



## **FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES**

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# Lecture-12



## TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA:

Inequality in India operates in many aspects but the worst suffering is of India's Tribal People. Indigenous people of India have a very ancient history of their survival in the scarcity of resources. It is a very significant part to study because we are devoid of their real and actual lifestyle, problems and rituals.

### **WHAT IS A TRIBE?**

There are many laymen and vague definitions for describing a tribe but let us take a look at verified one. From ancient Rome, the term tribe has its origin, where the word **Tribus** denoted a division within the state. According to **Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary**, Tribe is a group of people of the same race, and with the same customs, language, religion, etc., living in a particular area and often led by a chief.

### **TRIBE: IN INDIAN CONTEXT**

At present we usually take tribes in comparison with civilization but our history was different. So to study tribes in India, anthropologists go back to ancient or medieval times. There are two approaches evolutionary and historical. Both are prominent as an evolutionary approach is meant to discuss the process of tribal succession with time whereas the historical approach is confined with that exact time. Tribes of India are different on the basis of socio-economic and political development. At present we often regard tribes as mentioned in the Scheduled Tribes list. Most commonly the people living in solitude with localized groups are tribals by Indians. In India, the tribal people have known here as Adivasi a modern Sanskrit word that carries the specific meaning of being the original inhabitants of a given region.

**Under Article 342 of the Indian Constitution**, 1) President of India 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.

2) Parliament may by law include un 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 to save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification.

There are over 600 Scheduled Tribes under Article 342.

### **Caste- Tribe Conflict**

**Academics** are making so many efforts to define tribe but still, there are controversies. The debate often begins when people co-relate caste and tribe. Tribes in India have continuum with caste. Indians relate "janjati" and "jati" together. The basic features of both do not differ so boundaries are always blurred. One reason is that our constitution does not define 'tribe' so there is not any uniform definition among social scientists. Even many colonial writers were unclear about the caste-tribe divide. In reality 'Jan' means people and many mixed

castes are often related as tribes by colonial writers. The confusions originate because the tribe also has a subdivision within it. This is an ongoing discussion that still has not reached any conclusion.

#### Characteristics of Indian Tribes:

- In India, the common in all tribes is their definite area. If there is no commonplace for them then they won't get other features like a common language, community, name, rituals, sentiments, territory, etc. This important characteristic helps them to unite together and maintain a sense of unity. It helps to encourage the common culture.
- According to Indian Culture, the institution of marriage holds a great significance. Tribal people do not get married outside that always respect their commonality.
- People living there always have an organized political authority that looks for their interests and welfare. They fear intrusion that would make their culture impure. The chief actively participates to promote the best for the masses.
- The group is egalitarian in nature. The sense of equality among the community should be praised. There is no institution that is based on caste, class or sex. However, the position of chief is higher but tribal people have no sense of discrimination.
- They believe in magic and spirits. Taboos are part of their life and largely they trust animism. Worship of spirits with fear and respect is common. They prefer isolated terrains to live in and disregard trespassing in their area

#### The geographical location of tribes

There are four tribal regions according to anthropologist L.P. Vidyarthi: Himalayan, Middle India, Western India, and Southern India. States and Union Territories having a maximum number of Scheduled Tribes **as per the census of 2011** are Lakshadweep with 94.8%, Mizoram with 94.4% and Nagaland with 86.5%. On the contrary, the minimum is in Uttar Pradesh with 0.6%, Tamil Nadu with 1.1% and Bihar with 1.3%. Moreover, there are some states like Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, and Puducherry which have no population of tribes.

#### **Tribes and Adivasi – Characteristics, Cultures, Societies**

The word 'tribe' takes its origination from the old French tribe, referring Roman Ancient States (Ramnes, Tities, Luceres).

Historically Tribes have existed as social groups comprising of distinct people dependent on their regional land for their livelihood and their self-sufficiency makes them partially independent of being integrated into the national society.

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Indigenous and tribal peoples are often known by national terms such as native peoples, aboriginal peoples, first nations, adivasi, janajati, hunter-gatherers, or hill tribes. Given the diversity of peoples it aims at protecting, the Convention uses the inclusive terminology of

“indigenous and tribal peoples” and ascribes the same set of rights to both groups. In Latin America, for example, the term “tribal” has been applied to certain afro-descendent communities.

Geographically, the Tribes in India establish their presence throughout the country right from Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand in the West to Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland in the northeast; some percent in Odisha, Karnataka, TamilNadu, and Kerala in southern India, in Western India it’s in Gujarat and Rajasthan and in the union territories of Lakshadweep and on the Andaman Islands and Nicobar islands.

Despite such a diverse regional distribution, almost all Indian Tribes share similar characteristic features which include:

- **Well-demarcated geographical territory** people live within a definite topography and this forms the basic foundation for their existence. Because in the absence of a common abode, the tribals might lose contact with one another which would cause a difference in the way of living.

- **The practice of endogamy happens** within the tribe and can serve as a form of Self-segregation, and the community uses it to resist integrating and completely merging with surrounding populations.

- **Amalgamation** Because Tribes are usually cut out from the rest of the state, there are unity and consensus on thoughts and opinions of people which is why a tribe or clan is headed by a chief.

- **Common dialect** They usually speak their own tribal language which the non-tribal people might have never heard or known. Like the Chakma language which is an Indo-European language is spoken by the Manipuri, Assamese, and Bengali; and Mizo people of Mizoram speaking the Mizo language

**Common culture** produces a life of homogeneity among the tribal’s which includes common language, food habits and dressing style like all Khasi (Meghalese tribe) males wear Jymphong or sarong and females wear Jainism or Dharma along with crowns of silver or gold.

- **Kinship**-It forms the basis of tribal social organization. Most Tribes are divided into exogamous clans and lineages. It includes people related by both descents of them like social relations happens with the development and also by marriage.

- **Animism**( a rudimentary type of religion)-It is the worldview that non-human entities possess a spiritual essence and is used in the anthropology of religion and a term for the belief system of some indigenous people. Like Sarnaism, an animistic religion followed by the Tribes of Jharkhand.

- **Egalitarian societies** Tribals are not a part of the caste system however many scholars argue upon this tribal belief saying that it’s a larger political agenda.

- **Power of authority** The Tribes are headed usually by the tribal chief that is the single political authority to prevent people from intrusion and infiltration. The chief is then aided by a tribal committee.

- **Economic structure and occupation** Most tribals are concentrated heavily in forest areas within nature and this determines their economic activity. which consists of hunting and agriculture.

Hence even in this modern Days, the lifestyle of tribal society is primitive and it totally depends on characteristic ways of non-monetary transacted life. It's astonishing and fascinating to know what a synthesized country India is, highly encapsulating macrocosm and microcosm.