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## **UNIT 2 DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN TRIBES, GROUPS AND SUB-GROUPS: CAUSES OF VARIATIONS**

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### **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

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After having read this Unit, you will be able to:

- get a panoramic view of the Indian tribes;
- understand the principles upon which their classification is based; and
- map their distribution on the basis of their geographical location, language, physical attributes, economy and social structure.

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### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

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We have had a general outline about the tribes of India in the preceding Unit (Course 4-Block 1- Unit 1). In this present Unit we will deal with distribution of the tribes of India in detail.

Structurally this Unit is divided into two main sections. In this first section of the Unit we will discuss the distribution pattern of Indian tribes and how they are classified into different groups and sub-groups based on various criteria.

These criteria are based on their geographical location, language, physical attributes, economy and the degree of incorporation into the Hindu society.

In the second section of the Unit we will discuss the causes of the variations in the distribution patterns of the Indian tribes.

As you go through the Unit, it would be helpful if you start mapping the distribution pattern of the Indian tribes on the imaginary map of India in your mind.

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## 2.2 DISTRIBUTION OF INDIAN TRIBES: GROUPS AND SUB-GROUPS

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India contains an unparalleled variety of ethnic groups, patterns of culture and modes of living. The People of India Project of the Anthropological Survey of India has identified about 461 tribal communities of India out of which 174 have been identified as sub-groups. They number about 67,758,000 according to the 1991 Census comprising about 8.01 per cent of the total population of the country.

You have by now known the characteristic features of tribes in the preceding Unit. In this Unit we will look into the distribution patterns of the tribes of India.

Even though there is not a single and definite system of classifying the tribes of India, attempts have been made by different anthropologists from time to time to distribute the tribes. There are mainly two categories to classify the tribes. They are:

- |                                       |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| I) Permanent traits                   | : | This includes factors like geography/territory, language, physical/racial attributes and size.                    |
| II) Non-Permanent or acquired traits: |   | This includes factors like economy or subsistence pattern and the degree of incorporation into the Hindu society. |

### 2.2.1 Geographical

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:

- The north and north-eastern zone in the mountain valleys and eastern frontiers of India.
- 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.
- 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. Vidyaarthy 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 Great Andamanese, North Sentinelese, etc.

K.S. Singh has offered a similar classification of tribes of India into the North-eastern 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 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.

### 2.2.2 Linguistic

Besides classifying the tribes according to territory, they are also classified according to language or linguistic categories. Four broad language groups have been identified amongst the tribes of India which are Indo-Aryan, Austro-Asiatic, Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman.

Tracing the linguistic map of India, we can see that the tribal people of India speak different languages in different regions and groups. One can find that the Dravidian language is spoken in southern India and in some pockets in central India; the Austro-Asiatic language is spoken in some pockets in the north-eastern Himalayan region of Meghalaya, in Nicobar Islands and most part of central India; the Tibeto-Burman language is spoken in the entire Himalayan region whereas the Indo-Aryan language is spoken in the remaining areas of the rest of the country.

L.P Vidyarthi and Binay Kumar Rai in their book *“The Tribal Culture of India”* put forward the following classificatory system of the languages of Indian tribes:

#### I) Dravidian

All the tribes of southern India as well as the Gonds and Oraons of central India speak languages belonging to the Dravidian language family. The Gondi language spoken by the Gonds who spread from Uttar Pradesh to Andhra Pradesh and from Maharashtra to Orissa belong to this language family. Other languages belonging to this family is the Kui language which is spoken by the Kandh of Orissa, Kurukh spoken by the Oraons of central India, Tulu language spoken by the Malerus of Karnataka. The languages spoken by the Todas, Palliyans and Irulas of Tamil Nadu, the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh, and Kadars of Kerala also belong to the Dravidian language family.

#### II) Austro-Asiatic

The Khasis and the Jaintias of Meghalaya speak in language belonging to the Austric language family. Apart from them, the Mundas (Bihar), Santhals (West

Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Tripura), Hos (Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh), Saoras (Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Orissa), Bondos (Orissa) and Korkus (Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra) speak languages belonging to the Austric or Mundarian language family as it is sometimes called.

This family is again sub-divided into the following sub-groups:

- A) Mon-Khmer Branch: Languages of this family are found in certain pockets of the north-Himalayan region of Meghalaya spoken by the Khasis and the Jaintias as well as the Nicobarese of the Nicobar Islands.
- B) Munda Branch: Santhali spoken by the Santhals, Gutob spoken by the Gadabas; Kharia of South Munda sub-branch; Korwa spoken by Kodaku; Korku of North Munda sub-branch, Juang of the central Munda sub-branch
- C) Kherwarian group: Ho

### III) Tibeto-Chinese

This family is again sub-divided into the following sub-groups:

- A) Siamese-Burmese: The Tai group of people including Khamptis and the Phakials speak languages belonging to this family
- B) Tibeto Burman:
  - i) Tibeto-Himalayan Branch: Bhotia, Khampa, Memba, Ladakhi spoken by the Mons; Kagati, Sherpa
  - ii) Western sub-group of Prenominalised Himalayan group: Chamba, Lahauli spoken by Lahaula; Swangli; Kinnauri spoken by the Kinnaura
  - iii) Non-Prenominalised Himalayan group: Rongke spoken by the Lepchas; Toto spoken by the Totos
  - iv) Arunachal Branch: Hrusso spoken by the Akas; Miri spoken by the Miris, Mishmi spoken by the Mishmis, Nocte; Sulung, Tagin
  - v) Assam-Burmese Branch:
    - a) Bodo group: Kachari, Dimasa, Garo, Mikir spoken by the Karbis, Koch, Dowyan spoken by the Tiwas, Rabha
    - b) Naga Group: Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Sema, Rengma, Lotha, Konyak, Maram, Phom,
    - c) Kuki-Chin Group: Hmar, Koireng, Lamgang, Monsang, Moyon, Paite; Vaiphei; Zou
    - d) Kachin Group: Singpho

Apart from the Khasis and the Jaintias of Meghalaya, all the other tribes of north-east India and the Himalayan region speak languages belonging to the Tibeto-Burman family.

### IV) Indo-Aryan

The tribes of Gujarat, Rajasthan and the Indo-Gangetic Plain speak languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan language family. Some of the languages belonging to this family include Chattisgarhi, Gujarati; Marathi, Assamese; Oriya; Baigana spoken by the Baigas; Banjari spoken by the Banjaras; Bhili spoken by the Bhils;

Dardic spoken by the Broqpas; Gujjari spoken by the Gujjars; Lamani spoken by the Lambadis; Baghelkhandi spoken by the Paos,

The entire group of Austric language speaking people and 80 percent of the Tibeto-Burman speaking people are identified as tribal communities. On the other hand a meagre 3 percent of the Dravidian language speaking people and almost 1 percent of the Indo-Aryan speaking people are identified as tribal people.

There is yet another language family spoken by the tribes of the Andaman Islands like the Great Andamanese, the Onges, Jarawas and the Sentinelese. They are loosely called the Andamanese language family.

### 2.2.3 Racial

On the basis of the physical attributes, anthropologists have tried to categorise the tribal population from time to time. But due to the lack of available knowledge and scanty direct evidence, the determination of the racial genesis and affinities of the tribal communities of India is a very complicated task.

The first attempt to categorise the Indian tribal communities in a scientific manner based on the racial characteristics was done by Sir Herbert Risley. He classified the entire population of the country into seven racial types which are Turko-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Scytho-Dravidian, Aryo-Dravidian, Mongolo-Dravidian, Mongoloid and the Dravidian. No separate classificatory scheme for the tribal population was given.

A more recent attempt of classification was given by J.H. Hutton, S.C. Guha and D.N. Majumdar out of which the most accepted classification is that offered by S.C. Guha who listed six main races with nine sub-types. They are as follows:

- I) Negrito
- II) Proto- Australoid
  - A) Paleo-Mongoloids- Long-headed and Broad-headed
  - B) Tibeto-Mogoloids
- III) Mongoloid
- IV) Mediterranean
  - A) Palaeo- Mediterranean
  - B) Mediterranean
  - C) Oriental type
- V) Western Brachycephals
  - A) Alpinoid
  - B) Dinaric
  - C) Armenoid
- VI) Nordic

Guha has also drawn conclusions as regards to the racial composition of the tribes of India. They are:

- I) Negrito:

II) Proto-Australoid

III) Mongoloid

At present the racial composition of the tribes of India include the following:

- D) Proto-Australoid: The tribes of middle India like the Mundas, the Oraons, the Hos, the Gonds, the Khonds, etc. belong to the Proto-Australoid stock. This group is characterized by dark skin colour, short to medium stature, low forehead, sunken nose, dark complexion and curly hair.
- II) Mongoloid: The tribes of north-eastern India and the Himalayan region belong to this group. They have the typical features of straight hair, flat nose, prominent cheek bones and almond shaped eyes with the epicanthic fold present and yellowish skin colour. They have medium stature, high head and medium nose.
- III) Dravidian: The tribes of South India like the Kadars, the Irulas and the Paniyans.
- IV) Negrito: The Great Andamanese, Onges, Sentinelese having frizzy hair have Negrito strains. The Siddis who migrated from the African shores of course belong to the Negrito group.

**2.2.4 Size**

Anthropologists have also attempted to classify the tribal groups according to their demographic size. It is interesting to note that tribal populations of India vary immensely with regards to their respective sizes. On one hand we find tribal communities like the Gonds, Bhils, (both designated with their generic names) with a population of about forty lakhs each followed by the Santhals with a population of more than thirty lakhs. They are followed by the Oraons, Minas and the Mundas who number about more than ten lakhs each. They are followed by the Hos, Khonds and the Kols with population strength of more than five lakhs.

Yet another more than forty tribes, comprising about ten percent of the total tribal population of India have a population ranging from one to five lakhs. These are the Adis, Baigas, Bhumijis, Bodos-Kacharis, Dhodias, Garos, Kacharis, Kharias, Kharwars, Khasis, Kolhas, Korkus, Lodhas, Mizos, Rabhas, Saoras, Tripuris, Warlis, Yenadis and Yerukulas, to name a few.

On the contrary there are communities like some Andamanese groups who number even less than hundred each. There is a lot of variation in size even within the tribal groups who lie in between these two categories- somewhere from between less than 1000 to less than a million.

**Check your progress 1**

**Note:** 1) Your answers should be about thirty words each.

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

1) What are the permanent and acquired categories of distributing the tribes of India based on their traits?

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THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

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2) What are the classificatory systems of the tribes of India based on territory or geographical criteria?

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THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY

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3) Fill in the Blanks

- a) Tulu language belongs to the ..... language family.
- b) Racially, the Mundas and Oraons belong to the .....group.
- c) ..... percent of the Tibeto-Burman speaking people are tribal.
- d) Kadars are ..... dwellers.
- e) ..... percent of the total population of Central India is tribal.

4) Match the Following:

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| 1) Kui         | A) Negrito   |
| 2) Rongke      | B) Andaman   |
| 3) Sentinelese | C) Dravidian |
| 4) Siddis      | D) Oraon     |
| 5) Kurukh      | E) Lepcha    |

Note for question 4: The above mentioned classificatory systems are based on permanent traits including those based on geographical location, linguistics, size, racial characteristics. But there are certain acquired characteristics on the basis of which tribal groups have been classified.

These are:

- mode of livelihood or the subsistence pattern;
- degree of incorporation into the Hindu society; and
- degree of incorporation into the Hindu society as well the development of the tribal group.

### 2.2.5 Economy or subsistence pattern

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

- Food gatherers and hunters
- Horticulturists
- Pastoralists
- Hill cultivation type
- Agriculturists
- Simple Artisan
- Folk Artist
- Labourers and
- 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, Birjhias, 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.

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.

#### **2.2.6 Degree of incorporation into the Hindu society**

Tribal and non-tribal communities in India have co-existed for centuries, influencing each other in different ways in varying degrees. This was also another way of classifying the tribal population of India based on the degree of

incorporation into the non-tribal caste-based Hindu society. This could be studied from the perspective of either the tribal society or the Hindu society.

The Tribal Welfare Committee constituted by the Indian Conference of Social Work in 1952 classified the tribes of India into four main divisions which are the following:

#### **I) Tribal communities**

This category includes those tribal communities who confine themselves to their original habitats and still maintain their distinct traditional pattern of life. For example, the hunting and gathering tribes and hill cultivating tribes.

#### **II) Semi-tribal communities**

This category includes those tribal communities who have, more or less, settled down in the rural areas taking to agriculture and other allied occupations. For example, the agriculturist tribes.

#### **III) Acculturated tribal communities**

This category includes those tribal communities who have migrated to the urban or semi-urban areas and are engaged in the industrial sector and have adopted the cultural traits of the rest of the population, for example industrial labourers like the Santhals and the Hos.

#### **IV) Totally assimilated tribal communities**

This category includes those tribal communities who have been totally assimilated into the new social order such as the Bhumjis, the Majhis, the Raj Gonds, etc.

B.K.Roy Burman in 1971 divided the tribal population into those who are;

I) Fully incorporated into the Hindu social order such as, the Bhils who have adopted the Hindu way of life including the ethos of the caste system and can hardly be differentiated from the neighbouring Hindu peasantry.

II) Positively oriented towards the Hindu social order

This category includes tribes like the Santhals, Oraons, Mundas and the Gonds who have not been incorporated totally into the caste structure but have to a large extent adopted the symbols and world views of their Hindu neighbours.

III) Negatively oriented towards the Hindu social order

This category includes tribes like the Mizos and the Nagas who are negatively oriented towards the Hindu social order and reject the caste structure.

IV) Indifferent towards the Hindu social order

This category includes tribes like those of Arunachal Pradesh who are totally indifferent to the Hindu order.

G.S. Ghurye in "*The Scheduled Tribes*" proposed a similar classification which includes;

- Tribes who attain a high status within the Hindu society

- Partially Hinduised tribes
- Tribes inhabiting remote hill areas and who exhibited great resistance to Hinduism as an alien culture

While combining the criteria of the level of incorporation and the level of development, Verrier Elwin proposed a fourfold classification:

- Those who are primitive live in a joint communal life and cultivate with axes. They are the purest as they live in the remotest areas and are least influenced by Hinduism.
- Those who, though equally attached to their solitude and ancient traditions, are more individualistic, face a decline of shared sense, are less occupied with axe cultivation and are more used to outside life.
- Those who are under external influence and are on the way to lose their tribal culture, religion and social organization. They are in a peculiar state of transition. This group constitutes the largest section of the tribal population which is about four-fifth of the same.
- Those who retain much of their original tribal life and tree of culture intact.

**Check your progress 2**

**Note:** 1) Your answers should be about thirty words each.

2) You may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of the Unit.

1) What are the acquired traits on the basis on which the tribes of India are classified?

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2) What are the main divisions devised by the Tribal Welfare Committee to classify the tribal population of India?

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.....  
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3) Match the Following:

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|-------------|---------------------|
| 1) Chenchu  | A) Madhya Pradesh   |
| 2) Bakarwal | B) Potter           |
| 3) Jhum     | C) Food Gatherer    |
| 4) Agaria   | D) Pastoral Nomad   |
| 5) Tharua   | E) Hill Cultivation |

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## **2.3. CAUSES OF VARIATIONS**

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In the preceding section, we have come across the wide variation of the different groups and sub-groups of Indian tribes based on permanent traits like geographical, linguistic, racial, size, and acquired traits like the economy or subsistence pattern and degree of incorporation into the Hindu society.

There are many factors which lead to this great degree of variations which are enumerated below:

### **2.3.1 Migration**

India had experienced different waves of movement of populations dating back to thousands of years.

The earliest known population movement is that of the Aryans who were a group of pastoralists who are said to have migrated from Iran through Afghanistan in around 1500 B.C. from the north-western side of the Indian subcontinent. They eventually displaced the Indus Valley culture and made this region their home. In much later periods of history the invasion of Greeks under Alexander the Great was followed by other invasions from the West and Central Asia like those of the Scythians known as the Sakas in India; the Yue-Chi from Central Asia, the Arabs from Baghdad in the eighth century; the Turks of Afghanistan in the thirteenth century and finally the Central Asian invaders under Babur in the sixteenth century which laid the foundations of the Mughal rule in India.

Apart from these invasions, migrant communities had come to India as merchants, traders religious practitioners and even as slaves.

This is the main cause behind the wide variety of racial and linguistic strains evident in the racial and cultural mosaic of India.

### **2.3.2 Acculturation and assimilation**

The migrants and the original inhabitants have been living in close contact with each other for centuries. The interaction between the two led to much acculturation as well as assimilation over the years. As a result, many new traits find their way into the cultural mosaic of the immigrant communities and many traits also die out leading to the variations in the culture of the two sides.

### **2.3.3 Geography or the physical environment**

The geographical or the physical environment of an area plays an important role in shaping the socio-economic conditions and cultural elements in the life of the people. For instance, the Bhotia of the eastern Himalayas follow Buddhism while those of the central Himalayas are Hindus due to the influence of the neighbouring communities. There is an obvious difference in the dress between the Gujjars settled in the cold region in the Jammu and Kashmir and those inhabiting the arid region of Rajasthan. The people living in the hilly region practice the shifting and terrace method of cultivation whereas those of the plains practice agriculture.

### Check your progress 3

**Note:** 1) Your answers should be about thirty words each.

2) you may check your answers with the possible answers given at the end of this Unit.

1) What are the causes of variations of the Tribes of India?

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## 2.4 LET US SUM UP

As you come to the end of this Unit, you have an idea about the distribution pattern of the Indian tribes and how they are classified into different groups and sub-groups based on some permanent traits including geography/territory, language, physical attributes as well as some acquired characteristics like economy and the degree of incorporation of the tribes into the Hindu society. You are also familiar to some extent with the causes of variations in the distribution patterns of the Indian tribes.

## 2.5 ACTIVITY

Try to discuss the various points mentioned in this Unit with your friends, co-students or interested people. Try to list the various causes of variations in the distribution pattern of the tribes of India.

## 2.6 REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

- Virginius, 2003. Tribes in India in *The Oxford India Companion to Sociology and Social Anthropology* Edited by Veena Das; Oxford University Press: New Delhi.
- Vidyarthi, L.P. and B.K. Rai. 1977. *The Tribal Culture of India*. Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.

## 2.7 GLOSSARY

**Acculturated** : The process by which culture is transmitted through continuous firsthand contact of groups with different cultures, one often more developed than the other.

**Assimilation** : The process through which groups living in a common territory but of a heterogeneous backgrounds reach a broad-based cultural solidarity.

- Bards** : Singing poets who recite verses about the legends and history of their people. **Migrant Tribes / Nomads**
- Brachycephalic** : Referring to a person with a comparatively broad head.
- Demography** : The statistical analysis and description of populations considering vital aspects like age, sex, birth rate, death rate and mobility over a period or at one time.
- Generic** : Relating to or descriptive of an entire group or class.
- People of India Project** : The People of India Project launched by the Anthropological Survey of India in 1985 to present a brief but descriptive anthropological profile of all the communities of India, study the impact of change and development processes on these communities.

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## 2.8 ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

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### Check your progress 1

- 1) Read Section 1.2
- 2) Read Section 1.2.1
- 3) Fill in the Blanks
  - a) Tulu language belongs to the Dravidian language family.
  - b) Racially, the Mundas and Oraons belong to the Proto-Australoid group
  - c) Eighty percent of the Tibeto-Burman speaking people are tribals.
  - d) Kadars are forest dwellers.
  - e) Eighty-five percent of the total population of Central India is tribals.
- 4) 1-C; 2-E; 3-B; 4-A; 5-D

### Check your progress 2

- 1) Read Section 1.5.5 & 1.5.6
- 2) Read Section 1.5.6
- 3) 1-C; 2-D; 3-E; 4-A; 5-B

### Check your progress 3

- 1) Read Section 1.3