plains. It is only because of subordination and marginalization that they have been forced to retreat to inaccessible places.

## NOTES

## NOTES

3. Their sense of history is shallow, for among them, the remembered history is restricted to three to four generations. Beyond that it tends to get merged in mythology. But in recent years the oral tradition which was considered as a weak source of history is accepted as the source material to reconstruct the history of the pre-literate people.
4. They have a low level of techno-economic development.
5. In terms of their cultural ethos-language, institutions, beliefs, worldview and customs, they are different from the others.
6. By and large they are non-hierarchic and undifferentiated. There are some exceptions like the Gonds, the Ahoms and the Cheros who had a ruling class or the landed aristocracy.

T.B. Naik (1956) has given the following features of tribes in Indian context:

- A tribe should have least functional interdependence within the community.
- It should be economically backward (i.e. primitive means of exploiting natural resources, tribal economy should be at an underdeveloped stage and it should have multifarious economic pursuits).
- There should be a comparative geographical isolation of its people.
- They should have a common dialect.
- Tribes should be politically organized and community panchayat should be influential.
- A tribe should have customary laws.

Naik argues that a community should possess all the above mentioned characteristics to become a tribe. A very high level of acculturation with outside society debars it from being a tribe. Thus, the term tribe usually denotes a social group bound together by kin and duty, and associated with a particular territory.

### **General Characteristics of Indian Tribes**

The society is changing and so the concept shifts to accommodate changes over the period to understand the dynamics. Today, in India, a tribe is characterised as a social category scheduled in the Constitution. Moreover, they display dynamic characteristics, often different from the ideal types. You cannot find a tribe completely in isolation. You can enumerate the characteristics of PTGs to understand a tribal community in particular and the characteristics of STs to understand a tribal community in general. Moreover, you have Non-STs which to a lesser degree agree to the ideal type of remote habitation. The characteristics below will give you an idea of heterogeneous tribal communities in India.

- (a) A tribe is both a broad social category to include STs and Non-STs;
- (b) When confined to the category of STs, it is a social category in an administrative sense within the frame of the Constitution;
- (c) It was relatively isolated at one time and later had its integration with the outside world, but has continued to call itself tribe because of vested interests;
- (d) A tribe is a community that still dwells in remotely situated forests and hills and is backward in terms of the indices of development, although the community may not have yet found a place in the list of the scheduled tribes; it belongs to Non-ST category;



- (e) A tribe does not exist as a stage of social evolution;
- (f) A tribe as ST is state specific status; the same community having no ST status in other states if not given the same status according to the Constitution;
- (g) As a corollary, a tribe is not always a community specific status, the same community may be ST in one state and a Scheduled Caste or Other Backward Caste or General Caste in another;
- (h) A tribe is category in contrast to caste, but it is not always so; some caste based communities in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand also have ST status; and
- (i) A tribe is not ideally a stateless society, there are some tribes like Garo, Gond, Bhumija who participated in statecraft as rulers.

## NOTES

## 2.2 SUMMARY

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- In this unit we have discussed the origin of the term tribe, its academic and administrative nature and particularly, the characteristics of tribe in changing perspectives. In India, tribe constitutes a large portion of its population constituting 8.6 per cent of only constitutional category. The population is distributed in 30 states and UTs of the country. You have read the nature and extent of distribution with reference to geographical regions and political divisions based on regions, states and districts.
- By reading this unit you are expected to learn details on the concept of tribe, characteristics and the distribution of their habitats.
- You have studied that the term 'tribe' is a colonial creation. But the communities designated as tribes during colonial period had their terms of address and outsiders' designation for them.
- The term tribe largely denotes to social category and includes both ST and Non-ST communities in India. ST category includes its variant i.e. PTGs. The ST category though refers to a broad social group its basis is socio-economic backwardness. Being a social category it deals with social institutions and organizations. But in a narrow and implicit sense the term is used to distinguish a tribal individual from its non-tribal counterpart. Further, being a social category the concept of tribe is not confined to the boundary of any socio- cultural characteristics. Tribes are heterogeneous in terms of bio-genetic traits, language, levels of cultural contact, economic pursuits, religious faiths and beliefs and in the field of governance system.
- You have further studied that the term tribe though originated in colonial vocabulary it continues to stay consequent upon its use in academics and government documents. However, a tribe does not exist in its ideal state; it is in transition. The characteristics of tribes, therefore, present not only an ideal state but also the changing perspectives.
- The habitat of tribe is finally explained in terms of ecology. The ecological habit, as you have learnt, influences knowledge system of a tribe. In turn the knowledge system helps in resource conservation. You have also learnt that ecological knowledge relates to the notion of health and health care practices in tribal communities.
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## NOTES

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### 2.2 KEY TERMS

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- **Aborigine:** The original or native or earliest known inhabitants of a country or region in relation to colonisers or other migrants.
- **Acephalous:** Literally, 'headless', meaning without any centralised authority.
- **Bio-genetic variability:** The phenotypic variance of a trait or the genotype in the population of a group or many groups due to genetic difference amongst individuals.
- **Census:** Complete enumeration of something. In India, the total population is enumerated once in 10 years, called Population Census.
- **Cephalous society:** A society with centralised authority like a chief.
- **Colonial:** Relating to the subjugating policy and power of a country over another independent country.
- **Concept:** A generalized form of abstract or generic idea of what something is or how it works; it is wider than in the meaning or definition of something.
- **Cultural Territory:** A geographical space generally across the political divisions where a community of a homogeneous or at least undifferentiated culture lives.
- **Divide and Rule:** The policy of gaining and maintain power over a population by creating small divisions within and causing rivalries and creating discord among them.
  
- **Evolution:** A gradual process through which something changes into a different and usually more complex or improved form.
- **Evolutionists:** Those who believe in the idea that things change through a gradual process from simple to complex forms.
- **Great Tradition:** The tradition based on the idea contained in epics, purans and other classical sanskritic texts and shared as a common cultural consciousness by the people.
- **Habitat:** Place or environment that is natural for the normal life and growth of plant or animal including human beings.
- **Ideal category:** The category that is expected to conform to the idea considered to be perfect and thus a model.
- **Interface:** The meeting point or area of different communicating ideas.
- **Little Tradition:** The tradition that is the local version of the great tradition which exist among folk artists, medicine men, tellers, stories , bards and in a region or village.
- **Livelihood:** Activities undertaken for the purpose of securing the basic necessities life such as food, water, shelter and clothing.

## NOTES

- **Non-literate:** Absence of the ability of reading and writing.
- **Perspective:** A particular way of viewing a phenomenon independently or in relation to another.
- **Political Territory:** A geographical area having a well-defined political boundary like that of a country or state or district.
- **Pre-literate:** Absence of the practice of reading and writing.
- **Scheduled Areas:** 'Excluded' or 'partially excluded' areas identified by the British Government and later declared in Indian Constitution as Scheduled Areas as per the provisions of Fifth Schedule, these are Fifth Schedule Areas in nine states at present with predominance tribal population.
- **Scope:** With regard to a discipline it refers to subject matter and its relation with other disciplines.
- **Seven Sisters:** The seven states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.
- **Theraveda:** Literally it means 'words or wisdom of the elders', it refers to the Buddhist School of Hinayana Cult that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Pali texts, or Tipitaka.
- **Tribal Areas:** Tribal inhabiting areas where provisions of Sixth Schedule are applicable.
- **Tribal Sub-Plan:** An integrated strategy of development of tribals in Fifth Schedule Areas of India introduced during the Fifth Five Year Plan.
- **Ecology:** Scientific study of interactions among organisms and their environment.
- **Traditional knowledge:** Knowledge that passes on orally from generations to generations.
- **Supernatural:** That does not exist in natural form and that cannot be explained in natural ways.
  
- **Sacred grove:** An enclosure with trees which is considered holy and linked to supernatural being(s).
- **Resource:** Resource has different meaning in different disciplines like Economics, Geography, etc. In natural resource it means natural materials used for human welfare.
- **Conservation:** Preservation, protection and promotion.
- **Totem:** Natural objects like plants or animals which are considered to be mythical ancestors of a clan or lineage.

## NOTES

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### 2.2 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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1. (a) True, (b) False, (c) False, (d) False, (e) True
2. Occupation
3. Divide and Rule
4. Proto-Australoids, Mongoloids, Negrito
5. Hunting-gathering, shifting agriculture, herding
6. Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Chinese, and Dravidian
7. Cephalous and acephalous
8. (a) True, (b) False, (c) True, (d) True, and (e) True
9. (a) Colonial mindset of divide and rule, evolutionary scheme of society, Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, Census Reports.  
(b) Communities who were notified as Criminal Tribes under Criminal Tribes Act, 1871  
(c) Band, tribe, chiefdom and state  
(d) Between tribe and peasant there are many tribal communities displaying characteristics of peasant and many peasant communities displaying characteristics of tribal communities at different degrees
10. (a) STs and PTGs  
(b) Articles 342 and 366 (25)  
(c) The Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Chandigarh and Puducherry  
(d) Non-Scheduled Tribes and Indigenous people
11. (a) True, (b) True, (c) False, (d) True, (e) True, (f) False, (g) False
12. (a) False, (b) False, (c) False, (d) False (e) True
13. (a) 75, (b) 2<sup>nd</sup>, (c) Andhra Pradesh, (d) Sixth Schedule, Fifth Schedule, (e) Shilp Aa Committee, (f) State
14. 1. Bhil, Gond, Mina, Naikda, Oraon, Koli - Mahadev, Kol, Varli, Kokna, Kaware, Korku, Koya, Halba, Dharua, Dubla, Rathawa, and Saharia
15. Kurung Kumey in Arunachal Pradesh
16. The Northeast India

17. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. The concentration of tribal population is more than 60%
18. Dhebar Commission in 1973
19. (a) G.S. Ghurye, (b) Marshal Sahlins, (c) F.G Bailey, (d) S.C.Sinha, (e) A.R.Desai, (f) B.R. Ambedkar
20. (a) False (b) True (c) False (d) False (e) True
21. (a) True (b) False (c) True (d) False (e) False

**NOTES**


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## 2.2 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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**Short-Answer Questions**

1. Do you think Indian tribes lived in isolation before British rule? Give examples to justify your answer.
2. Write any five characteristics of tribes in ideal state. Do you think tribes in India live in ideal state? Why or why not?
3. Do you think defining tribes in India has a territorial dimension? Support your answer with examples.
4. Distinguish between the concepts of Political Territory and Cultural Territory with reference to tribal communities of India.

**Long-Answer Questions**

1. 'Tribe as a social category is a colonial legacy'. Explain why or why not.
2. What is the basis of classification of Indian population in tribes and caste? Do you think the basis is correct? Support your answers with examples.
3. In India the term 'tribe' can be replaced with 'indigenous people'. Justify your answer with suitable examples.
4. Do you think concentration of tribal population correlates to the percentage of Country's tribal population? Support your answer with examples.

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## **NOTES**

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## UNIT II TRIBAL ECOLOGY

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### Structure

- 2.0 Introduction
- 2.1 Unit Objectives
- 2.2 Tribal Ecology
  - 2.2.1 Healthcare
  - 2.2.2 Resource Conservation
- 2.3 Summary
- 2.4 Key Terms
- 2.5 Answers to ‘Check Your Progress’
- 2.6 Questions and Exercises
- 2.7 Further Readings

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### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

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In the present unit the focus will be on the term ‘tribe’, tribes in Indian context, their characteristics and habitats. You will learn (i) *what/who is a tribe*, (ii) *why a community or a person is called a tribe*, (iii) *where do they live?* and (iv) *how are they distinguished?* As an answer to the first question you will learn that tribe is a social categorisation. The second question will answer the definitional and conceptual issues relating to the term tribe. Answer to the third question will inform you about tribal habitats in India. You will also learn about the concept of tribal ecology and its importance in healthcare and resource conservation practise. The fourth question will provide an outline of characteristics that have evolved from the study of tribes.

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### 2.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- 1..1 Define a tribe in general and in the context of India in particular
- 1..2 Define a tribe academically and as a constitutional category
- 1..3 Understand the scope of tribe as a social category
- 1..4 Explain the concept ‘Tribal India’
- 1..5 Describe the evolution of the term ‘tribe’ in India in a historical perspective
- 1..6 Classify tribal habitats from different angles
- 1..7 Identify the distribution of tribes in regions, states and Union Territories

- 1..8 Enumerate the characteristics of tribes
- 1..9 Explain learn how ecology influences tribal knowledge system
- 1..10 Understand tribal health care and resource conservation practices in terms of their ecological knowledge

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## 2.2 TRIBAL ECOLOGY

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In section 1.3 you have learnt the meaning of **habitat** and its classification on the basis of physical and political divisions. You have also learnt about the habitats of tribes and tribal concentration in India. This section deals with how a habitat influences the way of life of people living in it and how it shapes its culture. This is what we call Tribal Ecology. In general, you can say that the ecology or habitat has influence on the knowledge system of people, which is the dynamic aspect of culture. Precisely, you will learn two aspects, namely health care and resource conservation beliefs and practices of tribal knowledge system.

### Ecology and Habitat

The term ecology has several connotations. It may refer to the scientific study of interactions among organisms and their environment. In this sense it is a branch of knowledge that includes Biology, Geography and Earth Science. It also refers the natural world, as a whole or in a particular geographical area, especially as affected by human activity. An ecological area inhabited by a particular species of animal, plant or any other type of organism is known as its Habitat. The two concepts, Habitat and Ecology have diverse uses in different disciplines. Here we will use habitat and ecology as synonym terms. While the former manifests the physical characteristics in a wider sense, the latter reflects the interaction between physical and mental aspects in relation to the knowledge system evolved in a local habitat i.e. in a particular ecology.

In section 1.4 we have presented a broad category of habitats. But within this broad division you will find local variations. For example, forest habitat is a very general idea about tribal habitats. It includes forests of all types. You will find forests like desert type, mangrove type, bamboo forests, mountainous forests, plains forests and so on. Each forest type defines interaction among organisms in a particular way and thus has its distinct influence over people living there. As you know mangrove forests have swampy floors and so houses are constructed on raised platforms which are characteristic of all swampy areas. But where forest is not swampy and the ground is plain and there is no water logging, houses are constructed on the floor like the houses of Savaras, Santhals, Birhors, etc. in plains forests. The materials used for house construction also differ from one forest type to the other. Livelihood sources also depend on the nature of the habitat. Forest tribes living near rivers or sea coast depend on fishing while in deserts they depend on hunting. Tribes in mountainous forests normally practise shifting cultivation in contrast to permanent cultivation

## NOTES

### Chck Your Progress

19. Who said/ proposed?
- (a) Tribe is a Backward Hindu.
- (b) Tribe is a Segmentary society.
- (c) Tribe-caste continuum
- (d) Tribe-peasant continuum
- (e) Tribe in transition
- (f) *Adivasi* is a general term which has no special legal de jure connotations.



## NOTES

in plains. Plants and animals also vary from forest type to the other. While forest is defined as habitat, each forest type is considered ecology for our present discussion.

Tribal ecology is the small habitat of a tribal community where interaction with nature shapes a distinct culture and way of living for them.

In this section you will learn about tribal ecology in both general and specific senses. We separately discuss ecology to focus on interactions among organisms to explain knowledge system. So, you will learn tribal knowledge system in course of tribal people's interaction with natural resources—plants, animals, land, water, air and other natural objects like the Sun, the sky, etc. Precisely, we will discuss tribal people's faiths, beliefs and practices as a part of their knowledge system.

### **Knowledge system**

Tribal knowledge system is known as traditional knowledge, indigenous knowledge, folk knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge, community knowledge, etc. This knowledge is greatly based on long tribal experiences of interactions with their immediate ecology consisting of *biotic* (living) and *abiotic* (non-living elements).

As you know tradition refers to a 'long-established custom or belief that has been passed on from one generation to another'. The statements, beliefs, legends, customs, information, etc. pass on from generation to generations, especially by word of mouth or by practice. This system of knowledge and its transmission does not exist exclusive among the tribes. There are rural communities in which knowledge is also transmitted and is traditional. Traditional knowledge has a wider meaning than tribal knowledge system. Similarly, folk, people or community has also wider meaning.

Indigenous knowledge is the knowledge of indigenous people, the people who are native to a locality or ecology. In this sense, it seems that tribal knowledge system is indigenous knowledge. As you have learnt, in India tribal people are not considered indigenous people because of their history of migration. It is not easy to establish nativity of a community to a particular place. Without going into the controversy of who are indigenous and who are not, there is another way of defining indigenous knowledge. The knowledge is not created in formal institutions like research laboratories, Universities or research institutes. So, indigenous knowledge is defined in contrast to formal scientific knowledge. But this knowledge is not community specific or confined to tribes only. You will find the knowledge of weaving or basket making not only among tribal groups in Northeast India but also among non-tribal groups also. Obviously, tribal knowledge is indigenous knowledge but indigenous knowledge is not a synonym of tribal knowledge. The former is broader in meaning, content and context.

What you have learnt is tribal knowledge system as a part of indigenous, folk, people, ecological or community knowledge system preserved from generations to generations through oral transmission. It is a generic term and includes the knowledge of all the tribes of all the ecological settings. It covers all aspects of life, including management of resources, health care practices, faiths and beliefs, agriculture, food preparation, weaving, education, communication, technology, cattle herding, hunting and gathering, fisheries, mode of production, ethics of consumption, institutions, language, customs, arts, paintings, etc. which people of an ecology have generated and preserved as survival strategy. The

knowledge is based on experience, often tested over centuries, adapted to the ecology and cultural life of people.

Tribal knowledge like any traditional knowledge system is stored in people's memories and activities. It is expressed in the form of myths, legends, tales, stories, songs, proverbs, riddles, dances, values, beliefs, rituals and other practices.

You have learnt that knowledge system has two components: physical (visible) and mental (invisible/intangible). The two components however do not exist separately; they often exist together. While a tribal man constructs a house (a visible action) he is aware of the taboos and beliefs (invisible aspect) associated with his actions. He will not violate, say, the rule or belief associated with erecting the first pillar.

In short tribal knowledge is the generalisation of specific knowledge system of a tribal culture, existing within and developed in the habitat ecology of the people.

As you have learnt knowledge system has both visible and non-visible (mental) components. We will discuss these two aspects of knowledge with reference to health care and resource conservation of tribal people.

### **2.2.1 Healthcare**

Clements (1932), Lewis (1954) and many other have studied health care system of traditional communities. The notion of 'health' in these communities is ordinarily perceived as an opposite to 'disease' or 'sicknesses'. In other words, health is a condition of the 'absence of disease'. We can cite an example to illustrate the point. The Miju (Kaman) Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh, for example, use the term 'naat' to mean the condition of disease or sickness. They use the term 'ma-naat', meaning no disease, for a person who enjoys a 'normal' condition. In fact, they use this term to answer to any query like: Is s/he sick? Or how is she? In a tribal community the condition of 'health' is perceived as bipolar opposite to the condition of sickness or disease.

The idea of disease is also based on subjective judgement. Disease or sickness is a condition of deviation from normal life. A person is considered sick, i.e. 'not in good health' if s/he shows signs of pain or discomfort while performing normal works. You will learn from the studies of many scholars that the condition of sickness arises due to supernatural or physical reasons. Supernatural reasons are attributed to the wrath of deities (spirits), evil eye, witchcraft and sorcery, breach of taboo, failure to perform rituals, violation of social norms like committing adultery or incest, violation of culturally approved norms to be obeyed while interacting with natural objects like rivers, sacred places and so on. The reasons for supernatural punishment may be due to mistakes committed by human beings or even without them. The reason of sickness caused due to breach of a norm is attributed to human mistakes. But sickness due to an evil eye, for example, is caused without the mistake of the sufferer. Physical injuries of a person also may cause him/her discomfort or pain to carry out normal work and obviously, s/he is considered sick in tribal notion of health. However, the cause is not normally attributed to supernatural factors. The tribal people also believe that a wicked shaman, sorcerer or witch may send supernatural force into a person's body through black magic and cause sickness.

## NOTES

Thus, from the above discussion we know that sickness is caused by three factors. These are supernatural agency like spirits, human agency like sorcerer and natural causes responsible for physical injuries. In addition to these three disease causing factors, scholars have also classified two ways of understanding disease and the concept of health in tribal communities, namely - subjective and objective. Subjective ways refer to sickness due to supernatural causes while physical injuries are objective perception of sickness.

### Ecological Knowledge and Health

It will be interesting for you to know that the notion of health as opposed to the condition of sickness has developed in ecological knowledge system of the tribal people.

First, the trees, segment of a river, a cave, or any natural object which is considered sacred appears in the habitat ecology. There are cultural norms of how people would behave with these objects. Violation of norms relate to disobedience of relational behaviour of cultural prescriptions. Such violations invoke the wrath of supernatural power which inhabits the ecological place. It is to be mentioned that a tribe may live in different ecological space and its knowledge about the perception of supernature in material objects of that space is created. The *Hirek* tree in the ecology of Yomcha area of Galos in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh is considered sacred. Anybody shouting or urinating near it invokes supernatural punishment. But the tree is not found in the ecology of Lika Bali plains of the tribe in the same district or in Nari –Telam area of the Galos in East Siang district.

In Damro village of the Adi Padams, the *Siri-Rine* tree was considered to be a wish-fulfilling tree. Any act of defilement near it was considered sacrilegious as long as the tree existed. But such a belief is not attributed to any tree of other Padam villages like Mebo or Dambuk.

The important think which you learn here is that the material objects which have connection with the notion of health are ecology-specific.

Second, supernatural curative practices prescribe taboos or use of objects for offerings which are available in the ecology. Monkey meat is a taboo during pregnancy in the hills of Arunachal Pradesh, but not among the tribal groups living in Lakshadweep or Konkna ecological zone. In fact eating of some varieties of fish like *shingada* and *kolambis* is prohibited at least for six months after delivery in Kuli community of Konkna region. Coconut is invariably used as an offering in Kerala while it is not the case in Arunachal Pradesh where ecology is not suitable for coconut cultivation.

Third, materials used in curative practices also occur in the ecology. In Kerala, for example, *neem* leaves are used in curative rituals or as medicine by many tribes. You cannot find this item among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh or Meghalaya or Nagaland, as *neem* is not endemic in the ecology.

For the same disease in different ecology the plant medicine used are different. In case of diarrhoea and stomach disorder people in different ecological setting use different plants available. The Adis of East Siang district use *Aoeratum Conyaoides*, a weed, the Nyishis of Papum Pare district use *Arigiopteris evecta* (a type of fern called commonly as King fern –looks like the matured leaves of

*Dhekia* in Assamese whose botanical name is *Diplazium esculentum* and the Kuli in Konkan region use Chariamilo (*Oxalis corniculata*, in Sanskrit it is called *ambastha*).

Occurrence of disease has a link with ecology. The same disease does not occur among the members of a tribe living in different ecological setting. For example, Adis living in foot hills and plains suffer from malaria frequently while those living in Tuting, a clod region, have very rare cases of malaria.

The ecological knowledge is not uniform with regard to different medicinal plants available in the same ecology. You will find that the Gond medicine men of different wards in Pathai village of Betul district in Madhya Pradesh use different plant species for the cure of jaundice. In one ward, the traditional medicine man uses mixed juice of *Cuscuta reflexa* (in Hindi it is *amar bel*) and *Curcuma aromatic* (in Hindi -*jangli haldi*) while in another ward a concoction of *Hathikan lea macrophylla* (in Hindi-Hathikan leaves) and *aamras* ( a mango dessert) is used.

One important point about tribal health is occurrence of new diseases with changing ecology. In mining areas of Odisha tribes suffer from diseases like black lung disorder, tuberculosis; noise induced hearing loss, irritation to eyes, pneumoconiosis, severe cough and cold, skin infections, bronchitis, ulcer muscular pains, back pains, wearing out of joints, arthritis, spondylosis, numbness, fatigue and lack of stamina and so on. The traditional ecological knowledge does not have curative methods for these diseases though often they adopt to traditional practices before medical treatment. Treatment in hospitals could be an addition to their knowledge system as these institutions are located in their ecology.

### 2.2.2 Resource Conservation

Do you know 80 per cent of biodiversity on this earth is found in areas inhabited by tribal and indigenous peoples?

World Resources Institute (WRI), Washington, D.C. reports this fact in *World Resources Report 2005: The Wealth of the Poor – Managing Ecosystems to Fight Poverty*. It is reported that

‘many areas inhabited by Indigenous Peoples coincide with some of the world’s remaining major concentrations of biodiversity. Traditional indigenous territories encompass up to 22 per cent of the world’s land surface and they coincide with areas that hold 80 per cent of the planet’s biodiversity’.

#### Do you know why?

The reason is that these peoples are carriers of traditional knowledge and wisdom about biodiversity resources. These peoples have inextricably linked the natural resources in which they depend on to their identities and cultures. For them biodiversity resource is not an isolated and compartmentalized concept, but an integrated part of their lives. That is why it is not a surprise that these people make up only 4 per cent of the world’s population, but represent 95 per cent of the world’s cultural diversity. Scholars have found that traditional knowledge provides for intricate resource management systems that have sustained indigenous societies for millennia. In other words, tribal and indigenous communities survive due to the

## NOTES

survival of the resources and therefore their knowledge of biodiversity conservation is a survival strategy.

Coming to India we find that tribal people do not involve in wasteful consumption and sell or purchase biodiversity resources like a commodity. In their belief system nature or natural resources are free gifts. A tribe considers nature as *giving environment* or preserver and feeder (*thow-gew* in Aka language). In their belief, the nature has a supernatural (spirit) realm and its use requires propitiatory rituals for the presiding deities. In this belief system land, water, plants, animals are related to human beings, their identities and way of life. A tribe does not feel some one different from the Nature. S/he considers her/himself as a part of it.

### **Totem as a strategy of conservation**

It is not a surprise to find many tribal clans or lineages trace their origin from animals and plants. In other words, they possess totem of animals and plants for their ancestry. The clans in Ho tribe have their respective totems. The totem, for example of Puri clan (*kili*) is crocodile, of Hasda wild goose, of Tiu jackal, of Bage tiger, of Jamuda spring and of Hembram clan the totem is a tree bearing berries. Among the Santals the Murmu clan has a wild cow as its totem, Chande has a lizard and Boyar has a fish and so on.

A totem is a being, object, or symbol representing an animal or plant that serves as an emblem of a group of people, such as a family, clan, group, lineage, or tribe, reminding them of their ancestry (or mythic past). In kinship and descent, if the ancestor of a clan is nonhuman, it is called a totem. Normally this belief is accompanied by a totemic myth. The term totem belongs to Ojibwe tribe of North America.

You know that an ecology has its own species of plants, animals or land forms. The totemic names come from these species, not from any other which is not endemic to the ecology. The totems mentioned above are all found in the ecology in which the tribe lives. We can also cite the example of Oraons who live in Chotanagpur plateau in the states of Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha. The species found there are linked to totems of their respective clans. The Karkha clan has cow, Tirki has a young mouse, Lakra has the tiger, Kindu has the 'Saur' fish, Toppo has a small bird, Kerketta has the quail, Ekka has the tortoise, Gidhi has the eagle, Tiga the field mouse, Hartu has the monkey, Tatenga has the lizard, Minz has Eel, Xaxa has crow, Xess corn, Godo has a water creature as their totems. During the common lineage festival known as Dharm puja, every lineage member has to undergo rituals of fast to worship his own totem. You will find that the Kharwars of South Lohardaga regard the Khar grass as the totem of their tribe, and so they never cut or injure it while growing. In fact, totemic clans do not kill or injure totems nor allow others to do so; these are very sacred to them.

The idea and concept behind Totemism is that people have a spiritual connection or kinship tie with creatures or objects in nature, making the practice very similar to Animism. Animism is a belief based on the spiritual idea that the universe, and all natural objects within the universe, has souls or spirits. It is believed that souls or spirits exist not only in humans but also in animals, plants, trees, rocks and all natural forces. Tribes consider themselves as a part of the Nature.



If you read the history of human interaction with immediate ecology you will find a variety of human strategies to preserve the resources. One of the strategies is the demarcation of special areas of the natural environment which have connection with cultural needs. Such areas are diverse and range from the common resource areas for livelihood purposes to sacred trees and groves to meet cultural needs. You will find sacred grove as a resource conservation strategy still existing in India including areas inhabited by tribes.

Sacred Grove is a traditional example of community based resource conservation strategy. This age-old traditional conservation practice appears in all religions throughout the world. In India, sacred groves are scattered all over the country. They have different names in different parts of the country. These groves are called as 'Sarna' or 'Dev' in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, Devrai or Devrahati in Maharashtra, 'Sarnas' 'Jaherthan' in Jharkhand, 'Orans' in Rajasthan, 'Devarabana' or 'Devarakadu' or 'Rulidevarakadu' or 'Nagabana' etc. in Karnataka, 'Kovilakadu' in Tamil Nadu 'Kavu' in Kerala, 'Dev van' in Himachal Pradesh, 'KI Law Lyngdoh' or 'Ki Law Kyntang' etc. in Meghalaya, Dumbang among the Adi Padams of Arunachal Pradesh and 'Lai Umang' in Manipur.

Dumbang is an enclosure situated on the way to forest. The Papdam hunters perform rituals before and after a hunting expedition to propitiate *Gamik*, the presiding deity and owner of all kinds of wild animals.

The phrase sacred grove is combined from two words –sacred and grove. Sacred is considered to be holy or 'connected with a god' and the word 'grove' refers to a small area of land with trees of particular types grown on it. So sacred grove means a small area of land with particular types of trees grown on it and that are considered to be holy by the local community. Such groves are associated with the notion of a "presiding deity". In many cases these trees are dedicated to local deities or ancestral spirits. The local community preserves the trees through cultural traditions and taboos.

### The Sacred Groves of Meghalaya

As you have learnt, in Meghalaya sacred groves are known as – and found in every village. Among them two large groves are Mawphlang and Mausmai. The Mawphlang grove close to Shillong town is one of the best preserved groves. The Mausmai grove in Cherrapunji is about 6 km<sup>2</sup> of protected mixed broad-leaved rain forest area. The traditional religious belief is that the gods and the spirits of the ancestors live in these groves. In early time ceremonies were performed in all the groves regularly to propitiate the ruling deity. But due to influence of Christianity these rituals have been stopped in many groves. Nevertheless, cutting of trees or removal of plant parts is still considered to offend the ruling deity, leading to local calamities.

### Beliefs and Practices in Day-to-Day Life and Conservation

Tribes dependence on resources is for subsistence living. Their wants are less; they do not put resources into multiple uses and do not use in large scale. The tools and weapons they use are appropriate to the worldview of their needs and so do not do large damage to the resources beyond their needs. Subsistence community based

## NOTES

needs, rudimentary technology, belief in life of every natural object, linking human welfare to less damage to plants and animals, use of local resources only to meet their local community needs and so on form the bed rock of their ecological knowledge system. This knowledge puts restraints on indiscriminate use of resources.

The Nyishis profess 'animism' and believe in *wiyus* (spirits) –both benevolent and malevolent. There are *wiyus* in the jungle, on the lofty hills, in shadowy recesses and inaccessible caves on the top of the tall trees, in the rivers, and inside and outside the house. The Nyishi have developed a relationship of mutuality or avoidance with objects believed to have belonged to *wiyus*. In their belief system tiger happens to be the brother of *Abo Tani*, their ancestor; so they avoid killing of tigers. This belief is also there in Galo culture, another tribe in Arunachal Pradesh.

As the legend goes, *Abo Tani* and *wiyus* were contemporaries. *Wiyus* were jealous of *Abo Tani's* supernatural power and always were in search for the opportunity to harm him. *Tu Tungung* as *Bingdarbo* (Mediator who settles disputes, presently *gingdung*) settled the dispute by demarcating area for their dwelling. *Abo Tani* was allotted areas suitable for human settlement and *wiyus* were given inaccessible places, trees and hills, rivers and marshy land for their dwelling. So, the Nyishi do not cut nor use trees like *domrang*, *sangrik* (*ficus species*), *tara posi sangkang* because they are believed to be the dwelling places of the *wiyus*. *Sanda dumbangbo* (any tree with a special structure), *osso dumbangbo* (cane with special structure), *hatek hanek* (knotted bamboo) etc. are believed to be the dwelling place of *wiyus*. Nyishis do not use leaves of *kamyar* plant, for *wiyus* are believed to use it. *Sangne netebo* (very big trees), *aleng patebo* (peculiar shaped big stones), *senyik* (marshy land), *sele koibo* (deep river with dark-colour water) and distant and inaccessible forest and mountains are believed to be the shelters of *wiyus*. *Tab* (snakes) and birds like *pup* (owl), *puwa* (crow) are dreaded as *wiyus*.

That the belief system of the Nyishis puts restraint on resource use could be comprehended from the following example. *Peagaa* (horn bill) is a much sought after bird among the Nyishis. Its *hibu* (beak) is decorated on the top of the *gopiya/bopiya* (hat) that gives a social status to its user. But still, they do not go for its indiscriminate killing in the belief that one who does so will never prosper. They use the term *Khumom-ho/who* to mean misery of all sorts for the present and future. Nest-killing is practised but silently, lest the *shewu/swng* (the protecting spirit in the jungle) would harm the hunter. This belief stops indiscriminate killing because the killing expedition in a particular nest breaks silence and checks further killing. They do not kill all members of its family in the fear that the killer's family would be subject to supernatural punishment. In the same line of thinking, Nyishis do not kill a male *peaga* flying alone as they know that it carries food to the female bird that hatches egg in the hole-nest. Its killing, as the people believe, amount to the destruction of its family of starvation that would bring bad-luck to killer's family.

There are some specific trees having specific uses. For example, trees like *kora*, *karsing*, *porio*, *tai* are used as house building materials and trees like *kora*, *ninch* and plants like *tajar* are used for constructing *ugang* (ritual structure). After major rituals with mithun sacrifice, such as *ganda wiyu panam*, *himi panam*, entire community observes taboo for five days when outside works including

## Check Your Progress

20. State whether the following statements are true or false:
- Ecology has no influence in tribal knowledge system.
  - Tribal knowledge system is largely based on oral transmission
  - An ecological area inhabited by tribal people is known as a habitat.
  - Tribal knowledge system does not recognize faiths and beliefs.
  - Tribal people normally understand health in opposition to the concept of sickness.

felling of trees are prohibited. The Nyishi also observe restraint in the matter of harvesting trees during flowering and bamboos during shooting period. They strictly observe taboos because of the fear of supernatural punishment consequent upon their violation.

Use of land resource for shifting cultivation is not indiscriminate; rather it follows norms consistent to their belief system. The selection of new jhum plot is based on the ritual *wiyu kokanam* in which chicken lever or egg yolk is examined. Sometimes, dreams also play significant role in selecting a jhum plot. The jhum cycle is limited to particular fields for a number of decades and fallow period is at least above ten years. Moreover, jhum fields are selected in places where *tajar* plant and *kokam* leaves grow abundantly, for such fields are believed to be fertile.

You will find that the Khamptis another tribe in Arunachal Pradesh have developed the practices of restrained resource use. For example, *Ton Mei Hung* (peepal tree), trees having seven or more branches (believed to be the abode of spirits) are wholly protected. Some trees have specific use, eg. *tonliu* (simul)-used in making bier, *kamko* (nahar) branches used during *Sangken* festival, and thus are protected. The Khamptis have the belief that *Ariyanitya* (the future incarnation of Lord Buddha) will get enlightenment under *kamko*.

There are restrictions on the harvest of trees in certain seasons. At the time of flowering, harvesting is prohibited because of the belief that trees will yield soft wood prone to insect-infection. Same belief prohibits bamboo harvesting during *Nuen Napi* (fortnight preceding full moon day) and when shoots are tender. Harvesting of bamboo and trees are prohibited during festivals such as *Nawa* and *Sangken*.

In earlier days, the Khamptis followed a practice called *Tang Ton Mei* (to put a new tree in place of old one) to appease *phinoy*. Perhaps this was the traditional way of forest conservation, which in later years has been diluted to the practice of putting a branch in place of the felled tree. Any violation of traditional practice of resource use is linked to supernatural punishment like *maa* (madness), *khom tuk* (soul loss), etc.

The rationality behind taboos, beliefs and practices associated with restrained resource use is the prudence which seemingly contributes towards ensuring long term sustainability of resource use.

## 2.3 SUMMARY

- In this unit we have discussed the origin of the term tribe, its academic and administrative nature and particularly, the characteristics of tribe in changing perspectives. In India, tribe constitutes a large portion of its population constituting 8.6 per cent of only constitutional category. The population is distributed in 30 states and UTs of the country. You have read the nature and extent of distribution with reference to geographical regions and political divisions based on regions, states and districts.
- By reading this unit you are expected to learn details on the concept of tribe, characteristics and the distribution of their habitats.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

21. State whether the following statements are true or false:
- (a) Faiths and beliefs put restraints on resource use.
  - (b) Any item, whether available or not in the ecology can be prescribed as a taboo for people living in it.
  - (c) Traditional knowledge system has clues of resource conservation.
  - (d) Sacred grove is a strategy of religious belief.
  - (e) People do not violate social norms knowing that it will help in resource conservation.

## NOTES

- You have studied that the term 'tribe' is a colonial creation. But the communities designated as tribes during colonial period had their terms of address and outsiders' designation for them.
- The term tribe largely denotes to social category and includes both ST and Non-ST communities in India. ST category includes its variant i.e. PTGs. The ST category though refers to a broad social group its basis is socio-economic backwardness. Being a social category it deals with social institutions and organizations. But in a narrow and implicit sense the term is used to distinguish a tribal individual from its non-tribal counterpart. Further, being a social category the concept of tribe is not confined to the boundary of any socio-cultural characteristics. Tribes are heterogeneous in terms of bio-genetic traits, language, levels of cultural contact, economic pursuits, religious faiths and beliefs and in the field of governance system.
- You have further studied that the term tribe though originated in colonial vocabulary it continues to stay consequent upon its use in academics and government documents. However, a tribe does not exist in its ideal state; it is in transition. The characteristics of tribes, therefore, present not only an ideal state but also the changing perspectives.
- The habitat of tribe is finally explained in terms of ecology. The ecological habit, as you have learnt, influences knowledge system of a tribe. In turn the knowledge system helps in resource conservation. You have also learnt that ecological knowledge relates to the notion of health and health care practices in tribal communities.

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## 2.4 KEY TERMS

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- **Aborigine:** The original or native or earliest known inhabitants of a country or region in relation to colonisers or other migrants.
- **Acephalous:** Literally, 'headless', meaning without any centralised authority.
- **Bio-genetic variability:** The phenotypic variance of a trait or the genotype in the population of a group or many groups due to genetic difference amongst individuals.
- **Census:** Complete enumeration of something. In India, the total population is enumerated once in 10 years, called Population Census.
- **Cephalous society:** A society with centralised authority like a chief.
- **Colonial:** Relating to the subjugating policy and power of a country over another independent country.
- **Concept:** A generalized form of abstract or generic idea of what something is or how it works; it is wider than in the meaning or definition of something.
- **Cultural Territory:** A geographical space generally across the political divisions where a community of a homogeneous or at least undifferentiated culture lives.
- **Divide and Rule:** The policy of gaining and maintain power over a population by creating small divisions within and causing rivalries and creating discord among them.

- **Evolution:** A gradual process through which something changes into a different and usually more complex or improved form.
- **Evolutionists:** Those who believe in the idea that things change through a gradual process from simple to complex forms.
- **Great Tradition:** The tradition based on the idea contained in epics, purans and other classical sanskritic texts and shared as a common cultural consciousness by the people.
- **Habitat:** Place or environment that is natural for the normal life and growth of plant or animal including human beings.
- **Ideal category:** The category that is expected to conform to the idea considered to be perfect and thus a model.
- **Interface:** The meeting point or area of different communicating ideas.
- **Little Tradition:** The tradition that is the local version of the great tradition which exist among folk artists, medicine men, tellers, stories , bards and in a region or village.
- **Livelihood:** Activities undertaken for the purpose of securing the basic necessities life such as food, water, shelter and clothing.
- **Non-literate:** Absence of the ability of reading and writing.
- **Perspective:** A particular way of viewing a phenomenon independently or in relation to another.
- **Political Territory:** A geographical area having a well-defined political boundary like that of a country or state or district.
- **Pre-literate:** Absence of the practice of reading and writing.
- **Scheduled Areas:** ‘Excluded’ or ‘partially excluded’ areas identified by the British Government and later declared in Indian Constitution as Scheduled Areas as per the provisions of Fifth Schedule, these are Fifth Schedule Areas in nine states at present with predominance tribal population.
- **Scope:** With regard to a discipline it refers to subject matter and its relation with other disciplines.
- **Seven Sisters:** The seven states, namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura.
- **Theraveda:** Literally it means ‘words or wisdom of the elders’, it refers to the Buddhist School of Hinayana Cult that draws its scriptural inspiration from the Pali texts, or Tipitaka.
- **Tribal Areas:** Tribal inhabiting areas where provisions of Sixth Schedule are applicable.
- **Tribal Sub-Plan:** An integrated strategy of development of tribals in Fifth Schedule Areas of India introduced during the Fifth Five Year Plan.
- **Ecology:** Scientific study of interactions among organisms and their environment.
- **Traditional knowledge:** Knowledge that passes on orally from generations to generations.
- **Supernatural:** That does not exist in natural form and that cannot be explained in natural ways.



## NOTES

- **Sacred grove:** An enclosure with trees which is considered holy and linked to supernatural being(s).
- **Resource:** Resource has different meaning in different disciplines like Economics, Geography, etc. In natural resource it means natural materials used for human welfare.
- **Conservation:** Preservation, protection and promotion.
- **Totem:** Natural objects like plants or animals which are considered to be mythical ancestors of a clan or lineage.

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## 2.5 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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- 22.(a) True, (b) False, (c) False, (d) False, (e) True
- 23.Occupation
- 24.Divide and Rule
- 25.Proto-Australoids, Mongoloids, Negrito
- 26.Hunting-gathering, shifting agriculture, herding
- 27.Austro-Asiatic, Tibeto-Chinese, and Dravidian
- 28.Cephalous and acephalous
- 29.(a) True, (b) False, (c) True, (d) True, and (e) True
30. (a) Colonial mindset of divide and rule, evolutionary scheme of society, Criminal Tribes Act, 1871, Census Reports.
- (e) Communities who were notified as Criminal Tribes under Criminal Tribes Act,1871
- (f) Band, tribe, chiefdom and state
- (g) Between tribe and peasant there are many tribal communities displaying characteristics of peasant and many peasant communities displaying characteristics of tribal communities at different degrees
31. (a) Sts and PTGs
- (f) Articles 342 and 366 (25)
- (g) The Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Chandigarh and Puducherry
- (h) Non-Scheduled Tribes and Indigenous people
32. (a) True, (b) True, (c) False, (d) True, (e) True, (f) False, (g) False
33. (a) False, (b) False, (c) False, (d) False (e) True
34. (a) 75, (b) 2<sup>nd</sup>, (c) Andhra Pradesh, (d) Sixth Schedule, Fifth Schedule, (e) Shilu Ao Committee, (f) State
35. 1. Bhil, Gond, Mina, Naikda, Oraon, Koli - Mahadev, Kol, Varli, Kokna, Kawar, Korku, Koya, Halba, Dharua, Dubla, Rathawa, and Saharia
36. Kurung Kumey in Arunachal Pradesh
37. The Northeast India



38. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland. The concentration of tribal population is more than 60%
39. Dhebar Commission in 1973
40. (a) G.S. Ghurye, (b) Marshal Sahlins, (c) F.G Bailey, (d) S.C.Sinha, (i) A.R.Desai, (f) B.R. Ambedkar
41. (a) False (b) True (c) False (d) False (e) True
42. (a) True (b) False (c) True (d) False (e) False

## NOTES

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## 2.6 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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### Short-Answer Questions

5. Do you think Indian tribes lived in isolation before British rule? Give examples to justify your answer.
6. Write any five characteristics of tribes in ideal state. Do you think tribes in India live in ideal state? Why or why not?
7. Do you think defining tribes in India has a territorial dimension? Support your answer with examples.
8. Distinguish between the concepts of Political Territory and Cultural Territory with reference to tribal communities of India.

### Long-Answer Questions

5. 'Tribe as a social category is a colonial legacy'. Explain why or why not.
6. What is the basis of classification of Indian population in tribes and caste? Do you think the basis is correct? Support your answers with examples.
7. In India the term 'tribe' can be replaced with 'indigenous people'. Justify your answer with suitable examples.
8. Do you think concentration of tribal population correlates to the percentage of Country's tribal population? Support your answer with examples.

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# UNIT-III SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

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## NOTES

### Structure

- 3.0 Introduction
- 3.1 Unit Objectives
- 3.2 Meaning of Social Organizations
  - 3.2.1 Socio-Political Organizations-Framework of Discussion
- 3.3 Tribal Village
- 3.4 Tribal Social Organizations
  - 3.4.1 Schema of Social Organizations
  - 3.4.2 Kinship Based Social Organizations
  - 3.4.3 Non-kinship Based Social Organizations
- 3.5 Institutional Social Organizations
  - 3.5.1 Kinship
  - 3.5.2 Marriage
  - 3.5.3 Family
- 3.6 Political Organizations
  - 3.6.1 Political Organizations-Evolutionary Scheme
  - 3.6.2 Types in Indian Tribes
  - 3.6.3 Traditional versus Modern Organizations
- 3.7 Summary
- 3.8 Key Terms
- 3.9 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 3.10 Questions and Exercises

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## 4.3 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, you have learnt the definition and evolution of the term 'tribe.' You have also learnt about the categories of tribes in India, terms of reference, distribution of habitats and their characteristics. By now you are aware that tribal communities are heterogeneous. But in the community itself the aspects of life show a harmonious blending through interconnectedness in terms of culture. In other words, the culture presents a holistic understanding; it means that aspects of life do not exist as separate domains. There is one domain, the cultural domain of all aspects of life, and each aspect, therefore is an integral part of that single domain, integrated and interconnected.

We can take an example for clarification. Economics as an aspect of life does not exist as a separate domain as in modern societies. It is instituted in social process and interconnected with other aspects such as social, political and religious life. Similarly, social aspect of life is interconnected with political, economic and

*Socio-Political Organizations* religious aspects of life, and all together form the culture of the community. In this unit you shall learn social and political aspects of life and their interconnectedness from the study of socio-political organizations.

## NOTES

Each and every society believes in stability, solidarity and harmonious living. In view of this a society evolves its mechanisms to ensure social harmony. Political organizations help enforcing these mechanisms. However, these mechanisms may vary from formal system to informal way of living, but the essence remains the same to maintain harmony and ensure stability. In tribal communities, customary laws and sanctions are such mechanisms which you will learn in this Unit.

You have already learnt that religion is a component of holistic tribal life. It is integrated with other aspects of life and plays a significant role in many ways. Its ethical component puts checks on unwanted social behaviour; beliefs and practices influence understanding disease and curative system; and faiths, beliefs and practices present the cultural identity of the members of the tribe in a holistic sense. You will learn about all these aspects in this unit also.

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### 4.3 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of various tribal social organizations
- Discuss institutions like kinship, marriage and family in the context of tribal social organizations
- Describe the working of tribal political organizations
- Examine the customary laws and social sanctions followed in tribes
- Discuss the tribal religious faith, belief and practices

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### 4.3 MEANING OF SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

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You already know the meaning of *social organization*. The meaning has been compared with the meaning of *social structure*. Briefly but clearly a distinction between social structure and social organization is made by Brown and Barnett (1942). They state:

Social organization refers to the systems of obligation-relations which exist among and between groups constituting a given society, while social structure refers to the placement and position of individuals and of groups within that system of obligation-relations.

The clan displays obligation-relations among members. Families within the clan, for example, reciprocate labour exchange. At the same time, clan is also a social structure because of its distinct position in the schema of lineage, clan, phratry etc.

You will learn that different communities display different organizational schemes. The scholars study these schemes from different perspectives also. We present here definitions of social organizations advanced by leading scholars in the field.

You must be aware that in any given society collective life involves methods of grouping and grading people for effectively carrying out various types of activities required for survival existence. In view of this Malinowski (1992) has defined social



organization in terms of the manner in which humans combine to act upon their environment in order to satisfy their needs. Along Similar lines, Lowie (1969) refers to the significant grouping of individuals as social organization.

Raymond Firth (1951), however, presents the notion of social organization with reference to a scheme of three analytical levels namely, **social structure, function, and social organization**. According to him, *social structure* is the set of rules or principles governing social action. These rules or principles are social relations and how these relations serve individual or collective ends refer to *function*. Social organization on the other hand refers to the dynamic, situational and decision making aspect of social relations which serve individual or collective ends. Radcliffe-Brown (1952), who is also a structural functionalist, holds that social organization is an arrangement of roles associated with the statuses which constituted the social structure. Redfield (1955) emphasises kinship relationship and holds that three relations – consanguineal (blood relations), affinal (marriage relations), and ritual relations form the scheme of social organization in a village.

By now you must have an idea of the *dynamic nature* of social organizations from different perspectives of scholars. With this idea you can understand and relate social organizations of tribes in India.

### 3.2.1 Socio-Political Organizations-Framework of Discussion

Normally, a few questions may come to your mind when you look at the compound word ‘socio-political’. Why not study *social* and *political* organizations separately? Do they mean same thing as socio-political organizations? Why at all do we should study these organizations?

As you know all aspects of life in a traditional tribal community are interconnected. There are organizations which predominantly display characteristics of both social and political organizations. It will not be useful to study such organizations from either social or political points of view. You will learn that traditional political organizations are based on kinship relations and as you know, kinship is an institutional social organization. Therefore, we study **socio-political organizations**, not social or political organizations separately. The study of this type is known as interdisciplinary study, the approach to study two aspects of life as they exist interconnected.

Recent studies recognise that each discipline has linkages with a number of disciplines. The approach to study such linkages between two disciplines is interdisciplinary and among three or more disciplines is multi-disciplinary.

The essence of a political organization is authority, the power to take decision. The authority does not exist independent of social or religious norms of tribal communities. For example, a family is a social organization where the authority may lie in father (male head) or mother (female head). In the family, if father has the authority it is a patriarchal family; if the mother has the authority it is matriarchal family. The family, whether patriarchal or matriarchal, display features of both social (family) and political (authority) aspects of life. However, we will discuss socio-political organizations under *two separate sections* on the basis of the feature which is crucial. We will include such organizations in which social relations are crucially significant under social organization section. Similarly, organizations with focus on political aspect of life will be discussed under the section of political organizations.

We will classify **social organizations** under three types: (i) village, (ii) kinship and non-kinship organizations, and (iii) kinship based institutional social organizations.

## NOTES

You will learn that a tribal social organization is based on both kinship and non-kinship relations. In kinship relations members of a tribe have a common ancestry through blood relations or marriage relations. But in non-kinship relations type of social organization members have different ancestral origin with no inter-organizational marriage relations. A tribal organization also may have features of both. You will study that the Sherdukpen tribe has two social divisions *Thong* and *Chao*, not related in kinship bonds at the beginning. Similarly, the Koro and Hrusso sub-tribes of the Aka tribe of Arunachal Pradesh are not kinship based. The kinship based social organizations namely, family clan, sub-tribe, etc. are based on the foundation of institutional social organization like marriage. You will learn that family as a social organization may be monogamous or polygamous depending on marriage practices.

Needless to say, you will learn social organizations like family, lineage, clan, etc. and related institutional organizations like kinship and marriage.

Under the section **political organizations** you will study organizations with reference to classification of societies on the basis of authority and supernatural means of punishment. In many tribal communities a few persons derive their authority from community's faiths and beliefs of supernatural connection with 'crime and punishment'. So oath and ordeal have been discussed within political organization. In particular, you will study various traditional tribal councils and family types on the basis of authority along with a few individual cases.

Let us come to the third question: why to study social organizations?

You are aware that the term society is an abstract concept; it is not visible by itself. But it manifests through its various institutions and organizations. In other words, the study of its institutions and organizations make the concept of society meaningful and comprehensive.

Charon (1986) informs us that social organization basically refers to patterns of social interactions. It is society specific and precisely includes how people interact, the kinship systems they use, the marriage, pattern of residence, division of work, who has access to specific resources and knowledge, the strategy of social ranking and so on. There are different approaches to an understanding of social organization. Some scholars have used linguistic and cultural affiliation of tribes made up of bands (for predominantly mobile groups) or villages. The others have based their study on kinship and included nuclear families, clans, phratries and moieties. A society is also organised on political basis.

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### 4.3 TRIBAL VILLAGE

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A tribal village is normally a social organization. It displays a network of interconnectedness of relations among kinship groups and non-kin families. It also reflects all aspects of life as instituted in social, economic and political organizations. This means village as a social organization does not reflect social dimensions alone. It is a cultural space, an identity marker, an economic organization and a frame of governance. We can very well say that the tribal village is also a socio-political organization in terms of interconnectedness of its social and political functions.

A tribal village is a **microcosm** of tribal society. Social organization of families, for example, in the village is a part of the family organization of the tribe spread in many villages. The institutions in a village, to cite another example, constitute a part in the domain of such institutions of the tribe. When we say 'tribal village' it logically follows that 'tribal village' is a category by itself within the tribe. Though tribe is a social category the tribes are heterogeneous groups across region, religion, race, level of development and language affinity. Similar is the case with tribal villages. The notions of village, for example, for pastoralist tribes like Brokpas, Bhutias, Gaddis; and hunting gathering tribes like Birhor and Sulungs (Puroiks) are different. Further, the village has a different notion for permanent cultivating tribes like Oraons, Khamptis, and the like.

By now you must have understood that a tribal village gives the idea of a social category and a territorial space.

**Village as Social identity:** A sense of identity goes with a person having belonged to a particular village. That is why the villagers of a particular village are identified with certain attributes and characteristics. A village may also feel superior to other villages of the same clan because of its specific tradition. The people of Riga, the cradle of the Adi Minyong villages, display a sense of superiority in the process of interaction with other Minyongs. Interior Nyishis similarly show a sense of superiority because they believe their tradition is not polluted. The people of Hong Village of the Apatanis are called *Subu Hangu*, meaning Mithun (*bos frontalis*) Hong, by people of other Apatani villages. According to one version, the Hong people had a large number of *mithuns* and so, people from other villages call them Mithun Hong. There is another version which tells that the people of Hong are fond of eating like a *mithun*. The people of Bula Village are known as *Bula tuda yari betu*, meaning short tempered. So a village carries with it an identity as perceived by other villagers.

You can understand the significance of village as a social identity from the writings of N. Talitemjen Jamir and A. Lanunungsang about the Ao society. They write:

In Ao society, they do ask *koyimer*, 'whose village' /*shir chir*, 'whose son'? *kechi kidong*? Which clan? The identity of a person is known better through these answers that start from the village and clan hold followed by tribe's name. Generally, the character of a person is well read even by the name 'village' in Ao society because every village has peculiar traits of its own...

**Territorial and social dimensions of villages:** Tribal villages differ in terms of territorial occupation with reference to number of households. They also differ in terms of number of clans settled within the territory and marriage norms. You will find Ao villages in Nagaland with several hundred households, whereas a Mishmi village in the hills may consist of one long house. Usually, the villages of any tribe in the plains are large in size while those in the hills are comparatively small.

The villages may be a *clan based village* or a *multi-clan village*. Traditional villages of the Nyishi and Galo are clan based, though in recent years some of them have become multi-clan. On the other hand, the Khamptis, Adis, etc. live in multi-clan villages. Multi-clan villages are often endogamous. The clan based villages are mostly exogamous; the village exogamy binds all men and women born in the same village in the same generation as brothers and sisters. So marriage is an important factor of interaction with other villages. Even marriage takes place

## NOTES

*Socio-Political Organizations* between two neighbouring tribes. Needless to say, tribe exogamy is not universal. We have examples of the Akas and the Mijis tribes of Arunachal Pradesh who have marital relations between them from time immemorial.

## NOTES

You will also find some cases of non-tribal families living in tribal villages. These villages have a greater social sphere beyond tribe. Sachidanada (1968) reports that in tribal villages of undivided Bihar some households belonged to a few Hindu castes. But they were found not making their influence felt and did not keep themselves apart as distinct entities. As a result, separate caste Panchayats did not operate for them in the tribal villages where they lived.

Villages of some tribes have social organizations in the pattern of satellite settlements as among the Adi Padams of Damro. In satellite settlements which are clan based; the Padams use the term *Dolung* not only for the clan settlement but also for the village itself. So Damro is Damro *Dolung* and the satellite settlement, for example of the Pertin clan, is Pertin *Dolung*. The Ho villages in Jharkhand, however, have a number of satellite settlements called *tola*.

***Village as a shifting social organization:*** Usually the concept of village is associated with settled life, precisely with practices of agriculture - settled, shifting and wet rice cultivation. But the hunter-gatherers like Bonda, Birhor also have a village life. N. Patnaik (1987) informs us that the nomadic Birhors distinguish three seasons, namely rainy, winter and summer and in each season they change their *tanda* (settlement/village). The location of a *tanda* depends on livelihood concerns. For example, in rainy season the *tanda* is located in a place which is close to the market centre and also to the forest covered mountains. The *tanda* is a multi-clan structure with a distinct small hut for each clan to house clan deity. The *kumbha* (house) is leaf thatched conical structure for living of individual families, though there are two other *kumbhas*, *dhingla*-dormitory of unmarried boys and *kudi ada* - dormitory of unmarried girls in each *tanda*.

Professor A. C. Bhagabati, former Vice Chancellor of the then Arunachal University often narrates the replica of Shedukpen villages when they migrated to the plains of Assam in winters during colonial days. Therefore, you can say that some tribal villages are shifting in nature.

***Interacting Tribal Villages:*** Tribal villages in India do not present the picture of an isolate. In the area of social relations, the village is closely connected with other villages of the same tribe or of other neighbouring tribes. In central India, tribal people of different villages used to meet in weekly markets. In the Northeast India, tribes from different villages and different communities used to visit the trade fairs of Sadiya and Udalguri. The Adis, Mishmis and Khamptis were important among the visitors to Sadiya fair.

Villages of a tribe interact not only through marriage relations, but many of them also interact through political institutions.

For example, tribes like Adi, Khasi, Jaunsar Bawar, Oraon, Gond Bhils and Jaintia have a structure comprising three different levels. The Jaintia, for example, had tribe level chief (*Siem*) at the top, provincial governors (*Dollois*) in the middle at the level of *Raids* i.e., group of villages and village head (*Wahehchanong*) at the village level. In some tribes there is chieftdom. The point is that in such systems the village does not exist as an isolate. In chieftaincy vertical interaction or satellite interaction of villages with the chief takes place. You can also come across a group

of villages under a territorial chief as is the case among the Noctes. When there is a tribe level chief like that of the Khamptis the issue of village as an isolate does not arise. A Khampti village is a well-defined structural unity with its *Chauman*, the village head, but linked to the tribe level chiefdom. In contemporary tribal villages both traditional and Panchayati Raj institutions exist side by side and thus, the village has become a part of the institutional arrangement of the nation and the provincial state. Not only in the present times, but also in earlier periods as well; a tribal village displayed the characteristic of *an extension* beyond its territorial and social boundary.

**Organization of Institutions of socialisation:** There are distinct organizations in the villages of some tribes which play a crucial role in the process of socialisation. In fact, it is not only significant in socialising process, it also teaches cultural norms. These institutions are better called social cultural institutions than dormitories. You will find such institutions among the Oraons which is called *dhumkuria*, among Konyaks called *murung* and among Ao Nagas which is called *arju*. Verrier Elwin's excellent study on Muria Gonds' *ghotul* (dormitory) presents its functions that relates to different aspects of social life. Among the Wanchos, the *paa*, (dormitory) is such an institution. It is divided along the Chief and commoner line and is both sacred and a secular place. The *mushup/dere* (dormitory) of the Adis is a cultural space where both sacred and secular activities take place.

### 4.3 TRIBAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

You already know that social organizations are kinship or non-kinship based. Information on formation of a tribe by non-kinship groups for marriage purpose is not available yet. But within the tribe, even having a common ancestry, marriage rules such as endogamy and exogamy among the groups culturally evolve.

A tribe is also formed by members genealogically unrelated. The *Man* community in Meghalaya is formed by Burmese soldiers who settled in India and married native women. The Siddis of Gujarat are of African origin, who came as porters of Portuguese but settled as a community. The community formation is not obviously based on the consideration of genealogical relations. Similarly, the Khampti tribe is not based on blood relations. Members of the constituent clans migrated under the leadership of a chief. The members were not genealogically related to the chief which formed a distinct clan namely *Namchum*, in India. The Sherdukpen have two social divisions, namely *Thong* and *Chao*. The clans in the *Thong* group are the descendants of the chief who migrated and established the community. On the other hand, the clans in the *Chao* group are formed by the descendants of the people who came along the *Thong*. Though the Sherdukpen tribe is not kinship based, the clans are. In a tribe there may be both kinship based and non-kinship based organizations.

We normally discuss social organizations of a tribe as they exist in different segments like family, lineage, etc., but arranged in ascending order, i.e. vertically. The individual is the base of any society. But family is the segment at the bottom and the tribe at the top of the arrangement order of organizations. In between you may find lineage, sub-clan, clan, sub-tribe, phratry, and moiety. However, all tribes do not have the same sequence of the Segmentary organizations.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

1. Choose the correct answer:
  - (a) A tribal village is a social/religious organization in a territorial space.
  - (b) A village ensures a sense of identity/conflict among its members.
  - (c) Tanda is a permanent/temporary settlement of the nomadic Birhors.
  - (d) In India the village is an isolate/extension.
  - (e) Your village is your social/religious identity.
  - (f) The essence of political organizations lie in power/oratory skill to take decision.
  - (g) The compound word 'socio-political' points to interdisciplinary/separate branch of knowledge.



### 3.4.1 Schema of Social Organizations

#### NOTES

As you know units/segments of organizations vary in tribes. All the units are not present in every tribe. Obviously, the scheme varies depending on the number of units in a tribe. On the basis of study of different tribes, scholars have presented different schemes found in social organizations of tribes in India.

T. C. Das (1953) presents seven schemes of social organizations existing among tribes of India. Each scheme is based on the number of units in social organizations of a tribe. According to him, you will find any one of the following schemes of social organization in a tribe:

1. Family → Local Group → Tribe
2. Family → Clan → Tribe
3. Family → Moiety → Tribe
4. Family → Clan → Phratry → Tribe
5. Family → Clan → Phratry → Moiety → Tribe
6. Family → Clan → Sub-tribe → Tribe
7. Family → Sub-clan → Orthogamous clan → tribe

S. C. Dube (1971) on the other hand, presents a general scheme such as Family → Clan → Phratry → Tribe. According to him social organizations of a tribe in India include four units or segments. The units are families formed by individuals, clans or local groups formed by families, phratries formed by clans and tribe formed by phratries and in some cases by clans.

Vidyarthi and Rai (1985) have advanced the scheme in a more elaborated way. They have listed eight common schemes found among the tribes in India. They have presented the schemes *from tribe/tribal groups to individual* unlike Das's scheme of *family to tribe*. The schemes based on the number of units in a tribe's social organization are as follows:

1. Tribal groups → Tribe → Sub-Tribe → Phratry → Clan → Family → Individual
2. Tribal groups → Tribe → Moiety → Phratry → Clan → Sub-Clan → Lineage → Family → Individual
3. Tribal groups → Tribe → Territorial group → Social class → Clan → Lineage → Sub-lineage → Family → Individual
4. Tribe → Sub-tribe → Clan → Lineage → Family → Individual
5. Tribe → Territorial group → Clan → Sub-Clan or Lineage group → Lineage → Family → Individual
6. Tribe → Clan → Lineage → Family → Individual
7. Tribe → Local group → Lineage → Family → Individual
8. Tribe → Clan → Family → Individual

### 3.4.2 Kinship-Based Social Organizations

We have not distinguished between social organizations based on blood relations and marriage relations. But you will find a connection between the two in following discussions. Sometimes you will find a common designation for a group of tribals. This grouping is hardly based on kinship relations. Nevertheless, they exist in the scheme of tribal social organizations.



**Tribal group:** Designations like Naga, Gond, Bill, Gadaba, etc. are common name of a group of tribes; they do not refer to a single tribe. Such designations are generic names. For example, Naga is the generic name for tribes like Ao, Angami, Konyak, Rengma, Sema, etc. Similarly, Bhil is the generic or group name for tribes like Bhil Garasia, Dholi Bhil, Dungri Bhil, Dungri Garasia, Mewasi Bhil, Rawal Bhil, Tadvi Bhil, Bhagalia, Bhilala, etc.

**Tribe:** As you know, tribe is a social group/social category that includes other units of organizations. This organization is common in all tribal communities. In evolutionary sense, it is the second intermediate stage in social evolution from band to state. In this sense also, a tribe is a social formation. However, the tribe as a social organization displays some characteristics that situate it as a distinct category. You have defined a tribe and learnt its characteristics in Unit-I of this paper entitled *Tribes, Habitats and Characteristics*. The important point which you have to keep in mind is that *tribe* is the apex social organization in the scheme based on kinship and non-kinship relations.

**Sub-tribe and territorial group:** We have discussed about the Noctes of Arunachal Pradesh. The Noctes have territorial divisions, Borduria and Namseng noctes. The Nocte villages are grouped under the Chief of Borduria or the Chief of Namseng or other Chiefs. Accordingly, they are designated as Borduria Noctes or Namseng Noctes. These divisions are sub-tribes of the Noctes. The Monpas have also been territorially divided into Dirang Monpa, Tawang Monpa and Kalektang Monpa. In this sense, the Monpa has three sub-tribes. Ordinarily, a sub-tribe is a division of the tribe identified on the basis of economy or ecology or geographical isolation. A tribe may have two or more sub-tribes. The Korwas of Palamau, for example, has two divisions based on geographical isolation. The two divisions are Hill Korwas and Plain Korwas. These groups are also called as territorial groups when culturally or economically much difference is not found. Nocte sub-tribes, Aka sub-tribes, Monpa sub-tribes could be good examples of territorial groups.

**Moiety:** When a society is divided only into two halves, each half is called a moiety or dual organization. Thus, a moiety is in simple terms a half tribe. Each moiety consists of several phratries, clans and lineages. A Moiety is different from sub-tribe in the sense that in sub-tribe territorial factor is the basis while in moiety it is social factor. There is often a sense of superiority and inferiority feeling between two moieties of a tribe. Moiety organization is normally endogamous. But examples of exogamous moieties are also found. In traditional Minyoun group of the present Adi tribe the society was divided into Kuri and Kuming moieties. The social division of the Apatanis into *Gyuchi* and *Gyutii* presents the features of moiety organizations.

**Social class:** The Tharus living in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh have two social divisions distinguished by the use of titles such as *Rana Thakur* and *Thakur*. In the social hierarchy the former enjoys a higher status than the latter. You also know the Thong and *Chao* divisions of the Sherdukpen. These are two social classes. Similarly, the Khamptis have three social divisions namely *Phanchau* (royal families), *Paklung* (commoners) and *Phan-e-on* (other than the two groups). Often the line of division of a tribe as moiety or social class is overlapping. However, a moiety may have kinship relations from the beginning while a social class, with high and low status, may not have such relations.

**Phratry:** It is larger than clan, because such a kin group includes various clans. It is a combination of brother clans. It is the immediate higher grouping of clans in

## NOTES



*Socio-Political Organizations* the scheme of tribal social organizations, but a lower grouping than moiety and social class. All the tribes may not have this organization. However, these organizations are common in many tribes of the Northeast India. You will find phratry organization, for example among the Rabhas. In the community, a *bar* is clan equivalent. Two or more *bars* unite to form an organization called *hur*, which is a phratry equivalent. You will also find four phratries, such as *yerwen saga*, *sarwen saga*, *siwen saga* and *nalwen saga*, among the Raj Gonds who mainly live in Odisha, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

## NOTES

**Clan:** A clan is a kin group that consists of members who are the unilineal descendants of a common ancestor whose identity is forgotten and therefore fictitious. A clan is a large kin group than lineage, and includes members belonging to many generations and also many lineages. A clan is distinguished from a lineage in that a clan merely claims common ancestry; a lineage on the other hand traces its origin from a common progenitor. A clan may have several lineages.

Majumdar and Madan (1970) consider *sibs* as clans. According to them, a *sib* or a clan is the combination of a few lineages and descent ultimately traced to a mythical ancestor who may be human, human like, animal, plant or even inanimate. The clan of a tribe is an exogenous social group and regards marriages among their members as incest. It is formed by the members who hold the view of descent from a common ancestor, possession of a common totem or habitation of a common territory.

The clans among Indian tribes can be a totemic clan, a genealogical or territorial clan, or a clan based on *rishis*. The Santal, Bill, Munda, Ho, etc. have totemic clans. As K. K. Misa (1987) notes, the Hos have 90 clans with totems. The totem of Purti clan (*kili*) is crocodile, of Hasda wild goose, of Tiu jackal, and of Hembram clan the totem is a tree bearing berries. The Gonds have clans whose members believe *rishis* like Bashistha, Kashyap as ancestors. The clans of Arunachal tribes are mostly genealogical in their claim of ancestry. However, some of the Khampti clans are based on habitation in a common territory. The group that inhabited upper course of the river are designated as Mannow and that inhabited the lower course are designated as Mantaw. However, the Mannow and the Mantaw combine together to form an exogamous group.

**Sub-clan:** A sub-clan is a part of the clan. Among the Hos for example, the Purti clan has seven sub-clans. Majumdar and Madan (1970) state that the division of a clan into sub-clans is the result of either migration or adoption to new cultural traits or both by different sections of the clan. The Parmer clan of the Bhils have sub-clans like Dhararya, Devodia, Pipria, etc. based on the places of their habitation such as Dhar, Devod, Pipre, etc.

**Lineage:** You will find a number of families (of ego generation) related because these families are formed by brothers born to a father. In the generation of the 'father', i.e. the second generation, there may be families of his brothers. In third generation, i.e. grandfather's generation, there may be families of his brothers. In the fourth generation, i.e. great grandfather's generation there also may be families of grandfather's brothers. In the fourth generation, i.e. great-great grandfather's generation, he may be the single person. So all the families from great-great grandfather to the families of first (ego) generation form one group in terms of blood relations and recognise him as a common ancestor. This group is called a lineage. A lineage is, therefore, a kin group that consists of members who are the unilineal descendants of a common ancestor whose identity can be traced. The lineage is also called unilineal descent group. The lineage can be patrilineal

or matrilineal depending on whether the descent is traced from a male or female ancestor (Firth, 1956). Generally, members of five to six generations are included in a lineage. In this regard Lowie (1969) states that 'the lineage is made up exclusively of provable blood relatives, i.e., all members are demonstrably descended from a common ancestor or ancestress'.

**Sub-lineage:** It is a subordinate division of the lineage. When the population grows the group who believe in the same lineage settle in different locations. The families of each location form a sub-lineage. Nath (1960) states that the Bhils of western India live in a few villages; the families in these villages believe in the single lineage group with a depth and extension of five to six generations. The families who claim descent from Kadla are found living in four villages. The families of each village that belong to different generations form sub-lineage groups as they feel that they all form a single lineage of families descended from Kadla.

**Family & Individual:** You already know that family is the basic social unit in the scheme of social organization. However, an organization is formed by individuals, and therefore, an individual seems to be the basic element in social formation. An individual, on the other hand, is not a social organization by itself. You have learnt from the definitions of social organization that a social organization always begins with a group and therefore, family is the first basic group in the scheme of social organizations.

By now you have learnt that individuals form the smallest group such as family or household. Families of five to six generations combine together to form lineages; lineages form sub-clans or sub-local groups; sub-clans form clans or village or local groups; clans form phratries or territorial groups; phratries forms moieties or sub-tribes; and finally sub-tribes form a tribe.

With the growth of population, the lineage may grow into a clan and a clan into a phratry and so on. So, study of social organizations of a tribe is a continuous process. However, once a tribe is identified and recorded, it and its organizations remain static in spite of the fact that many internal dynamics change over the years.

### 3.4.3 Non-kinship Based Social Organizations

We have given the example of non-kin based social organizations of a tribe when two organizations do not have kinship relations, such as *Thong* and *Chao* of the Sherdukpen. In course of time there may emerge a kinship bond in terms of marriage relations.

In addition to this type of non-kinship organizations Indian tribes also have another such organization in the form of age-grades and age-sets. The age-based groups among the tribes are termed as age-grades by the anthropologists. For example, in the youth dormitories of the Oraon of Jharkhand, known as *Tur*, there used to be three grades of members: *Puna Jokhar* or novices entering at the age of 11 or 12, *Majh Turia Jokhar* or the middle class members, and *Koha Jokhar* or the oldest members. While the first two age-grades are of three years, duration each the last grade continues until the member is married, and sometimes until he has a child. Among the Padams of Arunachal Pradesh, *musup* is a male institution similar to youth dormitory in other tribes to some extent. The members in a *musup* are graded as *Musup ko*, *Minil*, *Ruutum* and *Pator Mijing*.

In many tribal societies of India, social groupings are made on the basis of gender also. This differentiation is more visible in the tribal youth dormitories.

## NOTES

*Socio-Political Organizations* Among the Oraon of Jharkhand and the Juang of Odisha, the youth dormitories were divided on gender lines, which means that there used to be separate dormitories for unmarried boys and unmarried girls. Among the Padams of Arunachal Pradesh, there is *musup* and *raseng* for boys and girls respectively. Among Ao Nagas *Ariju* existed for boys and *Tsiiki* for girls. Similarly, the girl's equivalent of the boys' dormitory (*pa*) among the Wanchos is called *haam*. Of course, many of these dormitories are now extinct among the tribes of India.

## NOTES

**Some cases:** You know that tribes in India have different schemes of social organization. Here you will find the difference with reference to three tribal communities.

**Rengma Naga:** The Rengma Naga comes under the generic Naga tribe. The tribe is territorially divided into the Eastern Rengmas and the Western Rengmas. J. P. Mills writes that the Western Rengmas are further divided into six exogamous groups or phratries. Each of these six phratries is further divided into a number of clans. The Eastern Rengmas have no such phratries, but are divided into three clans. The clans have sub-clans, which are divided into families and families into individuals.

**Kondh:** The Kondhs in Odisha are territorially divided into Kutia Kondhs, Desia Kondhs and Dongria Kondhs, which are the sub-tribes of the main tribe. Each sub-tribe is further divided into many exogamous totemic clans, constituted by a number of families. Each family is again constituted by many individuals.

**Toda:** The Toda tribe is endogamous in nature. It is divided into two exclusively endogamous dual organizations i.e. moieties. The higher and the major moiety is known as *Tarthar* while the lower one is *Teivali*. Each moiety is divided into a number of exogamous, totemic and patrilineal clans. A *Tarthar* comprises of twelve clans, whereas a *Teivali* consists of only six. Each clan is territorial in nature and possesses a number of villages. Further, each has two types of sub-clan divisions. A sub-clan is divided into a number of families. A Toda family is based on fraternal polyandry. A sharp division of labour is observed in a Toda household which is based on sex. The family consists of individuals.

The scheme of social organizations of the above three tribes is given below:

Rengma Raga	Kondh	Toda
<b>The generic tribe</b> (Naga, for example)	<b>Tribe</b> (Kondh)	<b>Tribe</b> (Toda)
⇓	⇓	⇓
<b>Tribe</b> (Rengma, for example; others could be Ao, Angami, etc.)	<b>Sub-tribe</b> (e.g. Dongria)	<b>Moiety</b> (Tarthar & Teivali)
⇓	⇓	⇓
<b>Territorial group</b>	<b>Clan</b>	<b>Clan</b>
⇓	⇓	⇓
<b>Phratry</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Sub-clan</b>
⇓	⇓	⇓
<b>Clan</b> (Khinzonyu/Apungza, etc. for example)	<b>Individual</b>	<b>Family</b>
⇓		⇓
<b>Sub-clan</b> (Tslanyu, for example)		<b>Individual</b>
⇓		
<b>Family</b>		
⇓		
<b>Individual</b>		

## 4.3 INSTITUTIONAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kinship, marriage and family are institutional social organizations. These institutions are established relations that govern the social organizations in tribes. A discussion of these institutions will help you to understand the social organizations we have already discussed. We will study these institutions from organizational point of view.

### 3.5.1 Kinship

Kinship is a social institution. It includes the classification of relatives, the formation of kin groups and rules of marriage. Rodney Needham's (1960,1971) definition of kinship is important in this regard. He defines kinship as following:

The study of kinship is the investigation of how social ties of descent and marriage are established, elaborated, fabricated, modified, forgotten, suppressed; how these ties are related to other manifestations of personal and social action.

So, kinship is the recognition of the ties with other human beings by descent, marriage or adoption. The ties need to be expressed in words, by using different terminologies. For example, children born to same set of parents are recognised through the uses of terms like brothers or sisters. There are practices, verbal or non-verbal, which are either avoidance between relations or a kind of nearness like joking relations. Such practices are kinship usages in day to day life.

As you know, kinship includes the classification of relatives, the formation of kin groups and aspects of marriage. Marriage is also associated with residence rules, meaning the settlement practice of married couples among the relatives. Scholars who study kin groups are called *descent theorists* and those emphasise on relations of groups through marriage are called *alliance theorists*.

You will learn the following aspects of kinship:

- Types of kin
- Rules of residence
- Descent
- Kinship terminology
- Kinship usages

### Types of kin

Kin is of several kinds. The kinds of kinship are based on different criteria. We shall discuss them as follows:

1. **Blood and Marriage:** Kin can be through blood or social (marriage) relations. The kin groups believed to have been formed biologically related to blood are *consanguineous kin* while those formed through marriage alliance are called *affinal kin*. The bond between parents and children, and that between children of the same parents is *consanguineous* in nature. On the other hand, there is a bond between spouses and their relatives as a result of marital relationship which is called *affinal kinship*.
2. **Nearness of members:** On the basis of the nearness of members in the group and beyond, the kin can be *primary*, *secondary* and *tertiary kin*
  - (a) A **primary** kin is a person who is directly related to the ego either through blood or through marriage alliance. One's father is one's primary kin

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

2. Fill in the blanks selecting the suitable answer from the bracket:
  - (a) Kinship is (institutional/ political) organization.
  - (b) The ancestor of a lineage is (real/fictitious).
  - (c) A dormitory is an institution of (socialization/ orphans).
  - (d) My maternal uncle is an example of \_\_ (kinship/ non-kinship) relations.
  - (e) A tribal village is a (microcosm/ reflection) of tribal society.
  - (f) Bachelor's dormitory is a (kinship/ non-kinship) organization.



## NOTES

through blood (primary *consanguineous* kin) and while one's wife is one's primary *affinal* kin.

(b) A **secondary** kin is a person related to ego through his/her primary kin. For example, the brother of ego's father is ego's secondary kin as it is through blood relation. The brother of ego's father is related to ego through his/her father who is a primary kin. The step mother of ego is his/her secondary *affinal* kin; the relation is through marriage alliance of ego's father, the primary kin.

(c) A **tertiary kin** is the primary kin of the secondary kin or secondary kin of the primary kin. We know that the brother of ego's father (uncle) is ego's secondary kin. Ego's aunt from the marriage alliance with ego's father's brother (uncle) is an example of tertiary kin.

**3. Direct and Indirect relationship:** On the basis of direct and indirect relationship the kin can be *lineal* or *collateral*.

(i) **Lineal** kins are those persons who are related to each other directly through descent, such as father, father's father, son and son's son. On the other hand, **Collateral** kins are persons who are related to each other indirectly through the mediation of another relative such as father's brother, mother's sister and so on.

(ii) **Real and Fictive:** Kinship can also be *real* or *fictive*. The distinction between the two, however, has the notion of 'blood group'.

The **real** kin members are born out of a biological relationship. The children of the same set of parents are real kin. Even a collateral kin like father's brother is a real kin. So a person, whose descent is either patrilineal or matrilineal, belongs to the group of real kin. In some societies social recognition of a father gives the status of real kin. For example, an adopted child is treated everywhere as if one's own biologically produced offspring.

**Fictive** kinship entails relationship which are quite like real kinship ones in some way. These relationships often have the same emotional and obligatory force as those between blood relatives. However, the relationship does not fulfil the requirements of the real kinship. The metaphorical use of kinship terms such as 'sisters' in the feminist movements or 'fathers' for priests are examples of fictive kinship.

### Rules of Residence

You will understand nature of organization of some family types on the basis rules of residence. The types of family on the basis of these rules are as follows:

1. **Patrilocal residence:** When married couple resides in or near the parental home of the bridegroom it is called patrilocal residence or *virilocality*. Tribes such as Oraon, Adi, Nyishi, Kharia and Ho are patrilocal.
2. **Matrilocal residence:** This system is the opposite of the patrilocal residence. In the system of matrilocal residence married couple resides in the parental home of the bride. This type of residence is also called as *uxorilocality*. The Khasis of Meghalaya have matrilocal residences.
3. **Bilocal residence:** This system of residence permits the married couple to reside in or near the house of parents of either of the spouse.

4. **Matri-Patrilocal residence:** This is a system of residence in between the matrilineal and patrilineal types. It is a special combination of matrilineal and patrilineal residences that alternate periodically throughout the married life of a couple.
5. **Avunculocal residence:** This system requires the married couple to live with bridegroom's maternal uncle. This rule invariably involves an initial period of matrilineal residence when the baby stays with its mother in his/her maternal uncle's home.
6. **Neolocal residence:** In the system the married couple establishes their own residence independent of the location of the parental home of either spouse. The residence can be located even at a considerable distance from both bride's and bridegroom's parental homes. Many of the highly industrialised societies follow this rule. Societies in which there is food shortage, as in the Tundra region, also adopt this rule for obvious economic reasons.

## NOTES

### Descent

On the basis of descent kinship relations can be unilineal or non-unilineal.

1. **Unilineal Descent Systems:** Unilineal descent systems recognise only one line of descent either along father's line or mother's line or along both father's and mother's line. The last one is called double descent. In addition to this, the descent can also be cognatic i.e. bilateral descents.
  - (a) **Patrilineal:** This is a descent in male line; group membership is determined by descent through father. This line of descent is also denoted by the term **agnatic**. In this system of descent an individual is affiliated with a group of kin who are related to him/her through the father alone. Thus, in patrilineal systems, the children in each generation regardless of child's sex belong to the descent group of their father: their father, in turn, belongs to the descent group of his father and so on.
  - (b) **Matrilineal:** This is a descent along female line; particularly through mother and the system is denoted by the term **uterine**. In this system of descent, the individual is affiliated with a group of kin who are related to him/her through the mother alone. Thus, in matrilineal systems, the children in each generation belong to the descent group of their mother; their mother, in turn, belongs to the descent group of her mother and so on. This system of descent does not necessarily imply that authority is in the hands of the mother or female; it only means that one traces membership in the group through female links.
 

Both patrilineal and matrilineal rules of descent are unilineal rules because an individual recognises descent through linkages with either males or females exclusively.
2. **Unilineal Descent Groups:** Unilineal descent groups in a tribe form into different groups beginning with a group of families called lineage. This group identity expands through clan, sub-clan, etc. till it merges into the greater identity that is tribe. You have already learnt these groups earlier.
3. **Complex Unilineal Systems:** In complex unilineal systems the descent is traced in varying directions. For example, the directions could be both patrilineal and matrilineal. We shall discuss the systems as follows:

## NOTES

- (a) *Double descent*: In this system every one belongs to two lines of descents: one patrilineal and the other matrilineal. A double descent system is thus a discrete combination of unilineal affiliations.

In double-descent system both matri-group and patri-group are simultaneously operative. The Herero tribe of Namibia and the Yako tribe of Nigeria have double descent systems. Each Herero, for example, belongs both to an *oruzo* (patrilineal clan) and an *eanda* (matrilineal clan). We have not come across such a system among the tribes of India.

- (b) *Cognatic/Bilateral*: This is the opposite of double descent. In a fully cognatic society, there are no patrilineal or matrilineal groups. The kinship is determined on the basis of mother and father; the person is reckoned to be equally related to kinsfolk on either side of the family. This type of kinship is found especially among hunter gatherer tribal communities. The descent does not go beyond five to six generations. As descent is not traced directly, the bilateral kinship is known collateral kinship.

### Kinship Usages

In every kin group, there are certain types of behaviour patterns which define relationships between relatives. The behaviour, verbal and non-verbal, constitutes kinship usages. Some of the universally found usages are as follows:

- (a) *Avoidance*: In many societies persons or groups who stand in a particular relationship avoid each other. As a mode of behaviour, avoidance always expresses respect. Although the prohibitions are binding on both, it is usually the duty of one party specifically to avoid the other, e.g. it is the duty of a man to avoid his wife's mother. The extent of avoidance varies from society to society. It may include such prohibitions as not eating from the same dish to not entering the other's village. Avoidance is universal phenomenon and exists in all known societies.

According to Frazer, the purpose of avoidance is to prevent such sexual intimacy as would amount to incest. Frazer's notion of avoidance is based on sexual intimacy between various kinds of relatives. Incest is technically a sexual act between individuals prohibited from engaging in such acts because of their relationship. All societies have incest prohibitions. In many tribal communities everyone is classified as 'kin'; there are categories of kin whom it is especially permissible to engage in sex and to marry. For example, in some communities, mother's brother's daughter is a potential bride and the ego can engage in sexual act, while in others this could lead to incest.

- (b) *Joking Relationship*: The reverse of the avoidance relationship is joking relationships. A joking relationship involves a particular combination of friendliness and antagonism between individuals or groups in certain social situations. In these situations, one individual or group is allowed to mock or ridicule the other which is not taken as offence. A. R. Radcliffe Brown in his *Structure and Function in Primitive Society* distinguished between symmetrical joking relationships where each party has the right to tease and asymmetrical relationships where only one party is so privileged.

The joking relationship may be indicative of potential sexual relationship and the marriage sphere. Such a relationship between a man and his wife's

younger sister or of a woman and his husband's younger brother is indicative of potential mates. They are in the marriage sphere.

The joking relationship may also occur between men or women of alternate generations, e.g. grandfather and grandson. There are instances where joking relationships between grandparents and grandchildren lead to marriage between the two. Verrier Elwin also reported an instance from the Baiga community where a grandson married his own grandmother.

- (c) *Teknonymy*: Sir Edward Burnett Tylor had coined the term Teknonymy to describe the custom of naming parents after the birth of a child. In many tribal communities and in rural India the father and mother are called as the father and mother of his/her child. For example, a mother may be named 'mother of x'. Thus, Teknonymy is a term which covers both cases. This practice occurs in Khasi tribe of Meghalaya.
- (d) *Avunculate*: This term designates the special relationship existing in some societies between a man and his mother's brother i.e. the maternal uncle. If the maternal uncle comes first among all male relatives, then this kinship usage is called *Avunculate*, and the maternal uncle's authority as *avuncopotestality*. If nephews and nieces are brought up in their maternal uncle's family, the condition is referred to as *avunculocal* residence. This is a common usage in matrilineal communities.
- (e) *Amitate*: It is the relationship between a man and his father's sister. The sister is designated as *Amitate*.
- (f) *Couvade*: It is the practice which requires a husband to lead the life of an invalid along with his wife whenever she gives birth to a child. He refrains from active life, goes on sick diet and observes certain taboos. Such a practice has been reported among the Khasis and the Todas.

## Kinship Terms

Human beings use different terms to designate kinsfolk. However, no language has terms for all biological relatives. For example, we do not have a term to designate, say the 10<sup>th</sup> ancestor of the 'father' of a man.

In the English language we speak of brothers and sisters, but, social scientists use the term *sibling* to designate brothers and sisters together. Other kin of the same generation besides brothers and sisters are designated as *cousins*. If we want to signify sex, then we specify as girl cousin or boy cousin. Similarly, if we want to specify the side of the family, we refer to as cousin on my father's side and so on. When we say *father* or *mother* we recognise sex. However, for other persons of the same generation we use *uncle* or *aunt* but do not recognise the side of the family except sex. Father's brother is as much an uncle as is mother's brother.

These are the relations for which we have designated terms. We have classified the relations into some categories. At the same time there are relations for each of whom we use single term. The two interrelated issues of designating kinsfolk have been conceptually distinguished by Morgan as classificatory and descriptive systems of kinship terms. The classificatory system designates several people, lineal as well as collateral, and often even affinal, by the same term. In other words, in this system two or more kin are grouped together and each group is assigned one single term. We have given the instance of uncle which is a classificatory term. A wide

## NOTES

range of relations is expressed in one term. The classificatory terms refer more to relationship rather than to kin.

Opposite to classificatory terms there are descriptive terms which describe an exact relation directly. One may use this term to address and refer to a relation. For instance, the word father is a descriptive term. Descriptive terminology provides a specific kin term for each person. Rivers refers to a third *family system* of terms. Such terms refer to members of a single biological family individually.

The whole ensemble of kinship terms - classificatory, descriptive and family system—is referred to *Kinship Terminology* or *Relationship Terminology*.

In tribal communities the same term is used to address a wide number of relations of various generations. Among the Kukis, for example, the term *hepu* is used for father's father, mother's father, mother's brother, wife's father, mother's brother's son, wife's brother and for wife's brother's son. In the Angami community *shi* is used for elder brother, wife's elder sister, husband's elder brother, elder sister's husband, elder brother's wife, mother's brother's wife, and father's brother's wife. Clearly the same term is used even for members of opposite sexes.

### 3.5.2 Marriage

Marriage is the most fundamental of all social institutions. This institution is both culture universal and culture specific. This means the marriage institution exists in all the known cultures of the world, but there are variations of marriage rules, forms, modes of obtaining a bride or marriage rules from one culture to another.

As marriage is culture specific, it is difficult to get a universal definition which can adequately cover all types of human marriage despite the fact that marriage is also culture universal. As an important social institution, marriage has different implications in different cultures. That is why Edmund Leach (1961) argues that a universal definition of marriage is not possible. However, some eminent sociologists and social anthropologists who have studied different societies and tribes have tried to define marriage in their own ways. Some of the important definitions of marriage are mentioned below:

E. Westermarck in his *History of Human Marriage* (1921) says that the marriage is “a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognised by custom or law and involves certain rights and duties both in the case of the parties entering the union and in the case of the children born of it.”

Gillin and Gillin (1953) define marriage as a ‘socially approved way of establishing a family of procreation’.

Johnson (1970) defines marriage as ‘a stable relationship in which a man and a woman are socially permitted without loss of standing in community, to have children’.

R. H. Lowie (1969/1948,1933) remarks that marriage is ‘a relatively permanent bond between permissible mates.’ He further states, ‘Marriage denotes those unequivocally sanctioned unions which persist beyond sexual satisfaction and thus come to understand family life’.

Malinowski (1927) is of the opinion that marriage is “a contract for the production and maintenance of children.”

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

3. Who is a primary kin?
4. What is the basis of affinal kinship?
5. What is incest?
6. Give an example of fictive kinship.
7. Name the kinship types on the basis of direct and indirect relations.
8. What are the three types of kinship relation according to Robert Redfield?
9. What are the levels in relation to which Raymond Firth attempted defining social organization?
10. What are the stages of evolution of societies?
11. What are the types of tribal society on the basis of the nature of political organization?



All these definitions of marriage make it quite clear that it is nothing but a socially and legally/customarily recognised union of one or more males with one or more females. These people, tied in marital relationship, play the roles of husband and wife in society. For them, the marriage is the means through which they satisfy their sexual appetite and it imposes on them mutual rights and obligations.

### Forms of marriage

The forms of marriage simply give the idea of the number of marriage partners of one person from the opposite sex. Scholars have noticed following forms of marriage in tribal communities:

**1. Monogamy:** Monogamy is an important form of marriage. Under this form a male or a female cannot have more than one spouse at a time. During the life time of the husband, his wife cannot marry another man. Similarly, the husband also can not marry another woman while his wife is alive. Only death of a life-partner makes the acceptance of a second spouse possible. There is a wrong notion that tribal men marry many wives. But ethnographic studies show that monogamy prevails among the tribal people on a wide scale. The Kamar tribe of Madhya Pradesh and the Ho of Jharkhand, Barmans of Cachar in Assam for example, practise monogamy. Even in tribes labelled as polygynous, monogamy prevails on a large scale. The incidence of monogamy is noticed more in Adi, Khampti and Singpho communities of Arunachal Pradesh though polygyny is socially approved. Among the Hmars of the North Cachar Hills, Sonowal Kacharis of Dibrugarh, Jorhat, etc., Rengma Nagas of Karbi Anglong in Assam monogamy is the prevailing practice although polygyny has social approval.

**2. Polygamy:** It is the marriage practice in which one person marries two or more persons of opposite sex. In other words, polygamy permits a man to marry more than one woman and a woman to marry more than one man. The practice is fairly widespread all over the world. Murdock reports 78 per cent polygamous families in a sample of 250. This practice prevails in many tribal communities in India. Polygamy has two forms: polygyny and polyandry.

(a) **Polygyny:** In this form of marriage one man marries several women. In other words, under the system of polygyny a man is eligible to marry more than one woman. Polygyny, once again, is sub-divided into two types, namely, *sororal* polygyny and *non-sororal* polygyny. This type of marriage is prevalent among the tribes like Gond, Baiga, Lushai, Nyishi, etc. The Naga tribes also practise this form of marriage. The sororal polygyny is a form of marriage in which co-wives are sisters; the man marries to the sisters of first wife. The sorrorate marriage can be *junior sorrorate* or *senior sorrorate*. In the former case after the death of the wife a man can marry his deceased wife's younger sister. The Bodo Kacharis of Assam practise junior sorrorate but not the senior sorrorate marriage, i.e. on the event of death of one's wife, one cannot marry the elder sister (if unmarried then) of the deceased wife. On the contrary, non-sororal polygyny implies the marriage of a man to women who are not sisters to one another.

As a widower can marry the sister of the deceased wife, so also a widow can marry to the brother, younger or elder or both depending on the

## NOTES



## NOTES

custom, of the deceased husband. This practice is known as *levirate* which can be either *junior levirate* or *senior levirate*. Junior levirate is prevalent among the Bodo-Kachari and Rengma Naga of Karbi Anglong in Assam where the younger brother can marry the wife of deceased elder brother. Marriage of one's wife (during life time of the husband) with the brothers also takes place in polyandrous communities like the Toda, Kota, Khasa, etc. This is also a form of levirate.

- (b) **Polyandry:** The system of polyandry allows a woman to marry two or more men. The practice of polyandry is rare these days. In some pre-literate communities, the practice is still prevalent. It is usually a marriage with two or more brothers. While discussing polyandry in India, K.M. Kapadia (1966) describes polyandry as 'a form of union in which a woman has more than one husband at a time or in which brothers share a wife or wives in common'. The word 'polyandry' has been derived from the Greek word 'polyandria' meaning thereby a woman having many husbands (poly = many; *aner, andres* = man). *Note and Queries on Anthropology* defines it as a custom 'by which a woman is permitted to have more than one husband at the same time.' Sangree and Levine (1980) refer the term 'polyandry' to any 'situation in which a woman is married to two or more men simultaneously' and assert that 'it does not apply to circumstances in which women are permitted or encouraged to engage in extra-marital liaisons of the sort which may be termed cecibeism, a form of polykoity.' Radcliff-Brown (1952) also feels that 'it is not sexual Intercourse that constitutes marriage' for 'marriage is a social arrangement by which a child is given a legitimate position in the society, determined by parenthood in the social sense.' According to him, marriage establishes a relationship between off springs and social father but not between off springs and biological father in communities where extra marital sexual relation is permitted.

The Khasas of Jaunsari Bawar, the Kotas of Nilgiris and the Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh practise polyandry. Earlier writers put the Galo community as polyandrous. But with more empirical evidences, the Galo practice can at best be called cecibeism. Polyandry is of two types: adelphic or fraternal polyandry and non-fraternal polyandry.

- (i) **Fraternal Polyandry:** When a woman is shared by all the brothers living in a family, polyandry becomes fraternal. Her children are regarded as the children of their eldest brother. The Todas of Nilgiri Hills practise fraternal polyandry.
- (ii) **Non-fraternal Polyandry:** The non-fraternal polyandry is a form of marriage which allows a woman to marry many men as her husbands who are not necessarily brothers. This practice is not recorded among Indian tribes.

### Marriage rules and regulations

After reading this section you will learn (i) Sphere of marriage (ii) Modes of obtaining a bride, (iii) The practice of settlement of marriage discords, and (iv) Marriage exchanges.

### (i) Sphere of marriage

A person of a tribe cannot marry any person of opposite sex. There are prescribed rules which determine the sphere of marriage. In this sphere marriage cannot take place within a category and marriage is preferred within the other category. This can be explained with reference to the terms like endogamy, exogamy and preferential marriages.

**Endogamy:** This means that an individual *can marry* within a culturally defined social group in which s/he is a member. Usually a tribe is endogamous, as one is required to marry within the tribe one belongs to.

**Exogamy:** This means that an individual *cannot marry* within a culturally defined social group in which s/he is a member. In tribal communities the clans are exogamous. The family is exogamous as in no circumstances one can marry from one's family.

**Preferential Marriages:** Sororate and levirate are preferential marriages. We have explained about these two forms. There are different forms of preferential marriage like Uncle-niece marriage, and cousin marriage. Cousin marriage can be patrilineal (parallel cousin marriage) or matrilineal (cross cousin marriage). Cross cousins are children of *brothers and sisters*, while parallel cousins are children of *brothers or sisters*. In patrilineal marriage a man marries his father's sister's daughter (FZD), while in matrilineal marriage the first preference of a bride is mother's brother's daughter (MBD). The Bigas, Garos, Kadars, etc. practise FZD form of marriage, while the Gonds, Birhos, Mikirs, Todas, etc. practise MBD form.

### (ii) Modes of obtaining bride

Tribal culture prescribes different approved ways of obtaining a bride. Interestingly, no single way is specific to any community. More than one way is adopted by every tribal community though one of the ways may be considered ideal. Every community considers negotiated marriage as ideal. Other important ways of obtaining a bride are as follows:

Marriage by Trial, Marriage by Capture, Marriage by Exchange, Marriage by Service, Marriage by Purchase, Marriage by Elopement, Marriage by Intrusion and Marriage by Probation.

### (iii) Settlement of marriage discords

The marriage rules and regulations also extend to the settlement of marital discords like divorce. Normally, divorce is not so common in traditional tribal communities. However, this practice is not totally absent. The elders first try to reconcile between husband and wife. If the attempt fails divorce procedure is initiated. The clan or village council or mediator takes decision of the divorce. Marriage exchanges and sharing of children are also discussed.

### (iv) Marriage exchanges

Marriage exchange plays a crucial role in tribal marriages. This practice is wrongly recorded as bride price. Exchanges during marriage take place on different grounds as bonding relations between two families. A few scholars are of the opinion that there is a future security concern in such exchanges. In case of divorce from husband's side the items brought by the wife is returned. The items are given from both bride

## NOTES

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

12. Choose the correct answer:
- A man marrying the sister of wife is a practice of levirate/sororate type of marriage.
  - A clan is normally endogamous / exogamous.
  - Marriage is a social organization/ institutional organisation.
  - My paternal uncle (father's brother) is my primary/ secondary kin.
  - Unilineal kinship relations are based on descent/rules of residence.
  - My father's elder brother's daughter is my parallel/cross cousin.
  - Polyandry is a form of polygamy/ monogamy.
  - My aunt, the wife of my father's brother is my secondary/ tertiary kin.

and groom families. In majority of the tribes the items given by the groom's family have two components. One component is reciprocated and the other, given either in the name of the bride or her mother or father or to three of them, is not counted for reciprocation. For example, among the Kaman and Taraon Mishmis, one mithun (*bos frontalis*) is given to mother which is not reciprocated, for it is considered to be *rak-tantong* the 'price' of her breast milk. The same practice also prevails in Galo and Nyishi communities.

The items which are exchanged are bargained and agreed upon by both the sides. The bargain also takes place for the items which the bride would bring. Demand from the bride's family, bargaining, obligation to meet the demand, as it leads to the practice of marriage by service, and corresponding reciprocation are more indicative of the commitment to cultural prescriptions, social status, and relations than mere consideration of bride price. The strength of bargain from bride's family depends on its ability to reciprocate the items it would receive. In cross-cousin system of marriage the bargain takes place between the relatives and is a method of reinforcing the relations associated with the practice of preferential marriage.

### 3.5.3 Family

Family is a basic social organization. It is a universal institution found in every human society. The term family has been derived from the Roman word, 'Famulus' which implies servant. The servants, slaves and such other persons enjoyed the status of members of a household in ancient times. Therefore, the term family is derived from the word, 'Famulus'. In order to have a comprehensive idea of the concept of family it is essential to describe some of its important definitions given by eminent scholars. These definitions are mentioned here:

Ogburn and Nimkoff (1960) define family as 'a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without children, or of a man or a woman alone with children.'

Maclver and Page (1974) in their book '*Society: An Introductory Analysis*' remark that family is 'a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children.'

According to Elliott and Merrill (1950), 'The family may be defined as the biological social unit composed of husband, wife and their children. The family may also be considered as a social institution, a socially approved organization for meeting definite human needs.'

According to Burgess and Locke (1963), family is 'a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household, interacting and inter-communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister, creating a common culture.'

Davis (1949) thinks that 'family is a group of persons whose relations to one another are based upon consanguinity and who are, therefore, kin to another.'

The American Bureau of Census, U.S.A. defines family as a group of two persons related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing together.

The family, in short, may be described as a group or an association of a body of persons such as father, mother and one or more children. In other words, it is

used to mean the body of persons such as parents and the children who live in one house under one head. Among all the above mentioned definitions, the definition given by Maclver and Page seems to be quite adequate.

## Types of Family

As you have studied, family is a social organization. It is also an important institution of culturally prescribed relations. We will discuss the types of family to understand the organizational aspect. There are different criteria on the formation of families. These criteria are based on kinship and marriage. We will discuss them below:

1. **Family on the Basis of Family Circle:** The family circle/sphere is the basis of a family. The division of the family circle is as follows:
  - (a) *Conjugal or nuclear family:* The nuclear family is a type of family which develops around the nucleus of a man, his wife and their children. It is regarded as the most dominant form of family in the modern industrial societies.
  - (b) *The extended family:* The joint or, as it is called consanguineous family is organised on blood relationship and comprises a father, his children, brothers, sisters, etc. It is different from a nuclear family which is organised on the basis of marital ties between a husband and his wife. The members of the extended family belong to several generations. Usually, they live together under this family system. The bond binding the member of a joint family is very strong and therefore, is described as 'a nucleus of blood relations surrounded by a fringe of spouses.' There is another view which says that 'an extended family consists of two or more nuclear families affiliated through an extension of parent-child relationship i.e. by joining the nuclear family of a married adult to that of his parents.' The Nyshis and the Mishmis of Arunachal Pradesh live in long houses which accommodate a number of nuclear families.

We call that household a joint family which has greater generation depth (i.e. three or more) than the nuclear family and the members of which are related to one another by property, income and the mutual rights and obligations.

*I.P. Desai, 1956.*

2. **Family based on residence:** You can learn the organization of a family by its residence of location. The nature of residence has led to the division of family into three kinds. They are as follows:
  - (a) *Matrilocal family:* The Matrilocal residence is the basis of the family to which the husband goes over and joins his wife after his marriage. Under this family system, the residence of the wife is all important and here the husband occupies a secondary position. The children live with the mother at her residence. The Khasi tribe in Meghalaya follows this system.
  - (b) *Patrilocal Family:* The Patrilocal family, as opposed to the Matrilocal one, is the residence where the wife leaving her father's home, joins her husband to live with him in his house permanently. The family system based on Patrilocal residence exists in most parts of the world.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

13. What do you mean by polygamy?
14. Name two polyandrous tribes in India.
15. Name a tribe which practises matrilineal system?
16. What is endogamy?

## NOTES

**3. Family based on marriage practices:** On the basis of marriage practices the family is divided into following types:

- (a) *Polygynous Family:* A polygynous family is a type of family which allows a man to marry more than one wife simultaneously and to live with them and their children in the same house. This kind of family system exists among the Gond, Baiga, Nyishi and many other tribes in India.
- (b) *Polyandrous Family:* A polyandrous family is a kind of family system which allows a woman to marry more than one man. She lives with them and is shared by them or she lives with each of them by turns. A few tribal communities like the Toda, Khasa, etc. follow the system of polyandrous family.
- (c) *Monogamous Family:* A single husband and single wife living together with their unmarried children form a monogamous family. Under this family system a man can not have more than one wife at a time. The women also cannot have two husbands simultaneously. Today, the whole world has accepted it as an ideal type.

**4. Family based on descent or ancestry:** There is a kind of family which is based on descent or as we call it ancestry. The term descent is used to mean the accepted social relation between a person and his/her ancestors. This family is of two kinds, namely matrilineal and patrilineal. The description of the two types of family is given below:

- (a) *Matrilineal family:* In this family type, the mother or the female line is the basis of the lineage. The rights and privileges of the family go along female line. The Khasis and the Garos are examples of matrilineal family.
- (b) *Patrilineal family:* In this type of family the lineage is determined on the basis of male line. The father hands down his rights and privileges to his sons as per cultural norms. Among the Apatanis, according to traditional norms, the eldest son inherits the ancestral property.
- (c) *Bi-lineal family:* If the descent is reckoned both through the father's and mother's line it is known as the bi-lineal family.

**5. Family based on authority:** The various forms of family fall into two broad categories, the matriarchal or the maternal and the patriarchal or paternal family. This division is made on the basis of authority and power of the father or the mother in the family.

- (a) *Matriarchal family:* The matriarchal family is also known as the Mother-Right family or Maternal family and in such a family the power rests in the woman head. She owns all the property and rules the family. In her family the name, status, inheritance, etc. are transmitted matrilineally. The lines of descent are traced on the basis of matrilineal principles. The Khasi tribe of Meghalaya has adopted this system of family.
- (b) *Patriarchal family:* The patriarchal family has a number of forms. Its significance, great as it is, has been realised at all stages of human civilization. Essentially, it is a joint family ruled over by the eldest married male member. The 'patriarch' or father is the centre of power and authority and exercises his unchallengeable authority in the family.

## Check Your Progress

17. What is a nuclear family?
18. Do the terms patrilocal and patrilineal carry the same meaning? Clarify.
19. What do you mean by a matriarchal family?
20. What does marriage by exchange mean?
21. What is MBD form of marriage?



There is no one to question his decision regarding the rights and property of his family. The ancestry of the patriarchal family is determined on patrilineal basis and the family is Patrilocal in respect of residence. Under this system, the eldest son succeeds to the position of his father after the latter's death.

## 4.3 POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

Political organizations of Indian tribes are varied in nature. The evolutionary scheme of socio-political organizations from *band* to *tribe* to *chiefdom* and finally to *state* will not be of much help to understand the political organizations of tribes in the Indian context. Nevertheless, the scheme will be useful to understand the nature and scope of political organizations in pre-state communities like the tribal communities.

Therefore, at the outset we will briefly discuss the various stages of political organizations with reference to their evolutionary schemes. Then we will classify the political organizations of Indian tribes with examples of a few individual tribes. And finally, we will discuss the supernatural means of establishing evidence to find the culprit. As you know, power and authority are the underlying principles of a political organizations, hence, oath and ordeal by invoking supernatural power have some sort of connections with authority, for the supernatural means are pronounced and obeyed.

### 3.6.1 Political Organizations-Evolutionary Scheme

You have studied in unit I and also in this unit that [Marshall Sahlins (1961) and in Elman Service (1962)] advanced stages of social evolution which are also the four levels of political organizations: hunter-gatherer, tribe, chiefdom, and state. In India we do not have a state corresponding to a tribe. In other words, at tribe the level the state as defined by the evolutionists did not emerge among Indian tribes. But there are tribes like the Khampti, Jaintia, Gond, Bhumija who once took part in the process of state formation. Their jurisdictions were beyond their respective tribes.

**Band:** Birhors and other hunting gathering tribes like those in Andaman and Nicobar Islands are believed to have the band form of political organization. A band acts as a political unit and is autonomous in operations. Political decision making is generally informal and taken by the band head. The decisions mainly relate to shifting of camps or settling any dispute if any arises among the band members.

**Tribe:** In a tribe political organizations are informal and also include organizations based on age grades and sex. Normally the society does not have centralised authority. The entire society does not act as a unit. Organizations based on kinship groups rather provide basic framework of political organizations.

**Chiefdom:** This is the third stage of pre-state socio-political organization and is marked by emergence of a ruler. It displays some formal structure, because in some societies the position of chief is hereditary. Chiefdom usually has a council, for example *mukchum* of the Khamptis, which is headed by the chief. In the initial stages the chiefdoms were theocracies, with the ruler or the member of his family also serving as a high religious official. When the chief died the position was occupied by someone from a particular line of descent. In India we have the chieftainship form of society but these societies *are not a stage* after the tribe.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

22. State whether the following statements as True or False:
- A phratry is a dual organization. True/False
  - My maternal uncle is an affinal kin. True/False
  - A village is an isolate. True/False
  - Nomads do not have village. True/False
  - There is no social class in Indian tribes, so the tribes are egalitarian. True/False
  - A generic tribe is a kin-based tribe. True/False
  - The ancestor whose descendants form the clan is a historical figure. True/False
  - A tribe can have a non-kinship based social organization as its component. True/False
  - Socio-political organizations perform the dual function of both social and political aspects of life. True/False



### 3.6.2 Types in Indian Tribes

#### NOTES

A political organization is embodied with power and authority. This power and authority is distributed in various ways. It may lie on an individual or on a group of individuals. The power and authority along with the individual or individuals form political organizations. You will find these organizations at various levels, from family to tribe.

You have already learnt about the types of families such as matriarchal and patriarchal families based on authority in one of the previous sections and the head (male or female) who takes decision. Similarly, decision making capacity also lies at the level of the lineage and clan. However, from our present discussion you will learn political organization not from multi-functional social organization point of view, but with reference to specific organization like councils as decision makers.

In India, tribal communities are broadly classified on the basis of cephalous and acephalous characteristics of societies. Accordingly, you will find councils with centralised and without centralised authority. These councils may exist at the village level, at the level of territory or group of villages and at tribe level. However, all the tribes may not display a uniform scheme of political organizations.

In the centralised forms of political organizations you will find a chief, whose position is normally hereditary, as the head of the council. In case of the non-centralised forms you will find a range of organizations when authority lies with the council of members equally or in varied degrees, or on an arbiter or on a group of elders. You can also find members elected or selected to the council.

Among the Kaman Mihsms of Arunachala Pradesh, usually the clan or lineage head is the decision maker. In such communities, the role of arbiter is also important. The Gindu/Gindung (middleman, arbiter) in Nyishi and Tagin communities of Arunachal Pradesh has the important role to play in organising Nyele/ Dupam, a council of elders when the need arises. Even arbiter(s) can mediate between two disputing parties. In multi-clan villages with a sort of stratification the members of a higher social division (gerontocracy) form into the body politic. The *Buliang* of the Apatani or the *Jung* of the Sherdukpen can be taken as examples. Among the Adis, Jaintias and many central Indian tribes the councils exist at village, territory and often at tribe levels. You will also find an exception among the Todas who invite members from neighbouring tribes. In case of Sulungs (Puroiks), the Nyishi/Miji masters play the decisive role in settling the dispute. Sulungs are predominantly hunter-gatherers and subordinate to the neighbouring Nyishi and Miji tribes who are agriculturists.

We will present hereunder the political organization of a selected few individual tribes.

#### 1. Parhaiya Political System

The *Parhaiyas* of Jharkhand have political organizations both at village and inter-village levels. The village level organization, called *Bhaiyari*, is presided by a hereditary headman called *Mahato* assisted by *Kahato*. The *Baiga*, the religious leader is an important member of the council. Besides, there are other 5-6 elderly and experienced people as members in the *Bhaiyari*. Usually the *Bhaiyari* is a lineage (*khut*) based organization. The inter-village council, called *Kara-Bhaiyari* or *Khut Bhaiyari* represents several villages. The head is called *Pradhan* and there are representatives from each *Bhaiyari* to this council.

#### Check Your Progress

23. State whether the following statements are true or false:
- In Matrilocal residence the mother is the head of the family. True/False
  - A band is a form of cephalous society. True/False
  - Sexual relation between persons of opposite sex within joking circle is incest. True/False
  - Levirate is related to widow marriage. True/False
  - Polygamy means one man marrying many women. True/False
  - In tribal marriages only the groom's family makes presentations to bride's family according to the demand of the later. True/False

The *Bhaiyari* deals with cases arising out of breach of social norms like adultery, divorce, sexual offence, marital conflict, etc. If the cases are of inter-village nature the *Kara-Bhaiyari* looks into it. Usually the Councils try to reconcile the disputing parties. But in cases of severe offence they impose fines depending on the nature, magnitude and gravity of the crime committed by the accused. In extreme case the accused is ex-communicated.

## 2. Monpa Village Council

The Monpas of Arunachal Pradesh have evolved a self-governing village institution to maintain law and order so that social, religious and economic activities are carried out smoothly. Tawang, the present district was traditionally divided into six regions, which were further sub-divided into *Tso* or *Ding*. Each *Tso* or *Ding* was more or less a distinct self-governing unit headed by a man called *Tso-Tsorgan*. He is usually elected by the influential members of the society. During the selection of a *Tso-Tsorgan* the knowledge of the individual in traditional conventions, customary laws, oratory skills, integrity, social status, ability to handle cases and experience are considered. Once he is selected, the meeting of the *Mangma* (totality of the inhabitants) is called upon for its approval. Although the *Mangma* is the supreme authority over the *Tsorgan*, it does not interfere in day to day affairs of the *Tso-Tsorgan*. Occasionally, when the opinion of the *Mangma* is required, the meeting of the *Mangma* is convened to decide the matter.

The *Tsorgan* can be from among the Lamas or from *Khrami* (those who own taxable land). *Surmi/Naamtang*, those who do not own taxable land are not eligible for the post of *Tso-Tsorgan*. The post is not hereditary, but if the son of the *Tso-Tsorgan* is otherwise found capable, he stands a better chance of being elected/selected. In principle, there is no restriction on woman becoming a *Tso-Tsorgan*, but in practice no woman ever had occupied this office. The normal term of office of a *Tso-Tsorgan* is three years, but some capable ones have had continued in office quite a longer term, more than 20 years. He is not paid any salary, but it is mandatory for all the *Khrami* of that *Tso* to contribute in form of food grains twice in a year as remuneration (*Tso-khrai*) for the services he renders.

The *Tso-Tsorgan* is vested with judico-administrative and development functions. He is authorised to settle most of the civil and criminal cases within his jurisdiction. In discharging his normal duties, the *Tso-Tsorgan* is assisted by other functionaries. These functionaries are known by different names at different places. During a field study in 2009 it was observed that Lhou village is divided into six *Kachungs* on the basis of geographical settlement and each *Kachung* is headed by an official known as *Gomi* who is assisted by *Thumis*. At the lowest of the hierarchy is a functionary known as *Shi-Tza*.

## 3. The Tangsa Chieftainship

The political and social life of the Tangsa is maintained and regulated by *Ruung*, the village council with *Lungwang*, the chief who is assisted by *Kengsalang* (village elders), *Ngongwa/Lukhap* (advisor), *Kamwa* (messenger) and the *Shamma* (priest). The *Lungwang* being the final decision maker is also called *Khaphongwa* or *Phongwa* - the decision maker. The *Kengsalang*, usually elderly persons with oratory skill and knowledge in customary laws are the representatives of each clan in the village to the *Ruung*. *Ngongwa/Lukhap* (advisor) is selected by the chief from among the knowledgeable persons who always accompanies him. The *Mamwa* (messenger)

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

24. Choose the Correct word.
- Tribe is a pre-state society in the scheme of evolutionary/revolutionary perspective.
  - Authority/Hereditary is the basic consideration is a political organization.
  - Village council does not exist in chiefdom/state.
  - In traditional village councils, membership is hereditary/gender discriminatory.

*Socio-Political Organizations* typically comprises of two or more individuals and they mediate between the *Ruung*, the plaintiff and the accused. The one who assists the chief during the settlement of dispute with information is given membership in the *Ruung*. The *Shamma* predicts success or failure by performing rituals and reading omen before going for any community hunting, waging raids against the enemy and searching for the suitable land for new settlement.

## NOTES

*Ruung* tries the cases like theft, adultery, murder, seduction of a girl, assault, simple injury, house trespass, non-payment of bride wealth, land encroachment, marital discord, etc. The Council seats in the chief's house as and when needed. The village council is always instrumental in selecting the site for shifting cultivation, burial place, etc. The council also decides, the date for agricultural operation, fixation of date for celebration of festivals, organization of hunting expedition, fishing, etc.

### 4. Sherdukpen Gerontocracy

According to Sherdukpen mythology it was a descendent of a Tibetan chief who established the community. The Sherdukpen community has two social divisions, namely *Thong* and *Chao*. The clans in the Thong group are the descendants of the chief who migrated and established the community. In a Sherdukpen village the body politics is called *Jung* which has a member from the *Thong* group of clans as the chief. The position of the chief is not hereditary in the family or in a particular clan but is hereditary in the upper division of the community, i.e., the *Thong*. There are also members with specific assignments. The village body politics of the Sherdukpen is gerontocratic in nature.

### 5. Kharia Panchayat

The Hill Kharias, who prefer to call themselves Sabar, mostly live in West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand states. The traditional political system of the Kharia is a village *Panchayat* with *Pradhan* as its head. A traditional Hill Kharia village consists of households ranging from 5 to 30, though the size of rehabilitated villages may run even up to 100 households. Traditional villages are not practically lineage based as a man either before or after marriage can settle in another village. However, the households in the villages or in adjacent villages belong to near kin groups. The *Pradhan* heads the village Panchayat; his post is hereditary in the family along the male line. The eldest son if otherwise normal and capable inherits the post. The *Pradhan* is assisted by *bhandari* (messenger), *loya* (a religious functionary) and *dehuria* (who performs magico-religious rituals) along with family elders in the village. Usually the *Pradhan* settles disputes in a social gathering in consultation with the members present. The council can excommunicate or impose fines depending on the nature of the offense. The Panchayat of the Kharia not only settles disputes but also decides on the rituals to eradicate epidemics, natural calamities, etc., along with rituals relating to economic activities like hunting. An adopted son gets inheritance rights only after the approval of the council. Naturally, the Hill Kharia Panchayat is more of a socio-cultural institution than a mere politico-judicial body.

### 6. The Kora Council

The Kora tribe has its village council which is called *Kulhi-Dhurup*, meaning the Panchayat in session. Obviously, the people do not have a permanent body though its head *Mahato* is a hereditary post and thus permanent. He is assisted by *Gorait*,

*Charidar* and other village elders. Every session is attended by at least one member of each and every family of the village. The function of the council includes social, economic and cultural aspects of Kora life along with the politico-judicio and administrative responsibility.

Now it is clear that tribal political systems are of various kinds. Vidyarthi and Rai (1985) have outlined three characteristics to which we can add one more feature. These are: (i) Political Association Based N Clan/ Lineage; (ii) Political Association Based on the Village as a Unit; and (iii) Political Association of a Group of Villagers of a Territory and (iv) The Political Association at Tribe Level.

From the above characteristics the structure of the Tribal Political System can be outlined. Vidyarthi and Rai (1985) have provided the following structure of the political system existing in the tribal world of India (some examples are added):

- The Council of Elders, a temporary body of selected villagers, generally coincides with clan elders to look into cases brought before them. (Sometimes all village elders in principle are members of the village council as is the case with the Adis).
- The Village Headman, a hereditary post and/or subject to villagers' opinion if and when required. (The Khampti village chief or the Tangsa village chief is a hereditary head).
- The Village Panchayat: a body of the *Panchs* headed by the village Headman. The panchs are elected by the villagers directly. (There can be also a village council with elected head. For example, traditionally each Khasi village has its Village Council called *Durbar Shnong* headed by *Rangbah Shnong*).
- The Union of Villages, a regional panchayat headed by the regional head (can also be a body of selected members from village councils like the *Bango Kebang* of the Adis. It can also be a territorial council with elected head as is the case of the Khasi. The territorial organization called *Durbar Raid* has elected head called *Basan* or *Lyngdoh*).
- The Tribal Chief, a hereditary post of supreme judicial authority at the tribal level. (The tribe level chief can also be an elected head like the *Syiem* in Khasi state, the tribe level political organization of the Khasis).

### 3.6.3 Traditional versus Modern Organizations

The tribal village councils do not exist in traditional forms. The traditional role of the councils has declined due to introduction of village Panchayats. The developmental works are now in the sole domain of the Panchayat bodies. In many tribes the head of the council used to be hereditary in nature, but in Panchayats, all the members including the head (Sarpanch, Anchal Samilti Member, etc.) are elected ones. Whereas the village councils in Chieftainship type of societies had chiefs as heads, the Panchayats in such societies have elected representatives including the head. The village Panchayats are gender sensitive whereas in traditional councils women were deprived of active participation or membership. These modern village councils do not have religious advisors as members; in other words, the present councils, i.e. the Panchayats are secular in character.

In traditional tribal communities, the village councils were either democratic or monarchic. The compositions and functions varied across the tribes. Some

## NOTES



*Socio-Political Organizations* village councils were clan or lineage based. But the modern democratic Panchayats are uniform across both the tribal and non-tribal villages of the country and in composition and function. In Panchayats all the members of the village can participate if otherwise eligible without clan or other social considerations. We know that in Sherdukpen community the *Chaos* do not have the right to membership in Jung. Similarly, a person who does not own taxable land cannot be elected/selected to the post of *Tso-Tsoorgan* in Monpa community.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

25. State whether the following statements are true or false:
- (a) Traditional tribal political system had its origin during hunting-gathering stage of social evolution. True/False
  - (b) An acephalous society is characterised by centralised authority. True/False
  - (c) Social division is found in acephalous type of political organizations. True/False
  - (d) All tribes have political organizations at village, territory and tribe levels. True/False
  - (e) Gerontocracy has a sort of social division. So it is chiefdom. True/False

In some tribes, the jurisdiction of functioning of both traditional and modern councils is distinct. The Adis take up all the traditional matters in *Kebang* while those of developmental works in village Panchayats. In Hill Kharia tribe, matters other than those involving social secrecy are decided in the Panchayat. The cases of conflict and quarrel between non-tribals or with other tribals and Hill Kharias are represented in the modern village Panchayat. Both the traditional and modern councils coexist harmoniously. We also see from field experience that the traditional and present political head happen to be the same person. But in some tribes, even in some villages of the same tribe there is conflict and the role of the traditional leaders is on decline.

## 4.3 SUMMARY

- In this unit we have discussed society, social organizations and political organizations with reference to tribal communities. We have found that social organization, as the members of a society are grouped, are of two types.
- The first one is kin-based. It includes kinship organization and its functional components like marriage and family. The second one is non-kin-based and includes the village, age gradation, territorial division and cultural practices reinforcing social order of a tribe. We have focused on these points under four thematic divisions, namely the village, kinship, marriage and family.
- Marriage and family are universal in all know tribal communities. But the forms vary from tribe to tribe. There is a relationship between forms of marriage and forms of family. Though the rules and regulations of marriage are tribe specific, they display broad features of uniformity. Similarly, familytypes vary from tribe to tribe. But they also have broad common features.
- Under marriage rules and regulations, we have discussed who can marry whom. This depends largely on kinship relations. We have discussed consanguineous and affinal kinships and how kinship determines the rules of residence of married couple in different tribes. The kinship has also a significant role to play through family organization. Under kinship we have also discussed incest taboo and joking relations — the behaviour patterns which define relationships between relatives.
- The political organizations of the tribal communities present a contrast. We find both democratic and chieftain type societies and political organizations. In recent years, the tribal villages have modern panchayats. Both traditional and modern village institutions coexist and in many cases the functionaries of both the institutions are one and the same.

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- The political organizations of the tribal communities present a contrast. We find both democratic and chieftain type societies and political organizations. In recent years, the tribal villages have modern panchayats. Both traditional and modern village institutions coexist and in many cases the functionaries of both the institutions are one and the same.
- In tribal communities, the political life is not distinct from other aspects of life. It is instituted in social process. Therefore, socio-political organization is a befitting term to understand interconnectedness of social and political organizations.
- Like any other communities, tribes also maintain social harmony and therefore adopt different mechanisms. In this unit we have discussed customary laws and social sanctions which are mechanisms to ensure social stability and maintain harmony. In addition, we have discussed tribal religion which constitutes an important aspect of tribal way of life like social and political organizations. Whether it is social organization, political life, economic pursuits or faiths and beliefs, all are integrated into a cultural whole in tribal communities.



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## 4.3 KEY TERMS

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- **Acephalous:** Literally, 'Headless', meaning without any centralised authority.
- **Agnate:** A kinsman whose connection is traceable exclusively through male line.
- **Avunculocal Residence:** Residence with the man's mother's brother.
- **Cephalous society:** A society with centralised authority like a chief.
- **Chief:** The person of highest authority in the political organization of a community, often hereditary.
- **Chiefdom:** The political unit with a chief as its head.
- **Cognate:** Related by birth, of the same parentage, descent; **cognates-** words that are similar in sound and meaning.
- **Cognatic descent:** Descent from both sides of the family equally, opposite to double descent; there are no clans or lineages.
- **Cross-cousins:** The children of a brother and a sister.
- **Culture:** Everything which is socially learned and shared by members of a society.
- **Double descent:** Descent in both the male line and female line; Everyone belongs to two lineages-patrilineal and matrilineal simultaneously.
- **Ego:** The reference person; person from whom kinship relationship is traced. It is from the Latin meaning 'I' or 'myself'.
- **Endogamy:** Marriage practice within the group.
- **Incest taboo:** The prohibition of sex with a category of persons, such as brother and sister, mother and son, etc.
- **Kula:** A ceremonial exchange of shell ornaments in the Trobriand Islands.
- **Moiety:** One of two basic sub-divisions of tribe.
- **Monogamy:** Marriage between one man and one woman.
- **Oath:** The act of calling upon a supernatural power to stand witness to the truth of what one says.
- **Ordeal:** A culturally approved torture to identify guilt or innocence of a person.
- **Parallel-cousins:** The children of two brothers or two sisters.
- **Polygamy:** Marriage to more than one person.
- **Polygyny:** Marriage between one man and more than one woman.
- **Potlatch:** A ceremony by peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America in which feasts, giving away of goods and sometimes destruction of goods take place to earn social prestige.
- **Product based division of labour:** The same labour engaged in the production of a commodity from the beginning to end.
- **Reciprocity:** Exchange without the use of money.

- **Sacred:** Relating to faiths and beliefs, something set apart from normal world, having the notion of forbiddances.
- **Secular:** Relating to normal world, opposite of sacred.
- **Sib:** Clan.
- **Social father:** Socially recognised husband of the mother of a child.
- **Social Organization:** Significant grouping of members of a society.
- **Subsistence:** Obtaining living for survival needs.
- **Supernatural:** Not subject to natural laws.
- **Totem:** Normally a plant or animal from which a clan traces origin. In Ojibwatribes belief it is the spirit of a patrilineal clan represented by an animal. It may mean a similar spirit among any people.
- **Animism:** belief in the existence of soul in physical-living and non-living things.
- **Customs:** accepted and long established beliefs and ways of behaviour and practices in a culture.
- **Revivalism:** religious reformation movement with the intention of saving the tradition and culture by infusing it with new purpose and meaning.
- **Sanctions:** reinforcements to encourage good deeds and discourage unwanted behaviour.
- **Syncretism:** a display of amalgamation of features of two or more cultural traditions.

## NOTES

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### 4.3 ANSWERS TO ‘CHECK YOUR PROGRESS’

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1. (a) social                      (b) identity                      (c) temporary  
(d) extension                  (e) social                      (f) interdisciplinary  
(g) power
2. (a) institutional              (b) real                          (c) socialization  
(d) kinship                      (e) microcosm                  (f) non-kinship
3. A person directly related to the ego either through blood or through marriage alliance
4. Marriage
5. The prohibition of sex between certain relations
6. To address a priest ‘father’
7. Lineal and collateral
8. Consanguinal, affinal and ritual
9. Social structure, function and social organization
10. Band, tribe, chiefdom and state
11. Cephalous (centralised) and acephalous (with centralised authority)
12. (a) sorroate                  (b) endogamous                  (c) institutional  
(d) secondary                  (e) descent                      (f) parallel  
(g) polygamy                  (h) tertiary
13. The marriage practice between one man and more than one woman and vice versa
14. the Khasa and the Kota
15. Khasi
16. marriage within a culturally defined social group, not outside of it.
17. The basic unit of the family formed by the married couple with their unmarried children.
18. No. The term patrilocal refers to the practice of residence in or near the parental home of the bridegroom. Patrilineal refers to descent along male line
19. Woman as the source of power and authority in the family.
20. The marriage between groom’s sister bride’s brother

**NOTES**

**NOTES**

21. Cross-cousin marriage, the practice of marriage with mother's brother's daughter
22. (a) False (b) True (c) False (d) False (e) False (f) False  
(g) False (h) True (i) True
23. (a) False (b) False (c) False (d) True (e) False (f) False
24. (a) evolutionary (b) Authority (c) state  
(d) gender discriminatory
25. (a) true (b) false (c) true (d) false (e) false
26. Evolution perspective,
27. No, there are functionaries who also look after religious aspects of life. The functionaries also play important roles in the selection of jhum plot, consignment of dead body, etc.
28. Yes, the women do not participate in councils like meal members. Among the Sherdukpens, the Chao section of community does not have the right to membership.
29. Radcliffe-Brown,
30. The Monpa
31. K. Davis
32. (a) False (b) False (c) True (d) False (e) True (f) True (g) True
33. (a) True (b) True (c) False (d) True (e) False (f) False (g) True  
(h) True (i) False (j) False

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### **4.3 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES**

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#### **Short-Answer Questions**

1. Define social organization. Discuss how the tribe is divided and sub-divided into different kin and non-kin groups.
2. Define family and discuss the types of family.
3. Distinguish between patriarchal and matriarchy family.
4. Define marriage and discuss its various forms in brief.
5. Discuss the forms of marriage and their corresponding family types.
6. What is polygamy? Discuss its forms and causes.
7. Describe the nature and types of tribal political organizations.
8. Write a note on oaths and ordeals? What are its objectives? Give your comments.

#### **Long-Answer Questions**

1. Discuss the types of political organizations with reference to selected tribes.
2. Which types of family are socio-political organizations? Why?
3. Modern panchayats in tribal villages are new forms of traditional village council. Do you agree? Give reasons to your answer.
4. Distinguish between customs and customary laws?

5. Define customs and sanctions. How do they help in maintaining social harmony? Give your answer with suitable examples.
6. Do tribes have religion? Give reasons to your answer.
7. What are various forms and components of tribal religion? Discuss.

## NOTES

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## UNIT-IV SOCIO-POLITICAL ORGANISATION-II

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### Structure

- 4.0 Introduction
- 4.1 Unit Objectives
- 4.2 Customary Laws and Social Sanctions
  - 4.2.1 Customs
  - 4.2.2 Sanctions
- 4.3 Religion: Faiths, Belief and Practices
  - 4.3.1 Tribal Religion
  - 4.3.2 Faiths & Beliefs, Practices and Transcendental Experience
  - 4.3.3 Belief System of Selected Tribes
- 4.4 Summary
- 4.5 Key Terms
- 4.6 Answers to 'Check Your Progress'
- 4.7 Questions and Exercises
- 4.8 Further Readings

### 4.3 INTRODUCTION

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In the previous unit, you have learnt the definition and evolution of the term 'tribe.' You have also learnt about the categories of tribes in India, terms of reference, distribution of habitats and their characteristics. By now you are aware that tribal communities are heterogeneous. But in the community itself the aspects of life show a harmonious blending through interconnectedness in terms of culture. In other words, the culture presents a holistic understanding; it means that aspects of life do not exist as separate domains. There is one domain, the cultural domain of all aspects of life, and each aspect, therefore is an integral part of that single domain, integrated and interconnected.

We can take an example for clarification. Economics as an aspect of life does not exist as a separate domain as in modern societies. It is instituted in social process and interconnected with other aspects such as social, political and religious life. Similarly, social aspect of life is interconnected with political, economic and religious aspects of life, and all together form the culture of the community. In this unit you shall learn social and political aspects of life and their interconnectedness from the study of socio-political organizations.

Each and every society believes in stability, solidarity and harmonious living. In view of this a society evolves its mechanisms to ensure social harmony. Political organizations help enforcing these mechanisms. However, these mechanisms may vary from formal system to informal way of living, but the essence remains the same to maintain harmony and ensure stability. In tribal communities, customary laws and sanctions are such mechanisms which you will learn in this Unit.

You have already learnt that religion is a component of holistic tribal life. It is integrated with other aspects of life and plays a significant role in many ways. Its ethical component puts checks on unwanted social behaviour; beliefs and practices influence understanding disease and curative system; and faiths, beliefs and practices present the cultural identity of the members of the tribe in a holistic sense. You will learn about all these aspects in this unit also.

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## 4.1 UNIT OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of various tribal social organizations
- Discuss institutions like kinship, marriage and family in the context of tribal social organizations
- Describe the working of tribal political organizations
- Examine the customary laws and social sanctions followed in tribes
- Discuss the tribal religious faith, belief and practices

## 4.2 CUSTOMARY LAWS AND SOCIAL SANCTIONS

Human beings live in societies and forge individual, interpersonal and institutional relationships with other members of the society. Particularly in traditional societies such relations extend beyond human sphere to include *nature* and the *super-nature* as well. These relations define and get expression through different pattern of behaviours. It has been known that relations along with patterns and expressions of behaviours are culture specific which generally vary from one culture or community to the other. In a matrilineal society, for example, the relation of sons with the institution of property inheritance would differ from that of a patrilineal society. Accordingly, a son's behavioural relation towards maintenance of parents or practice of inheriting father's surname would also differ in the two systems. You will study about this difference in Unit-III of this paper in the section of Property and Inheritance.

The sphere of relations and pattern of behaviours are known to each and every individual of a community and one knows one's position in it. In other words, relations and associated behavioural patterns of a community which are perceived in its totality are its customs. Disobedience and violation of customs invoke sanctions.

In this section you will read about *customs* or *customary laws* and *sanctions* with a few examples from tribal communities of India. There are mechanisms through which customary laws are enforced for the maintenance of equilibrium, social order, peace and tranquillity. These mechanisms are taboos, social sanctions, ritualistic faiths, obeisance to super-natural powers and adherence to ethics and traditional values.

### 4.2.1 Customs

Custom normally refers to a long-established practice based on the values, mores, and norms of a tribe and is expressed in its beliefs, traditions, and practices. M. Chanock (1985) defines customs or customary laws as a body of rules, values, and traditions, more or less clearly defined, which were accepted as establishing

standards or procedures to be followed and upheld. Customary law is not simply about law, but it is about ways of conceiving the past and therefore, the present. As J.S. Bhandari (1995) writes customary laws are sustained by moral and ethical values of the members of a community and have implicit sanction of the people and may be enforceable by the collective coercive force of the people. In the tribal societies, the goal is to maintain the continuity of social relations based on primal ties. Therefore, customary laws can be understood more from the functions that it performs- the functions of inter personal relations and the maintenance of overall social order. According to L. Pospisil (1971), customary law is a law that is internalized by a social group which considers it to be binding. If such a law is broken, the culprit has a bad conscience that he has behaved improperly. Conformity to such law is not usually affected by external pressure. It is produced by an internal mechanism, which can be conscience in some cultures and fear or shame in others.

**Customs or Customary Laws:** Sometimes a difference is made between customs or customary laws. E.S. Hartland (1924) maintains that ‘Law and customs are not one; it is wrong to identify law with custom’. The customs recognised by formal legal system are often called by some scholars as customary laws. In that sense customary laws have a formal legal sanction and a formal enforcing authority.

The customs of Munda tribe documented by S. C. Roy in 1912 or the Garo inheritance practices recorded studied by J. K. Bose in 1930s have subsequently got recognition of formal legal institution. The Baliapara/Tirap/Sadiya Frontier Tracts Jhum Land Regulations, 1947 recognises traditional land tenure practices of tribes of present Arunachal Pradesh. Assam Frontiers (Administration of Justice) 1945 has introduced the system of village head (Gaon Burha) and the post of *kataki* to maintain law and order which continue and have become a tradition in tribal communities of the region. Enforcement of customs by these authorities obviously has legal sanction. In contrast to it, there are many customs in tribal communities which are informal but still continue and do not have a legal sanction. For example, we can cite the custom of the type of bridal dress in a tribal marriage. Logically, a distinction is noticed between a set of customs which are recognised in legal system and the other which is not and yet continues in practice.

From above explanation you must have understood that there is a distinction between customs and customary laws. However, customs are sources of customary laws which have formal recognition in a wider system. For a tribal community both do play the role of maintaining social solidarity, cohesion and harmonious living through approval and disapproval of behaviours. For a particular community the traditional authority enforces both customs and customary laws within the community until and unless the need of intervention by formal outside authority is felt. In our contemporary time tribes are citizens of the country and have constitutional position which recognises their rights, particularly their uncodified customs and practices. L. Pospisil (1971) is of the opinion that without the authority’s consent, customary law can never be called law; it would only be custom. He has made a distinction between *law* and *customary law* and equates the latter with custom.

Needless to say, the customs in general have approval in the formal system through recognition to their autonomous existence and in the absence of provisions to replace them. So, we use *customs* and *customary laws* interchangeably, for these are community specific at the core and customs exist within a greater system of formal authority, i.e. the State

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

26. According to which perspective socio-political organizations have four stages?
27. Do you think that village councils perform only political functions? Why or Why not?
28. Do you think that there is the practice of exclusion of members of a village in village councils? Give reasons.
29. Who said, ‘social organization is an arrangement of roles associated with the statuses which constituted the social structure’?
30. In which tribe the head of the council is elected?
31. According to whom ‘family is a group of persons whose relations to one another are based upon consanguinity and who are, therefore, kin to another’?

**NOTES**

By now you have got some idea about customary laws. From the definition and its scope the following characteristics of customary laws in general and tribal customary laws in particular can be enumerated:

- Customary laws are a body of established mode of social behaviours within tribal or traditional community. The laws are community based and thus confined to a particular tribe.
- In this sense tribal customary laws are universal. This means that there is no tribal community in the world where customs are not found.
- The body of customary laws refers to the totality of behaviour patterns.
- It is broad and all encompassing. Custom can relate to use of and access to natural resources, rights and obligations relating to land, inheritance and property, conduct of spiritual life, maintenance of cultural heritage and knowledge systems, and many other matters.
- These laws are long established and do not have any authorship. Nobody remembers who frame the law.
- As a corollary, the laws are uniform and continuous, meaning these have been followed continuously and uninterruptedly for a long time. In other words, these are group accepted techniques of control mechanism, taken for granted and are passed along from generation to generation.
- Customary laws are certain and definite as these are observed as a matter of rights.
- Customary laws do not oppose community morality and value system.
- A custom is formed on the basis of habit gaining the sanction over time. But it is not an individual habit. Customs are social habits which through repetition become the basis of and order of social behaviour. So customary laws are contrasted with mere random personal.
- Customary laws are generally unwritten. But in recent years many tribes have documented their customs which they follow and produce in the court while settling a dispute. The Nyishis of Arunachal Pradesh and the Darlongs of Tripura for example have codified their customary laws which they use to solve the problems arising in the society. Even the land record department of Gauhati High Court has documented the customary practices of land inheritance of more than 35 tribes in the northeast.

**4.2.2 Sanctions**

Sanctions are social control mechanism in every type of society. As you know a society is a harmonious organization of human relationships and associated pattern of behaviours. You also know that there are customs that guide these relationships to maintain harmony. But these customs are often violated by individuals due to one or the other reason. Such violation disturbs the social harmony. However, every society has developed sanctions which help in maintaining society solidarity. Sanctions are thus a means of controlling human behaviour. In general, social sanctions are means by which a moral code or social custom is enforced, either positively in the form of rewards or negatively by means of punishment. In tribal communities, sanctions

are not formal like the non-traditional industrial societies. These are in conformity with tribal morality and value system.

The word sanction has two nearly opposite meanings. In its first meaning it is used to refer to *approve of something* while in its second meaning it is used in the sense of disapproval and action taken or punishment given for disobedience or violation of rule or custom. The incidence of divorce is not considered normal custom; it is a disruption in social life of married couples. Obviously, for breaking the custom of marriage union the society has its sanctions in terms of fine. Among the Darlongs of Tripura, a husband has to pay *maktha* for initiating divorce, and the wife has to pay *hamanpui* if she initiates the process. The sanction is a negative enforcement for disruption of a socially approved bond.

### Characteristics

Sanctions are social control mechanisms. These sanctions are community specific and exist in all types of societies. The following are the characteristics of sanctions in tribal communities.

- Sanctions may be positive or negative, i.e. rewards or punishments. Positive sanctions are used to encourage a particular behaviour. But negative sanctions are invoked when a particular behaviour is sought to be discouraged.
- Sanctions in tribal communities are social and supernatural in nature.
- These sanctions are informal and based on customary laws.
- Therefore, sanctions are comprehensive and relate to customs of the community in general.
- Members of the whole community are aware of sanctions prevalent for violation of customs and like customs these are repeated and broadly continue from generation to generation.

### Some Examples

You will understand customary laws and sanctions along with their characteristics in tribal communities better through examples. Some examples are produced below:

1. Tobdan (2000) informs us about an interesting tribal custom, called *Zang-Zang*, which is prevalent among his people of Lahuli in Himachal Pradesh. *Zang-Zang* is a behavioural relationship between a guest and member (s) of the host family at the time of offering food to the guest. The guest vehemently refuses to accept the food, but the host persuades and offers the food. Even for any additional help the situation of refusal and persuasion continues till the guest eats to his heart's content. Later, the host ridicules the guest with the remark that he was pretending to eat, though he was really starving and the guest keeps on putting his stand that the food was not necessary. Tobdan does not know the origin of this practice and there is no folklore about it. But he believes that it originated sometime in bygone days when people did not have enough to eat. However, the practice continues as a custom even though people have enough to eat now-a-days. Its absence during meal time is not considered in good taste and the relations between the guest and the host is not considered normal. Now you see that the practice of *Zang-Zang* shows its past origin, long continuity as a tradition passing on from generation to generation.

## NOTES



## NOTES

2. The Munda and the Oraon tribes of Jharkhand believe in tribe endogamy. The violation of this custom invokes the sanction of excommunication till the non-Mund/non-Oraon partner is given up. The violation of social custom of endogamy also invokes purification ritual for re-entering into the tribe. In other words, social and spiritual mechanisms are adopted to rectify any wrong committed in the society. Witchcraft is not a socially approved practice among the Mundas, and the one who practises it is severely dealt with. The woman found guilty is thrashed, driven out of the village and sometimes even beaten to death. For adultery and theft the culprit is thrashed and fined as well.
3. The Munda and the Oraon practise avoidance between relations. Even touching of a man to his younger brother's wife or wife's elder sister is tabooed. Such a breach of custom is expiated for through some observances prescribed by elders in the family. Utterance of name of husband, father-in-law or mother-in-law by a woman is tabooed. Violation is socially disapproved; the violator is scorned. There is no other punishment from society as the offender is liable to fall into bad time one day for disobedience of the custom.
4. The custom of silent trade once prevailed between the Raji tribe and its neighbouring communities in Kumaon region of Uttarakhand. Even though the two parties did not meet face-to-face the behavioural relation is an interesting example of a custom and nature of disapproval.

The Rajis normally left their articles, mostly roughly manufactured wooden bowls at the door step of the Kumaoni villagers along with some symbols including the items the Raji desired to have in exchange, under the dark cover of night when whole village was fast asleep. Next morning the family concerned, on finding the bowls would know that they were left by the Raji previous night and would know the motive behind the action. The concerned Kumaoni family would fill the bowls with the desired items, usually cereal grains as per the indication. The bowls were on the same spot where these were initially left by the Raji. At night the Raji visited the place and collected the grains offered by the Kumaoni villager leaving the bowls as barter exchange for the grains received. In case they are not satisfied with the quantity or item they would not touch the bowls and leave it as they were. The family would understand that some more quantity of grains is required. Accordingly, the family would supply the grains to be lifted by the Rajis.

5. Among the Adi Padams movement taboo is observed after the performance of certain rituals. As per custom, villagers are discouraged to work in agricultural fields. Even the *Musup kos* (a particular group of Dormitory boys) organise *bedang-duubom*, meaning act of sitting on the way to block the path. Despite precautions if someone is found working in the field on that day a fine, equal to his one days labour, is imposed on the violator. Without coming to terms if the person refuses to pay, then *Musupkos* inform to the senior *Mushup* group called *Ruutum*, who also try to persuade the person to pay the fine. In case of failure they resort to *kumsung saanam* (forcible collection of grains from granary) and intimate their action by putting branches inside the basket used to carry grains. This act of the *Musup* boys is not reacted; rather it is accepted in the society. The practice has both positive and negative enforcement of sanctions.

6. Many tribes believe in the custom of not urinating near/in the place considered to be the abode of spirit. Violation invokes fever, madness or any such punishment. This is the example of a supernatural sanction which could affect remedial sanctions. In order to avoid supernatural punishments remedial measures like performance of rituals are organised. Rituals are socially approved cultural enforcements which are performed to rectify the wrong of violating the custom of right interaction with supernatural beliefs. The relations between customs and sanctions are not one-to-one, it is rather a multi-dimensional.
7. All types of violations of custom do not invoke sanctions. In Garo tribe, except youngest daughter, all other daughters are to leave the house after marriage. In the event of two daughters, the eldest daughter may stay in the family, though authority would lie with the youngest one. Such a violation of the custom of residence after marriage does not invoke any sanction.
8. In matrilineal community it is the custom that the youngest daughter has to stay in the home, look after parents and carry forward the family tradition. So she inherits the family property. But in case of her desire to build a separate household she is deprived of inheritance rights. The custom has the reward of according inheritance rights and the punishment of depriving it on violation of the custom.
9. In rituals human and supernatural relations are defined and behaviour pattern is established. For example, members observe taboos like food taboo or movement taboo or both in connections with some rituals. Any intrusion is a violation of customary norms. That is why visit of an outsider is considered a taboo. Outsiders are not allowed to the ritual sphere, may be a family or village territory. Disobedience leads to imposition of fine or confinement of the outsider till the taboo period is over. In case of non-compliance by the outsider the people are believed to incur supernatural sanction. In this regard Verrier Elwin's example given in *A Philosophy for NEFA* will be useful.  

An Agricultural Inspector once arrived at a certain place one morning when the people were engaged on a special sacrifice and it was strictly taboo for anyone to enter the village. The headman and others came to the visitor and begged him to camp outside, as it was against their rules and would be sure to lead to an outbreak of disease if he came in. To the Inspector, however, this seemed absurd and he insisted on making his camp in the headman's house. A week later an epidemic broke out and no fewer than twenty people died...the villagers are convinced that these deaths were caused by official ignorance and scorn of local custom.
10. In some tribes the custom of pre-marital sexual freedom prevails. But extra-marital relations are strictly prohibited. Violation of this custom is considered as a crime of adultery and the culprits are imposed fine. Even the husband can divorce the wife on this ground. Among the Darlongs, if married man commits adultery, his wife charges a fine of ` 50 from the woman with whom her husband has affairs. But in case of a woman, the husband reacts on his wife but not on the man committing adultery. The customary laws of punishment in case of extra-marital affairs and approval to pre-marital affairs conform to the community morality on the matter of sex. Moreover, relaxation for the man is inconformity with patriarchal values in a patriarchy. You have understood

## NOTES

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

32. Write whether the following statements are true or false:
- Customs and social sanctions in tribal communities are formal in nature.
  - Social sanctions are punishments to wrong doers and are generally negative in nature.
  - A few customs and practices have been recognized by formal legal system.
  - Customs have been framed by intelligent people in the society and thus have know authorship.
  - Customary laws are followed as a matter of rights.
  - Sanctions in tribal communities are also supernatural in nature.
  - Customs are generally unwritten.

how customs and sanctions confirm to the ethical and moral perception of a community.

- In Birhor tribe a young man has to show his skill of building a water proof *kumbha* (hut) in order to prove his eligibility for marriage. The display of skill is a positive enforcement where he gets silent social approval to begin his marital life. Before that if he expresses his desire for marriage he is ridiculed which is a negative enforcement for not achieving the eligibility as per the custom of the community.
- Among the Bhils of Rajasthan, *mautana* (a type of compensation) is a sanction against the crime of committing physical injuries or death. The man who causes death of another person has to pay *mautana* to the relatives of the victim. His family or clan members may also come to his rescue by paying the compensation. *Mautana* is a negative sanction in order to discourage the crime and establish a normal social order. Among the Darlongs also a similar practice prevails in the event of injury caused accidentally. The culprit has to bear all expenses for his cure or the funeral rites in case of death.

## 4.3 RELIGION: FAITHS, BELIEF AND PRACTICES

In this section you will study about the religion of the tribal people in India. We shall begin our discussion with two important but interrelated questions. The questions are:

- Does a tribe have a religion?
- What are the components and features of a tribal religion?

You have to keep in mind that a tribe in India is not always outside the framework of organised religion. One shouldn't be surprised to see tribes like Gond, Riyang, etc. professing Hinduism; tribes like Khampti and Monpa professing Buddhism; tribes like Gadi, Siddi and tribes living in Lakshadweep professing Islam and tribes like Khasi, Ao, Mizo and many others professing Christianity. There are also several tribes like Raji, Onge, Jarwa which follow their own traditional system of faiths, beliefs and practices. On the other hand there are tribes like Adi, Mishim, Zeliangrang, etc. which follow traditional faiths, beliefs and practices but with reforms. In other words, they follow a revived and evolved form of traditional religious life.

There are two things one must bear in mind while studying these tribes. The first one being that all members of a tribe who are identified by the name of a particular religion may not necessarily follow that religion in totality. For example, in a Christian tribe, there may be families/individuals professing their traditional faiths, beliefs and practices. The second aspect is that almost all tribal religions have had exposures to forces of organised religions in various degrees. However, these influences are either negligible or nil among tribes of Andaman and Nicobar Islands owing to their isolation. So, when you study a tribal religion you may find features belonging to different times and common to other religions. In other words, tribal religions have become syncretic in nature, meaning displaying characteristics of two or more religious traditions. With reference to the Khampti and Monpa tribes, Buddhism could be better understood as a syncretic tradition.

## Does a tribe have a religion?

What does a religion mean? Is there any definition of a religion?

There have been many attempts at defining religion, but what J. Z. Smith reminds us is that “The moral... is not that religions cannot be defined, but it can be defined, with greater or lesser success, in more than fifty ways’. In other words, there is no single definition of religion. But all the definitions agree on its three components: faiths & beliefs, practices (rituals, for example) and transcendental experience (mysticism). In a community all these components may exist in different degrees.

As you know religion does not have an isolated entity as it is for the members of the society. It may be a personal experience or affair but the experiences manifest in the socio-cultural setting. Religion is believed to have evolved as a human endeavour to link the natural and the supernatural worlds in order to understand the phenomena she/he experiences. A human being perceives the natural and the supernatural differently and tries to adjust between them. The ideas and the means he/she applies fall under the domain of religion. The ideas through which man perceives his different natural and supernatural worlds may ‘evolve into a belief system’ or may be the ‘belief system itself’. The realm of ideas takes expression through rituals. The belief system also extends to the belief in Transcendental Experience with which the members of the community communicate through intermediaries like priests. If any member of the community experiences the supernatural being he/she is called a mystic. Hence, mysticism, supernatural experience or altered status of consciousness is also a question beyond the realm of the natural world and hence deemed religious.

By now you would have understood how one could interpret and understand a religion. In other words, it may be understood that a religion has three main components. With respect to tribal studies one may ask if these components are also present in a tribal religion?

### 4.3.1 Tribal Religion

The dictionary meanings of ‘faith’ and ‘belief’ are almost synonyms to one another. Both refer to acceptance of or trust in something. Further, faith is also used in the sense of religion such as the Hindu faith. Obviously there is confusion in the use of two synonym words such as ‘faith’ and ‘belief’ to understand religion.

People believe in what is natural, i.e. normally visible or logically understandable. But to believe in something which is not natural one must have feelings for it, an acceptance about its existence. Faith is the first step towards an understanding of religion and it is based on the foundation of feelings, an idea and an acceptance of its existence. When the feelings are strong and acceptance is understandable it becomes a belief. As you know there is a saying: *seeing is believing*. Religion cannot be seen despite it being based on impersonal ideas at its core, it only can be speculated through imagination and contemplation.

So, first one must have faith before one begins believing in it. Faith may be just a beginning of an idea and when that faith becomes strong it becomes a belief. Hence, faith is a belief. But faiths and beliefs are not two separate words that form a combination of different things. The two things give one single impression as expressed in phrases like ‘bread and butter’ or ‘slow and steady’. In the same analogy

## NOTES

## NOTES

‘faith and belief’, express the singular idea about religion. Religious traditions, however, are different among the tribes and faiths and beliefs rightly represent the diverse traditions existing among tribes. It is ‘faith’ that sustains belief and the emotional element in faith leads to practices such as rites and rituals, all religious activities in general. Emotional elements are present in human-nature-supernature relations.

Religion in tribal communities’ expresses through an integrated process. As you know all aspects of life in a tribe are instituted in cultural process. Culture is an integrated whole. The aspects of life are so integrated and instituted that they present overlapping ideas. Therefore, you cannot distinguish an independent domain each for economic life, political life, social life or religious life. In economic life you will find components comprising of social, political and religious aspects. In other words, each aspect reflects in other aspects and vice versa. It is therefore, natural to find religious aspect of life pervading all other aspects of life. Precisely, faiths, beliefs and practices are all encompassing and so reflect in social relations, economic pursuits, resource perceptions and management practices, healthcare, artefacts and so on.

The belief system can be understood in terms of human-nature-supernature relations. Human beings relate themselves with supernatural beings in different ways. These beings are considered to be creator, protector and destroyer. There are benevolent spirits who help in the welfare of humans and animals. They protect them from misfortunes. On the other hand there are malevolent spirits who wait for the opportunity of harming human beings and animals which they use. The Nyishis, for example, believe in *Jengte, Pamte*, etc. as fever causing deities. *Rintum, Purtum, Rine Chine* etc. are domestic *Wiyus* (supernatural power) which look after progress and prosperity of the inmates of a house.

These supernatural beings, often spirits dwell in natural objects like trees, rocks, water bodies caves, etc. So human is related to supernatural through nature. If human relation with nature is disturbed supernatural sanctions are release forth in the form of disease or loss of crops or natural calamity. In most of the tribes there is the belief of a supreme creator, who often creates not only human being but also other living and non-living beings.

As human beings cause disturbance in relations, it is natural for them to remedy it. For that they have to appease or compensate the loss. Rituals are the media to restore the harmony of relations. In between humans and supernatural religions priests play a significant role in the process restoring normalcy. Many of their priests are known to have the power of communion with supernatural beings. In other words, they have transcendental experience.

You will understand tribal religion not only in terms of faiths and beliefs, practices and transcendental experience, but also in terms of its all encompassing nature. We will confine our discussion to a few examples from different tribes.

#### 4.3.2 Faiths & Beliefs, Practices and Transcendental Experience

Among the tribes of India, faiths, and beliefs, practices and transcendental experience are embedded in culture. They vary from tribe to tribe. However, these can be understood as follows.

**Animism:** Tribes are believed to follow animism. E.B. Tylor used this term to refer to ‘belief in souls’ and ‘supernatural beings’. These beliefs include belief in



ghosts, nature spirits, doctrine of spirit possession, the presence of witch doctors, the practice of magic, the worship of dead, belief in the supernatural causation of disease, the presence of taboos, the performance of ceremonial dancing, worship, and the like.

All tribes of India believe in supernatural beings. Verrier Elwin mentions that Muria Gonds worship nature, mountains, rivers, trees animals, etc. Even he has mentioned that men possess life as an animating substance as per Muria's belief.

### Supernatural force

The core of a faith and belief centres round supernatural forces and beings. Supernatural force is an impersonal force. A place, for example, possesses that power and therefore, can be considered a taboo. After ritual, for example, some food items are tabooed; some animals are not to be killed, places not to be entered or works not to be done. For a Galo Nyibu (religious specialist) local wine, flesh of wild animals, wild fruits, etc are tabooed before ritual. A newly married couple in Galo tribe observes taboo on meat of wild animals, ginger, garlic, onion and thorny vegetables for a year. It is because there is impersonal force in them and such forces need to be avoided. The Aos believe that a power, called *Tiar* or *Tiyer*, is inherent in man, which often withstands the evil power of ghosts.

### Supernatural Beings

Supernatural beings can be of human and non-human origins. Supernatural beings of human origin are ghosts and ancestral spirits while non-human origin are spirits, gods, godlings, presiding deities of natural objects and human activities. The Adi Padams believe for example in the spirit of hunting (Galling Gojo) presiding deity of a house (Gumin Soyin) and so on. The spirits can be benevolent or malevolent. The Aos believe in a host of supernatural powers (Tsungrams) who are traditionally supposed to cause illness and other misfortunes. Temsula Ao reports that they live in small springs, lakes, lowland, stagnant waters and deserted sites, bamboo groves and deep jungles, and also in certain trees.

You will find that tribal faiths and beliefs recognise a host of supernatural beings. Their belief system can be termed as polytheism, meaning belief in many gods, none having subordinate relations. In other words, they do not have the notion of a hierarchy of them in their belief system; they know a deity for its work. Temsula Ao informs us that among the Aos the term *Tsungrem* is used in a non-discriminatory way to denote several gods who are associated with mountains, big stones, rivers, forest etc. For the Ao *Lijaba* (creator of the earth) is a *Tsungrem* and so is *Meyutsungba* (the keeper of the land of the dead). There is no status differentiation among the gods.

Nevertheless, in many tribes there is a hierarchy of gods and deities. Elwin finds such a hierarchy in Muria tradition. Moreover, the gods exist at different levels. For example *Hana duma*, believed to be an ancestral spirit is presiding deity at home, *Tallurmutte*, goddess earth at village level and *Anga* is presiding deity at *progona* level.

**Totem:** Tribes like Ho, Oraon believe in totem which could be normally an animal or tree. The animal in itself is not sacred but something inherent in it makes the animals sacred. Emile Durkheim considers this as a symbolic perception. This means the totem animal is a symbol of a clan. Each clan of a tribe believing in

## NOTES



*Socio-Political Organizations* totem has its own totem animals. The totem distinguishes one clan from another. So according to Durkheim the totem occupies an important place in the clans' religious rituals. It symbolises both the clan and the clan's spirits.

## NOTES

### Life after Death

In tribal communities the notion of 'after life' is a part of faith and belief system. Many tribes like Muria Gond, Ranglong also believe in rebirth. The Adi priest narrates different stages that a soul passes through after death. Loss of soul is considered to be cause of disease which if not brought back results in death of the person. The notion of life after death differs in the belief system of tribes. For example, they have different notions about the status of the soul of people on the basis of accidental or normal death.

The Bongchers of Tripura believe that the soul of a person after death goes to *Rih Li* (a lake in Mizoram and Myanmar Border) and from there enters *Mithi Khua* (the abode of the dead). However, the soul of a wrong doer turns into butterfly after it passes *Rih Li*. The soul after the death of butterfly is born as pig, after the death of pig as goat, then a cow, and after the death of the cow it is born as monkey and finally it is reborn as human.

### Omen and Dreams

Faiths and beliefs in omens and dreams are important aspects of tribal religion, though these exist in non-tribal world also. The number 13 (thirteen) is not considered auspicious even today in many non-tribal traditions. Omen and dream are culture specific. What is bad in one culture may not be so in another and the event that is considered as a sign of good or bad happenings in future has a cultural context. The same event may not exist in another culture.

You will learn a few omens believed by the Darlongs of Tripura.

**Good Omens:** A sick person sneezing twice uninterruptingly – Quick recovery. Two persons accidentally speaking out same thing simultaneously – The elder one would receive a message.

A swinging spider in front of an unmarried girl - sign of receiving a marriage proposal soon

Coming out of ants from holes and moving around during a rainy day – Indication of a sunny weather,

**Bad Omens:** A dog climbing the roof of the house – Indication of misfortune or death of owner.

A tortoise crossing the path of hunter – sign of unsuccessful hunting.

Stumbling at the door while beginning a journey – a sign of uncomfortable or unsuccessful journey

Sudden and intermittent twitching of right eye brow or shoulder – sign of serious illness or death of a near one.

As you know dream has a significant place in the belief system of tribal people. By interpreting dream they predict future course of event. Elwin (1959) has recorded a case of dream in the then Siang division of Arunachal Pradesh, which led to the discovery of a hidden corpse and the subsequent conviction of the murderer. B.K. Shukla (1965) has also recorded the belief of the Nyishis on dreams. The Nyishis

believe that the soul leaves the body while a person is asleep and goes out wandering. What it sees or experiences is recollected by the person on awakening. When a Nyishi hunter is bitten by a snake in dream or sees a pigsty with open door he is sure of hunting a wild boar. But, if it is a closed door pigsty in dream the indication is about failure in bagging any game.

The Nyishis believe that an article of decoration seen in a dream is a bad omen indicating the death of a near one. L.R.NB. Srivastava (1962) also has explained about the belief in dream by the Galos. The Galo people believe in a successful hunting if the hunter dreams of a tooth knocked out. Similarly, a dream of broken legs is an indication of death of a child or wife of the dreamer. When a herd of *mithun* (*bos frontalis*) enters the village it indicates heavy rain.

Dream is considered an indication of things to happen and guidance for solving problems like sickness. When a dream is an indication of bad omen the effects are countered by rituals and sacrifices identified through the process of divination by the priest.

### **Magic and witchcraft**

Magic and witchcraft are important elements in many tribal religions. These elements together present a combination of beliefs and practices. Magic involves manipulation of supernatural force for good or bad. The Monpa monk is believed to stop rain by invoking supernatural power. Magic also involves some action where supernatural power is not manipulated. A Darlong turns his/her pillow while dreaming about his/her love so that s/he can have the same dream. Traditional rituals of Mishmis are believed to be magico-religious practices. When a person suffers from *Miknat* (conjunctivitis) a curative magico-religious ritual called *pachu-takap* is performed. The affected eye is covered with any cup-tumbler-like container to which a bow-man hits with an ordinary arrow made of bamboo-splint. The bow-man faces towards the east, while the patient to the west and the container covering the eye is hit nine times with the arrow. Each time the bow-man chants:

*Pachu ahul than ki lo lo...* (I kill the male of this disease.)

Next, the act is repeated with the bow-man facing to the west and the patient to the east. This time the bow-man hits the container eight times chanting.

*Pachu kamia mu than ki lo lo...* (I kill the female of this disease)

Some Galo Nyibus (religious specialists) also know the art of magic (*tarum-tago*). They can induce natural objects such as pebbles or beads into a person's body and remove the same.

Witchcraft is a practice carried out through thought process. This differs from sorcery. In sorcery materials and medicines are used to invoke supernatural evil action. In many tribal communities, witchcraft and sorcery are practised. The Baigas are known for practising sorcery. In traditional Munda and Santal belief system witchcraft is widespread.

### **Practices**

As you have studied, magic and sorcery are both beliefs and practices. However, there are beliefs on the basis of which practices like rituals, festivals, etc. are performed. Anthony Wallace has listed a number of practices which broadly include prayer

## **NOTES**

(asking for supernatural help), physiological experience (doing things to the body and mind), simulations (manipulating imitations of things), feast and sacrifices.

## NOTES

Among the tribes of India incantation forms a part of many rituals. Religious specialists, common people, medicine men involve in chanting during a curative session. Chanting by a priest is a normal scene while invoking supernatural force. The Adi people pray Almighty Donyi-Polo to be the witness to the judgement process in the Kebang (village council). Through rituals people pray for good harvest, good health, etc.

During a ritual performance religious specialists of many tribes observe food taboo, consume wine or opium, perform priest dance to commune with supernatural power. The *Igu* dance of the priest in Idu Mishmi tribe is a famous priestly dance. During Yaalo *Lonam* (the ritual of calling back lost soul), some Galo Nyibus fall into trance by performing *Nyigre dance*. In the process they establish communion with supernatural power. Such practices refer to doing things to body or mind.

Simulation like voodoo is not a popular practice among Indian tribes. However, there are instances when a symbol of a person is maltreated. The belief is that the person will also feel the same pain. Simulation is also employed at the time of divination. Among the tribes of Northeast India chicken lever reading, egg-yolk testing, etc., are carried out to understand the supernatural cause of disease or predict general welfare, good harvest, etc.

Feasts are organised on ceremonial occasions like marriage, death ritual and other rituals. Community feasts are organised as a part of dispute settlement process and atonement of sin.

Sacrifices and offerings are common features in tribal belief system. Offerings may include food items, drink and other items like ginger, turmeric, etc. Animal sacrifice is also a practice among the tribes. In Arunachal Pradesh tribes sacrifice poultry birds, pigs and *mithun* (*bos frontalis*), etc. Human sacrifice was prevalent among tribes like Kondh in Odisha.

**Oath and Ordeal:** Oaths and ordeals are practices organised to invoke supernatural interference in detecting the wrong doer. A guilty person is punished by the council when he/she owns up the guilt. But there are instances when no one owns up the crime and evidences do not suffice to identify the guilty. Then the council takes recourse to oaths and ordeals to detect the culprit. An oath is a swearing taken by both complainant and accused in the name of supernatural being to prove innocence in a public gathering. The tribal people in general believe that the God /Supreme Being watches everything. An ordeal is on the other hand a prescribed torture to prove innocence. It is believed that the innocent person escapes injury.

Usually the process of ordeals is initiated by the priests with rituals. In many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and in Central India this traditional practice still prevails. Among the Oraons, when a person is suspected of guilt his hands are dipped into boiling water mixed with cow dung. There is the practice of putting burning charcoals over palms. The belief is that an innocent person is not hurt.

Mundas and Oraons also administer oath. The suspect takes oath of his/her innocence by placing a lump of paddy, cow-dung and clod of earth on his head. If one takes a false oath it is believed that he/she will suffer from the loss of crops, cattle or land.

In Adi community a person accused of theft declares him/herself innocent by cutting one of his fingers in a public place. The cut of the innocent simply bleeds, but the blood rushes out from the corresponding part of the body of the culprit. These types of ordeals are practised in many tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.

### Transcendental Experiences

This experience is an altered state of consciousness one feels when one is possessed. This consciousness arises when a *shaman* (religious specialist) is in communion with supernatural force. He embodies the supernatural consciousness. The shaman enters into a trance and makes a journey to the world of spirits. He gets help from spirits to cure illness or gets news of impending disaster or answers to people's queries about their problems. Dreams are also used by the shaman to commune with spirits. A person becomes a shaman after long rigorous training under a master or with the help of supernatural power. In the latter case the shaman is inborn.

In Galo tribe a person to become a *Nyibu* (shaman) shows signs deviant behaviours from early life. S/he would have unique dreams and show deviant behaviour. Penny Potom in 2004 narrated a case of Shri Dibo Potom who had a dream before he became a *Nyibu*. In his dream he saw a door which opened up, he travelled across and saw mountains, rivers, forests, villages, fields and everything that exist in the physical world. As he journeyed further these panoramas became invisible and he entered into broad day light where he could see the Sun rising. He remained in this state and unconscious for some days and during this period supernatural power dawned in him. When signs indicate that a person is a *Nyibu* in making, *Nyibu Goal* (a ritual) is performed by a senior *Nyibu* as a mark of recognition. Sometimes one has to prove his supernatural power for acceptance. On one occasion when people asked such a person to show his power, he uttered some chants and threw away rice grains. He showed his empty hands. But next moment people saw these grains in his fist. This miracle established him as a *Nyibu*.

### 4.3.3 Belief System of Selected Tribes

#### The Garo and the Khasi

In recent years the Gaors and Khasis have largely adopted Christianity. However, their traditional faiths and beliefs have rich content. The creator in Garo religion is Tatar-Rabugs. He as the Almighty, created the world and all the creatures. He also protects the world against the most dreaded diseases that afflict making. His worship demands elaborate rituals and expensive sacrifices i.e. the sacrifices of a bull, a goat and a cock. Less important gods include Chorabudi, the protector of crops; Saljong, the god of fertility who blesses man's labours in the fields. The god is represented by the sun, and the annual festival, Wangala, is held in his honour. He is also worshipped with sacrifices of cock and offering of liquor before the beginning of the festivities. The god Kalkame is invoked to protect the people of the village from the evil intentions of the spirits of the forests. He demands the sacrifice of a goat or a cock, the blood of which is smeared on the *asong* (the sacrificial stone) erected in his honour. Among the evil spirits which are worshipped, Nawang, the monster that could even swallow the sun and the moon, causing eclipses is greatly feared. This spirit can also waylay their souls on their way to the purgatory.

The corporate worship is there in other tribal religions. The priest plays an important role in all the worships. The Supreme God of the Khasis is called U Blei

## NOTES

*Socio-Political Organizations* Nongthan or U Blei Nongpynlong. The deity is addressed a Ka Blei (Goddess) which exposes the matrilineal characteristics of the society of the Khasis. Minor deities include U Lei Long iing who is the household deity and U Ryngkew U Basa and U Phan-U kyrpad, venerated as village deities.

## NOTES

The Khasis also venerate the spirits of their ancestors as it is believed that they protect their descendants. The spirits responsible for creating diseases like malaria and cholera are believed to be malignant. Khasis also have their institutions of priesthood. Their priest who performs higher ceremonials is called U Lyngdoh. The priests who perform rites for the cure from the illness of the people are called U NongKhan (Diviner) or U Nongknia (Sacrificer). For divination, the Khasis resort to the breaking of eggs or sacrifice of a cock. The cock plays a vital role in the Khasi religion. It is a mediator between God and man. According to the folk myth, at the beginning of time, sin had become rampant among men so much that even the sun refused to appear. It was cock which sacrificed to bring sun to the sky. At its crowing the sun came out of his hiding.

### Nocte

Tirap Distric Gazetteer has included the belief system of the Noctes of Arunahcal Pradesh in brief. The Noctes believe in the existence of a Supreme Being whom they variously call *Jauban*, *Jongban* or *Tesong*. This Supreme Being is ambivalent as he embodies both good and evil. He causes miseries and troubles as well as he brings happiness and prosperity to human beings. They also have a belief in a number of spirits and deities. These deities are both malevolent and benevolent. The benevolent deities dwell in houses and protect human beings from sorrows and miseries. They are propitiated regularly with the offerings of food and other things in order to get their continued support and protection from the malevolent spirits.

‘They believe that, after death, the soul substance, called *mang* or *ja khang*, repairs to *ulim* or *balum*, a place in the sky. It may take the shape of a kite and appear the day when the dead body is disposed of. So when a kite is seen flying over the house, the relations of the dead pour water on the ground for the departed soul. In case of abnormal death, they believe that the soul turns into an evil spirit.

### Tiger-soul of the Ao belief system

Tiger-soul is a fascinating aspect of the Ao belief system. The people believe in tiger soul, meaning the tiger as being the other soul of a person. Temsula Ao informs us that according to Ao belief system certain persons are also believed to reside in rats, snakes, wild cats, etc. However, this belief is different from the belief in totem where animals are symbolically regarded as ancestors. According to Ao belief system some persons have more than one soul and souls of these person also reside in tigers. The tiger that embodies the person’s spirit is like any other normal tiger except that a strong attachment to the person concerned. When a person acquires the tiger soul, there is no replacement. In other words, if the tiger is killed the person whose soul is in the tiger will also die. In case of illness, the animal’s symptom of illness, pain, etc. are believed to be felt by the person also.

A person which embodies the soul of a tiger is believed to possess certain supernatural powers like curing illness, mending broken legs, etc. by prescribing the right rituals. However, there are notorious person who with such supernatural power avenge their enemies by threatening, killing or destroying their crops.



## Khampti System

The Khamptis believe in supernatural powers and Khampti Buddhism views the world full of ghosts (*phi*), demons (*phi phai*), evil spirits (*pik-ta*). One is constantly and unpredictably in danger of being harmed. Moreover, they are concerned with health, illness, drought, rain etc. Khamptis believe that devotions, rituals, ethics, scriptures, etc. act as a protective shield against harms and dangers from spirits and ghosts. Illness, natural calamities are believed to be the effect of supernatural displeasure. The existence of this belief system is the remnants of pre-Buddhist animism which the community, probably, practised. Present Buddhism in the Khampti society is a mix of Buddhism and extra-non-Buddhist beliefs and practices. In extra-non-Buddhist practices monks do not play a direct role except that they offer their blessings. However, they preside over some rituals like worship of household deity. The spell *mangala sutta* in Pali and traditional *Chas-sere* spell (Tai traditional hymns). *Paritta (pilik)* spells consisting of various books of canon (*pitakat*), *sutta (suk)* are chanted for protection against danger. These *parittas* give protection from misfortune as well as positive blessings. For curing illness, for granting a long life, for the protection of a new house from the evil spirits of the land on which the house is constructed, *mangala sutta* is recited. According to Khampti Buddhism, *paritta* is effective only if the person leads moral life following Buddhist tenets.

The Khamptis believe in the presence of the spirit (a super power) in inanimate objects around them. All the objects around them are as animate as the people themselves. So they have their non-Buddhist ways of propitiation or appeasing this superpower which is believed to direct and control the human life. Rituals associated with forest activities or agricultural activities go with the belief in a non-Buddhist super natural power. These rituals are performed by villagers but not by Buddhist monks.

*Phinoy* (the spirit of jungle / hills) is propitiated before forest activities like hunting, elephant catching, etc. for safety and success. Before ploughing the field and before harvesting, the Khamptis worship *phimung* (also called *Pang-ci-mung*), the village deity. *Phimung* is propitiated to save the village from any type of disaster, calamity like epidemic, drought, etc. and to grant a good yield and provide a good harvest. He is worshipped in a hut/alter near jungle, away from the settlement area. Sacrifices, though against Buddhist tradition, are made to the *Phimung*. The Khamptis also perform rituals like *kin-khao-mao* (eating of new rice) and *hong-khan-khao* bringing home the goddess of wealth i.e. paddy which relate to their agricultural life.

Loss of the soul is believed to be the cause of illness. So, *Pap hong khon* (village seer for the purpose) prescribes the method of calling back soul through *hong kon* ritual. *Chao-mo*, the village poet/chanter, who composes hymns/song about the ancestors or deliberation of soul, worship *Nang Sulasati*, the Khampti version of goddess Saraswati. The Khamptis believe in charms and both monks and ordinary villager prepare amulet or tie threads around the wrist to ward off evil eyes. They also believe in the ancestors (*philan*) and worship them in houses when someone falls ill or for the prosperity of household.

## Monpa System

Monpa, a Buddhist tribe of Mahayan cult, inhabits the West Kameng and Tawang districts of the Western part of Arunachal Pradesh. They believe in the *Gelukpa* sect of the Mahayan division of the Tibetan Lamaist form of Buddhism.

## NOTES

### Check Your Progress

33. State whether the following statements are true or false:
- Many tribes profess organized religions also.
  - Tribal religions are syncretic in nature.
  - Faiths & beliefs, practices like rituals and supernatural experiences are components of non-tribal religions only.
  - Tribal belief system is an expression of human-nature-supernature relations.
  - A tribe has faiths and beliefs but not a religion.



## NOTES

Prior to their conversion to Buddhism they followed the religion of *Bon*. Black magic, a feature of *Bon* religion, still exists among the Monpas. The disposal of the dead by cutting the body into hundred and eight pieces and throwing them into stream was a practice in their traditional religion. The Monpa Buddhism in fact, is found as a safety valve against the harmful effects from the spirit world. In their *Bon* religion, there were means and ways to encounter the doings of malevolent spirits, but it seems that Buddhism was implanted and accepted as more effective means in place of their traditional ones. They still believe in *Shein*, *Geapu*, *Tchan* (name of spirits) who dwell in big trees and harm those who violate traditional norms by cutting the trees or making loud noise in the jungle. Apparently, spirits punish those who disturb them. The Monpas believe that the spirits appear in the form of snake with three or nine heads. Anyone who sees them falls ill; his or any of his relatives might face death consequently. Lama performs *khurom* if such tragedy befalls upon any individual or family. Any villager or lama reads through ‘mo’ (a Buddhist scripture, horoscope) and prescribes for rituals. *Luth* is an important ritual where *luth* (balls of flour) are offered to cure the person possessed by *Shein* (Spirit of the dead).

The Monpas observe movement taboo and do not visit Sela or Bangajang on the occasion of death or birth in the family. Onion, garlic, etc. are prohibited to these places. They worship *Tso* (lakes), *Gangri* (snow fields) and make offerings like *Sha Chow* (replica of animal made of flour paste) to forest and mountain deities. In order to avoid theft by *Thipreng* (the mythical thief) they put magic spells like suspending egg shells/other ritualistic symbol in the front door of the house. Undoubtedly, worship both *Bon* gods and Buddhist deities and thus maintain the continuity of the features of their traditional religion even after they were converted to Buddhism.

Buddhism in different countries and among various communities display a wide range of variation because of its ‘tendency of localization’; each Buddhist tradition being an amalgamation of Buddhism and indigenous religion. ‘Tendency of localization’ in Buddhism and its various forms in different countries and communities refuse to attach exclusiveness to the Buddhist tradition. Buddhism is not absolute as a religious doctrine like other religions.

### Witchcraft in Manipur

Happy Baglari informs us about the tradition of witchcraft, known as Postam Jadoo, practised in some communities in Manipur. This particular witchcraft is performed by Maiba (males who perform good or bad rituals for the community / shaman) or Maibis (females who perform the same). They perform this practice when a person seeks for something which would benefit with their lives. Another practice is Mingsel Kanglon Yengba, here a Maibi uses a mirror and utters chants in order to find a thief or someone has lost something / goods, and then she will inform them the place where the goods may be kept. Thaoda Yenga is again a different practice performed by Miabis. They use oil, utter chants and during this she can describe physical features of the culprit and can also tell the thief / place where the things have been lost would be found from.

## 4.4 SUMMARY

- In this unit we have discussed society, social organizations and political organizations with reference to tribal communities. We have found that social organization, as the members of a society are grouped, are of two types.

- (f) The practice of suspending egg shells in front of the door to avoid theft is known as animism.
- (g) Religious tradition of a tribe displays features belonging to different time periods and common to traditions of others.
- (h) Rituals are media to restore the harmony in human-nature-supernature relations.
- (i) Belief in tiger soul among the Aos is a belief in totem.
- (j) Hierarchy of gods and deities is a feature in tribal religion.

The first one is kin-based. It includes kinship organization and its functional components like marriage and family. The second one is non-kin-based and includes the village, age gradation, territorial division and cultural practices reinforcing social order of a tribe. We have focused on these points under four thematic divisions, namely the village, kinship, marriage and family.

- Marriage and family are universal in all known tribal communities. But the forms vary from tribe to tribe. There is a relationship between forms of marriage and forms of family. Though the rules and regulations of marriage are tribe specific, they display broad features of uniformity. Similarly, family types vary from tribe to tribe. But they also have broad common features.
- Under marriage rules and regulations, we have discussed who can marry whom. This depends largely on kinship relations. We have discussed consanguineous and affinal kinships and how kinship determines the rules of residence of married couple in different tribes. The kinship has also a significant role to play through family organization. Under kinship we have also discussed incest taboo and joking relations — the behaviour patterns which define relationships between relatives.
- The political organizations of the tribal communities present a contrast. We find both democratic and chieftain type societies and political organizations. In recent years, the tribal villages have modern panchayats. Both traditional and modern village institutions coexist and in many cases the functionaries of both the institutions are one and the same.
- In tribal communities, the political life is not distinct from other aspects of life. It is instituted in social process. Therefore, socio-political organization is a befitting term to understand interconnectedness of social and political organizations.
- Like any other communities, tribes also maintain social harmony and therefore adopt different mechanisms. In this unit we have discussed customary laws and social sanctions which are mechanisms to ensure social stability and maintain harmony. In addition, we have discussed tribal religion which constitutes an important aspect of tribal way of life like social and political organizations. Whether it is social organization, political life, economic pursuits or faiths and beliefs, all are integrated into a cultural whole in tribal communities.

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## 4.5 KEY TERMS

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- **Acephalous:** Literally, 'Headless', meaning without any centralised authority.
- **Agnate:** A kinsman whose connection is traceable exclusively through male line.
- **Avunculocal Residence:** Residence with the man's mother's brother.
- **Cephalous society:** A society with centralised authority like a chief.
- **Chief:** The person of highest authority in the political organization of a community, often hereditary.
- **Chiefdom:** The political unit with a chief as its head.
- **Cognate:** Related by birth, of the same parentage, descent; **cognates-** words that are similar in sound and meaning.

## NOTES

## NOTES

- **Cognatic descent:** Descent from both sides of the family equally, opposite to double descent; there are no clans or lineages.
- **Cross-cousins:** The children of a brother and a sister.
- **Culture:** Everything which is socially learned and shared by members of a society.
- **Double descent:** Descent in both the male line and female line; Everyone belongs to two lineages-patrilineal and matrilineal simultaneously.
- **Ego:** The reference person; person from whom kinship relationship is traced. It is from the Latin meaning 'I' or 'myself'.
- **Endogamy:** Marriage practice within the group.
- **Incest taboo:** The prohibition of sex with a category of persons, such as brother and sister, mother and son, etc.
- **Kula:** A ceremonial exchange of shell ornaments in the Trobriand Islands.
- **Moiety:** One of two basic sub-divisions of tribe.
- **Monogamy:** Marriage between one man and one woman.
- **Oath:** The act of calling upon a supernatural power to stand witness to the truth of what one says.
- **Ordeal:** A culturally approved torture to identify guilt or innocence of a person.
- **Parallel-cousins:** The children of two brothers or two sisters.
- **Polygamy:** Marriage to more than one person.
- **Polygyny:** Marriage between one man and more than one woman.
- **Potlatch:** A ceremony by peoples of the Northwest Coast of North America in which feasts, giving away of goods and sometimes destruction of goods take place to earn social prestige.
- **Product based division of labour:** The same labour engaged in the production of a commodity from the beginning to end.
- **Reciprocity:** Exchange without the use of money.
- **Sacred:** Relating to faiths and beliefs, something set apart from normal world, having the notion of forbiddances.
- **Secular:** Relating to normal world, opposite of sacred.
- **Sib:** Clan.
- **Social father:** Socially recognised husband of the mother of a child.
- **Social Organization:** Significant grouping of members of a society.
- **Subsistence:** Obtaining living for survival needs.
- **Supernatural:** Not subject to natural laws.
- **Totem:** Normally a plant or animal from which a clan traces origin. In Ojibwa tribe's belief it is the spirit of a patrilineal clan represented by an animal. It may mean a similar spirit among any people.
- **Animism:** belief in the existence of soul in physical-living and non-living things.

- **Customs:** accepted and long established beliefs and ways of behaviour and practices in a culture.
- **Revivalism:** religious reformation movement with the intention of saving the tradition and culture by infusing it with new purpose and meaning.
- **Sanctions:** reinforcements to encourage good deeds and discourage unwanted behaviour.
- **Syncretism:** a display of amalgamation of features of two or more cultural traditions.

## NOTES

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### 4.6 ANSWERS TO 'CHECK YOUR PROGRESS'

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- 21.(a) social                      (b) identity                      (c) temporary  
 (d) extension                      (e) social                      (f) interdisciplinary  
 (g) power
- 22.(a) institutional                      (b) real                      (c) socialization  
 (d) kinship                      (e) microcosm                      (f) non-kinship
23. A person directly related to the ego either through blood or through marriage alliance
24. Marriage
25. The prohibition of sex between certain relations
26. To address a priest 'father'
27. Lineal and collateral
28. Consanguinal, affinal and ritual
29. Social structure, function and social organization
30. Band, tribe, chiefdom and state
31. Cephalous (centralised) and acephalous (with centralised authority)
32. (a) sorroate                      (b) endogamous                      (c) institutional  
 (d) secondary                      (e) descent                      (f) parallel  
 (g) polygamy                      (h) tertiary
33. The marriage practice between one man and more than one woman and vice versa
34. the Khasa and the Kota
35. Khasi
36. marriage within a culturally defined social group, not outside of it.
37. The basic unit of the family formed by the married couple with their unmarried children.
38. No. The term patrilocal refers to the practice of residence in or near the parental home of the bridegroom. Patrilineal refers to descent along male line
39. Woman as the source of power and authority in the family.
40. The marriage between groom's sister bride's brother

**NOTES**

21. Cross-cousin marriage, the practice of marriage with mother's brother's daughter
22. (a) False (b) True (c) False (d) False (e) False (f) False  
(g) False (h) True (i) True
23. (a) False (b) False (c) False (d) True (e) False (f) False
24. (a) evolutionary (b) Authority (c) state  
(d) gender discriminatory
25. (a) true (b) false (c) true (d) false (e) false
26. Evolution perspective,
27. No, there are functionaries who also look after religious aspects of life. The functionaries also play important roles in the selection of jhum plot, consignment of dead body, etc.
28. Yes, the women do not participate in councils like meal members. Among the Sherdukpens, the Chao section of community does not have the right to membership.
29. Radcliffe-Brown,
30. The Monpa
31. K. Davis
32. (a) False (b) False (c) True (d) False (e) True (f) True (g) True
33. (a) True (b) True (c) False (d) True (e) False (f) False (g) True  
(h) True (i) False (j) False

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## 4.7 QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

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**Short-Answer Questions**

9. Define social organization. Discuss how the tribe is divided and sub-divided into different kin and non-kin groups.
10. Define family and discuss the types of family.
11. Distinguish between patriarchal and matriarchy family.
12. Define marriage and discuss its various forms in brief.
13. Discuss the forms of marriage and their corresponding family types.
14. What is polygamy? Discuss its forms and causes.
15. Describe the nature and types of tribal political organizations.
16. Write a note on oaths and ordeals? What are its objectives?  
Give your comments.

**Long-Answer Questions**

8. Discuss the types of political organizations with reference to selected tribes.
9. Which types of family are socio-political organizations? Why?
10. Modern panchayats in tribal villages are new forms of traditional village council. Do you agree? Give reasons to your answer.
11. Distinguish between customs and customary laws?

12. Define customs and sanctions. How do they help in maintaining social harmony? Give your answer with suitable examples.
13. Do tribes have religion? Give reasons to your answer.
14. What are various forms and components of tribal religion? Discuss.

## NOTES

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