

## Department of Anthropology

### Study materials

### BSc Hons(CBCS)

### Paper- GE3

#### **Q1. DEFINITION OF TRIBE**

*L.P. Vidyarthi (1981)* define tribe as “ social group with definite territory, common name, common district, common culture, behavior of an endogamous group, common taboos, existence of distinctive social and political system, full faith in leaders and self-sufficiency in their distinct economy.”

*P.G. Krishnan (1985,)* tribe is “a social group of simple and kind, the members of which speak a common dialect, have a single government act together for common purposes and have a common name, a contiguous territory, a relatively uniform culture or way of life and a traditions of common descent.”

*K.S. Mathur and B.C. Agarwal (1974)*, rightly comment that “traditional India is said to have three types of communities – tribal, caste and peasant”.

*Ralph Linton*, “In its simplest form the tribe is a group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in culture, frequent contacts, and a certain community of interest.”

*Bardhan A.B. (1973)* defines the tribe as “course of socio-cultural entity at a definite historical stage of development. It is a single, endogamous community with a cultural and psychological makeup.”

*G.S. Ghurye*, “The Scheduled Tribes are neither called the ‘Aborigines’, nor the ‘Adivasis’, nor are they treated as a category by themselves.

*D.N. Majumdar (1967)*, a ‘tribe’ is culturally and linguistically a homogeneous group which does not follow any major religion such as Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, etc

*Gillin and Gillin*, Describes tribes as a pre-literate group with a common territory, language, and culture.

*The Oxford dictionary*, A tribe is “a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader”.

The term '*Scheduled Tribe*' was mentioned by *the constitution of the India*. Article 341 (1),

## **Q2. GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN TRIBES**

The tribes of India are dispersed widely over geographical territory and scholars have attempted to arrange them along the regions they inhabit. Based on the geographical location and the tribal demographical set-up, anthropologists have tried to chalk out a zonal classification or a regional grouping of the tribes of India.

For instance, B.S. Guha has classified the tribes of India into three zones:

1. The north and north-eastern zone in the mountain valleys and eastern frontiers of India.
2. The central or middle zone occupying the older hills and plateaus along the dividing line between the Peninsular India and the Indo-Gangetic Plains including the converging line of the Western Ghats.
3. The southern zone comprising the whole of the Peninsular India.

D.N. Majumdar and T.N. Madan in their book *Introduction to Social Anthropology* (1956) have also offered a similar classification. They are Northern and North-Eastern Zone, the Central or Middle Zone and the Southern Zone.

S.C. Dube has demarcated four geographical regions including the North and North-Eastern Zone, Middle Zone, the South Zone and the West Zone.

Taking into consideration the zonal classification given by different anthropologists from time to time and keeping in mind the geographical, ecological, socio-economic, administrative, ethnic and racial factors, L.P. Vidyarthi put forward a five-fold classification system which included the following: the Himalayan region, Middle India, Western India, South India and the Islands.

I) *The Himalayan region* is sub-divided into:

A) North-eastern Himalayan region comprising the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura and the mountaineous region of West Bengal including Darjeeling.

B) Central Himalayan region comprising the Terai areas of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

C) North-Western Himalayan region comprising the states of Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir.

The tribes inhabiting this region are the Akas, Daflas, Apatanis, Mishmis, Khamptis, Singphos, Kukis, Khasis, Garos, Lepchas, Bhotias, Tharus, etc.

**II) Middle India Region** comprising the states of Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. About 55% of the total tribal population of the country lives in this region. The tribes inhabiting this region are the Juangs, Kharia, Khonds, Bhumijis, Baiga, Muria, Marias, Mundas, Gonds, Santhals, Oraons, etc.

**III) Western India Region** comprising the states of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli. The tribes inhabiting this region are the Barodias, Bharwads, Bhils, Damors, Dhanwars, Dhodias, Girasias, Gonds, Katkaris, Koknas, Kolis, Minas, Siddi, Warlis, etc.

**IV) South India Region** comprising the states of Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala. The tribes inhabiting this region are the Chenchus, Irulas, Paniyans, Kurumbas, Kadars, Todas, Badagas, Kotas, etc.

**V) The Island Region** comprising the islands of Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea. The tribes inhabiting this region are the Jarwas, Onges, the GreatAndamanese, North Sentinelese, etc.

K.S. Singh has offered a similar classification of tribes of India into the Northeastern India, Middle India, Southern India, North-western Himalayas, and Andaman and Nicobar Islands Zones.

Within this geographical classification, there is a lot of disparity in regards to the distribution of the tribal population of the country. We can come across a very high concentration of the tribal population in the eight states of the central Migrant Tribes / Nomads or middle India comprising of about 85 percent of the total tribal population. This is followed by the eight north-eastern states comprising of about 11 percent while the rest is distributed over the states and union territories of the northern and southern India.

However, if we try to see the ratio of the tribal population to the total population, we can find that the ratio is high in the north-eastern states except Assam. It ranges from 64-95 per cent in Meghalaya, Nagaland, Mizoram, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh and between 30-35 percent in Tripura and Manipur. The ratio is over 90 percent in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep whereas it ranges from 22-23 percent in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh in central India. In the rest of the country the ratio ranges from as low as 1-12 percent. Besides the zonal and geographical distribution, tribes have also been classified on the basis of their ecological habitat. On this basis they are classified as those who live in the hills (Hill Karbis, Hill Tiwas of Assam), plains (Bodos, Singphos), forests (Kadars of Kerala), rural, urban and industrial areas.

### **Q3 .ECONOMICAL DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN TRIBES**

On the basis of the mode of livelihood or the subsistence pattern, Indian tribes can be divided into:

1. Food gatherers and hunters
2. Horticulturists
3. Pastoralists
4. Hill cultivation type
5. Agriculturists
6. Simple Artisan
7. Folk Artist
8. Labourers and
9. Industrial workers

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

**II) Horticulturists:** In comparison with the hunters and the gatherers, the horticulturists extract more resources from a given area of land and they have greater effect on the environment. Their societies are organised around groups based on kinship and descent. Inter-group exchange and trade is common among them.

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

**IV) Hill cultivation:** type The people inhabiting the hilly areas have adopted shifting cultivation methods. Hill cultivation is a seasonally regulated procedure designed to open up and bring a patch of land under cultivation. After one or two seasons of cropping, the land is left fallow for several years with the aim of restoring the fertility of the soil. Following this, the land is again cleared and burnt and likewise another cycle of cultivation begins. Simple implements like the digging stick with a metallic end, spade, sickle and axe are used.

Hill cultivators apply three techniques which include: **i)** Slash-and-burn cultivation with the help of digging sticks; **ii)** Hoe-and-burn cultivation; and **iii)** Terrace cultivation in the Terai areas equipped with natural irrigation sources.

Hill cultivation is known by various names like Jhum in Assam, Kurwa or Khallu in Santhal Parganas; Podu, Rema, Dahi, Gudia, Bringa in Orissa; Penda, Dahiya, Bewar in Madhya Pradesh; Kondapady in Andhra Pradesh.

The practice of hill cultivation is widespread in our country. Tribal communities inhabiting the hills of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh including the Adis, Akas, Birjhis, Bondos, Chakmas, Chirus, Gangtes, Hmars, Jamatias, Juangs, Dimasas, Karbis, Mijis, Mishmis, Aos, Konyaks, Phoms, Paites, Riangs, Tangsas, Wanchos practice the Hill cultivation methods.

**V) Agriculturists :** Agriculture is the most popular economic activity of the tribal population of India. A large percentage of the tribes are supported by agriculture who practice it as their primary source of livelihood. It is a simple form of settled type of cultivation which requires ploughing the land with two animals. An important feature of tribal agriculture is cooperation among relatives and among the villagers on a reciprocal basis during the different stages of agricultural activities. Tribal communities practicing agriculture are the Apatanis, Cheros, Deoris, Miris, Hos, Jaintias, Khambas, Kharias, Khasis, Kolams, Tiwas, Rabhas, Kinnauras, Bhumijis, Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Kharwas, Baigas, Gonds, Bhils, Minas, Warlis, Koyas; the list is endless.

**VI) Simple artisan type:** There are a number of tribes in India who subsist on traditional crafts and cottage industries like basketry, wood craft, weaving, iron smelting, rope making, etc. Except in few cases, these are usually practiced as subsidiary occupations. The Asurs of Bihar, Goduliya Lohars of Rajasthan, Agarias of Madhya Pradesh are engaged in iron smelting; the Birhors are engaged in rope making; the Garas of Jammu and Kashmir and the Kammarus are blacksmiths. The Katkaris are engaged in catechu making; the Kotas and the Tharuas are potters; the Sauntas and the Mahalis are basket makers. In fact a majority of the tribes of India are engaged in basketry which caters to their individual needs and requirements.

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

These communities have ceremonial relations with their neighbouring communities. For instance, the Pardhans are considered the bards of the Gonds. 34 Tribal Cosmogenies Their presence is mandatory in the social functions of the Gonds. The Pardhans play on the Kikri- a stringed musical instrument and live on ritual begging and the customary alms received from the neighbouring Gonds.

Similarly the Ojhas are the bards and minstrels of the Gonds. Similarly the Kotas of the Nilgiris apart from catering to the needs of the Todas and the Badagas for pots and knives also offer music essential in the ceremonies of the Todas and the Badagas. They are offered grain in return of the same. The Kotas also have a reciprocal relationship with the Kurumbas who compensate the Todas with honey and fruits.

**VIII) Labourers/industrial workers:** Some of the tribes traditionally belonging to the agricultural or artisan type have adopted the work of wage labourers. They work as daily wage labourer in the agricultural fields or non-agricultural sector like the industries on a casual basis. The agricultural work is available in the locality itself whereas the non-agricultural work opportunities are available in the locality as well as distant places including neighbouring states. The emergence of the non-agricultural labour sector is a result of the rapid growth of population and the opening of mines and different industries in tribal areas. As a result tribal peoples from the agricultural and artisan type move out to distant places as seasonal migrants to work in the mines, industries, tea gardens, road and railway construction, forestry and other civil work like construction of dams, bridges, etc. The most renowned non-agricultural labour belt is the Chotanagpur of Bihar. Tribals of this area are found working in the tea gardens of North-East India, forestry and other sectors in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, etc. The Santhals and the Hos dominate the labourer sector of the iron mines and industries of Bihar, almost half the labour force of the manganese industry of Madhya Pradesh is constituted of tribal people. The tribal people are found to be taking industrial labour work either as the primary occupation or subsidiary work. Such occupational changes have led to changes not only in the income and expenditure pattern but also in the traditional occupational structure, importance of the traditional crafts, dress and food habits as well as in the family and social structure of the traditional tribal societies.

**IX) Skilled workers and white collar jobs** In the post Independence era, the Constitution of India has helped in creating job opportunities for tribal people by reserving seats in different services. As a result we find tribal people engaged in offices, hospitals, administrative jobs, etc. It is difficult to identify any particular tribal group that is extensively engaged in skilled jobs but educated tribal people are engaged in such jobs in different capacities all over the country.

**Q4. ACCULTURATION and ASSIMILATION**

ACCULTURATION	ASSIMILATION
The process by which culture is transmitted through continuous firsthand contact of groups with different cultures, one often more developed than the other.	The process through which groups living in a common territory but of a heterogeneous backgrounds reach a broad-based cultural solidarity

#### **Q5. FUNCTIONS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM**

- i) Determination of Social Status
- ii) To provide Mental Security
- iii) Selection of Occupation
- iv) Selection of Life Partners
- v) Control over Behaviour
- vi) Maintenance of the Purity of Blood
- vii) Maintenance of Religious Ideas
- viii) Social Status in Society

#### **Q6. DISCUSS BRIEFLY ON CASTE-TRIBE CONTINUUM**

The caste claims a common ancestry from a mythical ancestor, while the tribe sometimes traces its origin from some animals which may be treated as its totem. The title of caste implies that all the members follow the same occupation. But the title of a tribe does not indicate a common occupation. The convention of endogamy is strictly followed by the caste. But it is not applicable for all the times to a tribe. Sometimes the members of a tribe may find wives from the members of another tribe

The caste was originated in ancient Hindu society, with a view to division of labour on the basis of profession and occupation. The tribe came about because of the evolution of community feeling in a group inhabiting a definite geographical area. The concept of tribe-caste continuum in India originates with the work of Surjeet Sinha on Bhumij tribe; and a broad Bailey 1960, 1961 study of caste). Sinha was inspired by Redfield's two concepts of folk-urban continuum and peasant society and culture. They believe that the dichotomy of the society viz. caste and tribal can be seen as caste and tribe as the opposite ends of a single line. At different points along this line particular societies may be located according to their proximity to either the organic caste model or segmentary tribal model. Thus, we would not have to bother to find out which society is a tribe or a caste. Working on the data from Bhotia in Uttar Pradesh, Srivastava deals with the ancillary problem of tribe-caste mobility. He argues that the concept of "cultural approximation" is used to know the tribe caste dynamics. Cultural approximation is a process and an end product at a given time. The form of it is a "form of adaptation" which an interactive

and mutually beneficial cultural co-existence is rendered possible. The mechanism is adoptive in nature which is emerged from the within the cultures often without organized efforts. The transformation of a tribe into a caste is subsumed in the wider phenomenon of the absorption of the community into Hinduism. The ideology and the phenomenology of the caste and the tribe are different from earlier days. It is argued that tribal is a forest dweller and they are adimjati (original inhabitant), janjati (folk-people), adimjati (primitive people) vanwasi (inhabitant of forest) pahari (hill dwellers) having some specific life pattern. Not only has the tribe caste also had a peculiar characteristic of hierarchy, purity and pollution, and specific type of the belief and rituals. The caste and tribal both have a specific culture. The cultural traits have a tendency to spread from place to place.

This type of spread up is a kind of a cultural expansion having an impact on other society culture. The cultural interaction between the societies is happening with the spreading of a cultural trait of a specific society (e.g., material object, idea, or behavior pattern) from one society to another has an impact on the tribal society. The tribal society living in a close contact of the Indian village having an unimaginable diversity along with the caste features. Unconsciously and consciously tribal communities adopting the Hindu myth, ritual belief and the adaptation which is not a one way process but Hindu society is inclusive and the culture is more advanced and stronger than the tribal. Earlier the tribal society who refers as an isolated society has come in contact with different caste communities has different degree of cultural contacts leading the process of the continuum. Before dealing with the continuum, the assumption on the ideology of tribal economy and society is that the tribal communities in India are typified by their geographical isolation and high levels of ethnic closure. For Weiner, as for Dhebar, the 'typical' tribal village is a village of tribal: it is not a mixed village of tribes and castes, nor are any minor castes which might be resident in a tribal village entitled to any occupancy or employment rights therein. Thus, in contrast to a tribal society which is isolated, homogeneous and undifferentiated, a caste-hierarchy, on the other hand, is based on co-partnership, heterogeneity and stratification David Mandelbaum having a similar point in the conceptual discussion of the of tribe and jati: he argues that most tribal people of India live in hilly or forest areas where population is sparse and communication is difficult within their villages and localities most tribal have a strong sense of their distinctiveness and hold themselves to be quite separate from jati villages' (Mandelbaum, 1970).

In the context of continuum approach, Bailey (1960), for example, has attempted to distinguish a 'tribe' from 'caste', using 'direct access to land' as the major parameter. According to him, if the larger proportion of a given society has direct access to land, then closer that society is at the tribal-end of the continuum. Collective ownership of resources entitles all the members of a 'tribe' to have access to land and other resources. Conversely, if the greater access to land is through a dependent relationship as, for instance, big landowners leasing land to tenants, then nearer that society is to the caste pole. In this context, Andre Beitelles appropriately remarks that Bailey is perhaps the only anthropologist working in the Indian field who has tried to



characterize 'tribes' in terms of segmentary principles, but what Bailey is interested in the contrast between 'tribe' and 'caste' rather than between 'tribe' and peasant by using his pole parameter. Surjit Sinha, however, does not agree with Bailey and emphasises that the major feature of an 'Ideal tribe' is its independent socioeconomic existence, resulting naturally into its lack of interaction with other social systems. Sinha argues that the interaction with other social system can originate from either their geographical or social isolation and can be of dominant equal or dependent type. Group isolation, in turn, generates group sentiment or solidarity. Since there is social homogeneity within the group, there is, therefore, lack of role-specialization, leading, in turn, to the emergence of social relations on face-to-face. It is here that Baine's (1891) observation comes closer when he defines tribes to be 'the remnants of primitive communities which have, so far, escaped absorption' and have preserved, in a distinguished, but distinguishable shape their tribal existence. (Vidyarthi and Rai, 1985) Colonial epistemology thus built both on Brahmanical notions of caste and drew on 18th and 19th century ideas of race. The distinction between the caste and tribe can be related to colonial epistemology. How colonial power develops knowledge to distinguish tribe to coast and also make many sections of the tribe. Which we can see on the way when that the ethnographer and social scientist along with colonial administrator construct the tribe with his conveniences the Nagas and the Mizos as the "true wild tribes of India" and "unlike the broken tribes found in Chotanagpur". The colonial introductory model of the tribe is based on the essential unity, clear body of customary law and unambiguous legitimacies. This was better suited to the task of maintaining public tranquility. Indeed, the tribe which is also termed as noble savage is a kind of a Victorian notion. But we have to know that Tribe within the British tradition and the Asiatic tradition of civilisation has a distinction. The concept of the tribe has a dilemma of universality, 'civilisation by contrast' ideas about the physical nature and differentiation of man, which raised the problem of its universality; ideas about the nature of social order.

Unlike the Beitel, Sinha, and others social scientist some other did not differentiate 'tribes' from 'non-tribes' on the basis of traditional identification marks and features (such as language, culture, race, physical traits etc.), and use the word 'tribe' instead either to highlight a dominant characteristic of their economy which distinguishes them from other economic systems or to designate a particular type of society from other communities on the tribecaste-urban continuum. In this step we can keep the name of K.S. Mathur and B.C. Agarwal. T.B. Naik (1956) get too resonances, when he argues about the two key-words (caste-Tribe). He used to differentiate a tribal community from a caste-based system –first is solidarity or a feeling of commonality, and the second is co-partnership, the latter being the distinguishing-mark of a functionally interdependent caste-hierarchy (Hasnain, 2004).

(REFERENCE: <https://egyankosh.ac.in › bitstream>)

