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## UNIT 8 TRIBES AND ETHNICITY\*

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### 8.0 OBJECTIVES

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After you have studied this unit, you should be able to:

- explain the concepts associated with ethnicity and tribes in India;
- describe important external features of the tribe;
- discuss the relationships between tribe and ethnicity; and
- discuss the manifestation of ethnicity in tribes.

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## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

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In our previous we talked about the religious and language diversity. In this unit we shall introduce you to another aspect of Indian society, which are the ethnic and tribal social formations and their sheer diversity. We shall start by introducing you to the concepts associated with tribe and ethnicity in the Indian context, and discuss some of the important external features of the Indian tribes. We shall also introduce you to the relationship between tribe and ethnicity.

In this unit, we have described external features of the tribal groups. For this purpose, the unit first examines the concept of tribe in the Indian context and also concept associated with ethnic relations. Next, the unit classifies tribes in India by their geographic distribution, racial and linguistic affinities and demographic features. It also discusses the issue of isolation from and interaction with other groups. Further, it describes economic pursuits followed by various tribal populations. These external features of their social structure act like boundary markers and give the tribes an identity. Finally, the unit also describes the socio-economic changes affecting social structure of these groups and manifestation of ethnicity.

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## 8.2 TRIBES IN INDIA

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In India, 705 groups had been recognised as scheduled tribes in the census year of India 2011. They formed approximately 8.6 per cent of the total Indian population. In absolute numbers, according to 2011 census, their population was 10,42,81,034. Who are these tribal people?

The term tribe is derived from the Latin word 'tribus'. Earlier Romans used this term to designate the divisions in the society. Later use of the term suggests that it meant poor people. The present popular meaning in English language was acquired during the expansion of colonialism, particularly in Asia and Africa. The present popular meaning of a 'tribe' in India is a category of people, included in the list of the scheduled tribes. Tribal populations are relatively isolated and closed groups, forming homogeneous units of production and consumption. Being backward in economic terms, they were and are exploited by the non-tribals. Let us examine how the category of people, known as the scheduled tribes, came into being.

### 8.2.1 Ancient and Medieval Periods

In none of the Indian languages there was a term for tribes. In earlier times, they were known by their specific names such as the Gond, the Santhal, the Bhil, etc. In modern Indian languages, new words like *Vanyajati*, *Vanvasi*, *Pahari*, *Adimjati*, *Adivasi*, *Anusuchit jati*, have been coined to designate the people called as tribe. Though not much work on the history of tribes has been done, the names of tribes like the Kurumba, the Irula, the Paniya in South India; the Asur, the Saora, the Oraon, the Gond, the Santhal, the Bhil in Central India; the Bodo, the Ahom in North-East India, occur in old classical Indian literature. Some of the tribal populations, like the Gond in Central India, the Ahom in North-East India, had large kingdoms. The Banjara, a nomadic trading community, covered a wide tract in Western and Central India. In brief, in ancient and medieval periods of

India it appears that the so-called tribal populations interacted with other populations in a variety of ways in the region of their habitation.

### **8.2.2 During the British Period**

The modern phase of the tribal history begins with the advent of the British. The British were keen to establish their rule in all parts of the country and were also looking for resources for their industries. In the process, vast areas of India were opened up and brought under centralised administration. They not only levied new rents for land but also made new land settlements. The areas, which were relatively secluded but rich in natural resources, experienced entry of a new variety of people, namely forest contractors, labourers, officials, neo-settlers, moneylenders etc. In many places the indigenous populations resented new regulations, new levies and new settlers in their areas and they rebelled.

At this stage for a variety of reasons, the British thought of protecting the indigenous populations by bringing a regulation in 1833. Certain parts of Chotanagpur were declared as non-regulated areas, which meant that normal rules were not applicable on such areas for example, outsiders were not allowed to acquire land in these areas. The administrators of such areas acquired vast discretionary powers. Later on this policy was extended to other areas too. In 1874, the British passed Scheduled Area Regulation Act and in due course the idea of a distinct and special arrangement in such areas got accepted. In the meanwhile, the concept of a tribe as a social category was emerging, which was meant to distinguish them from the Hindu, the Muslim, and other organised religious groups through an over simplified assumption that the tribes were animist while the latter were not. By the Act of 1919, the idea of wholly excluded area and partially excluded area emerged for some of the areas where tribal populations were concentrated. These areas were excluded from the application of normal rules. The 1935 Act incorporated these provisions and a policy of reservation emerged for the people so notified for it.

While these policies were emerging, the British Government was still not sure how to classify the people, who were neither Hindu nor Muslim. Their confusion is apparent from the terms they used to classify tribal populations in their decennial censuses. In different censuses the terms used were animists, hill and forest tribe, primitive tribes, and tribe.

### **8.2.3 Period after Independence in India**

Following Independence, the policy of protection and development for the population identified as tribe has been made into a constitutional obligation. A list of tribes was adopted for this purpose. In 1950, this list contained 212 names, which was modified by successive presidential orders. In 2003, the list contained 533 names. The Constitution, however, does not provide a definition of a tribe. The people who have been listed in the Constitution and mentioned in successive presidential orders are called scheduled tribes. This is the administrative concept of a tribe.

To get a better understanding of the what tribe and ethnicity is we will turn our attention to some of the concepts surrounding ethnicity and tribe.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- i) Write how the idea of scheduled tribes has emerged in Independent India?

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## **8.3 CONCEPTS ASSOCIATED WITH ETHNICITY**

In this section we will define the following terms. (1) Ethnic and ethnic groups, (2) ethnicity, (3) ethnic identity, (4) ethnic boundary and (5) majority and minority groups.

### **8.3.1 Ethnic and Ethnic Group**

The term 'ethnic' is derived from the Greek word 'ethno' meaning 'nation'. It was originally used to denote primitive tribes or societies that formed a nation on the basis of their simplistic forms of government and economy.

But sociologists and social anthropologists use the term ethnic in a wider sense, based on their studies of pre-colonial and plural societies. Their studies revealed the coexistence of many groups that can be termed 'ethnic' within a nation. So in the course of time, ethnic has come to mean that which pertains to a group of people who can be distinguished by certain features like race, language or any other aspect of culture.

Ethnic group, is, therefore, defined as a cultural group whose members either share some or all of the following features — a common language, region, religion, race, endogamy, customs and beliefs. Members may also share a belief in common descent. On the basis of this definition we may say that the Jews, Negroes, Japanese, Muslims, Munda, Oraon all form distinct ethnic groups. Ethnic group thus refers to a group of people who share some common physical and/or socio-cultural characteristics.

Here we may ask the question; why is it so important to understand the concept of ethnic groups in the context of our examination of ethnic relations? We may say it is important because ethnic group defines an individual's social personality. It is formed on the basis of cultural and racial uniformity. The essence of this group lies in the individual's feeling of belongingness to it because of cultural association shared with other members. Birth determines incorporation into these groups, thereby making membership relatively restrictive, however, exception to this rule exists, for instance, in the form of conversions. Conversions constitute an exception to this rule. Conversion, literally, means change into another form. The most popular example of conversion is religious conversion.

Conversions pose a problem in group-identification and boundary maintenance. That is, in situations, where members of one group have become members of another ethnic group, there develops a problem regarding the allegiance of these converted members to either of these ethnic groups.

### 8.3.2 Ethnicity

Ethnicity refers to the interrelationships between ethnic groups. Thus the phenomenon of ethnicity becomes more pronounced when viewed at an interactional level. Cohen (1974) defines ethnicity as a process of “interaction between culture groups, operating within common social contexts”.

Though ethnicity is manifest in intra-ethnic relations, it becomes more apparent in inter-ethnic situations, as the very essence of ethnicity stems from the need to establish ethnic identity.

### 8.3.3 Ethnic Identity

Ethnic identity reflects both ‘likeness’ and ‘uniqueness’. On the one hand, it reflects on what the members of an ethnic group hold in common, and on the other hand, it differentiates them from other ethnic groups. The following is a diagrammatical representation of some of the factors of ethnic identification as arranged around the ‘self’.

NATIONALITY  
LANGUAGE  
RELIGION  
REGION  
RACE  
TRIBE/CASTE  
SELF

The order of arrangement of tribe and caste may vary from one social context to another or from one society to another depending on the issue. For example, in India, tribe or caste happens to be an important form of ethnic identification

### 8.3.4 Ethnic Boundary

Ethnic boundary refers to a social boundary, which does not always correspond to territorial boundary. The individual defines one self through one’s ethnic identity whereas ethnic boundary defines the social limit of the ethnic group. A dichotomisation of “others” as strangers, as member of another ethnic group, has two implications:

- i) The recognition of one’s own social boundaries (in group and out group) and
- ii) The limitation of common understanding and mutual interest. People outside the boundary are not expected to have a common understanding and interest.

### 8.3.5 Majority and Minority Groups

The study of ethnic groups incorporates both the majority and the minority groups. The term ‘majority groups’ refer to the numerical representation of persons in a

group and its control over economic and political resources. Usually it has been noticed that one ethnic group appears to be in dominance over other ethnic groups. However, we cannot overlook the internal disparities that exist within each ethnic group in terms of economic status. That is, certain sections in the minority group may enjoy majority status and vice-versa, in which the group may occupy either minority or majority status as a totality.

There exists a relationship of inequality between the majority and minority groups. The dominant group or the majority group enjoys numerical strength and control over economic and political resources. This group has all the privileges and advantages. The minority group on the other hand consists of people who are immigrants to the host society. Their numerical strength is low and they are in a subordinate position to the majority group, in relation to control over the limited resources.

The co-relation between numerical strength and control over economic and political resources is a point of argument. History provides many evidences of minority dominance over mass majority, for example; the British colonialism in India and the domination of a White minority on the Black majority in South Africa during the days of apartheid. These instances reveal that the myth surrounding the 'minority group' concept, as being a group, which is subjected to dominance and inferior status because of its low numerical strength, is not true. As it is obvious, a group having control over political and economic resources irrespective of its numerical strength becomes a 'majority minority'.

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## **8.4 FEATURES OF TRIBES IN INDIA**

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In this section we will understand features of tribal society in terms of their physical, demographic, linguistic attributes and their interaction with others.

### **8.4.1 Geographical Distribution**

Considering the widespread distribution of tribes all over the country, it is necessary to group them into broad geographical regions. On the basis of ecology, it is possible to group them into five distinct regions namely, Himalayan region (with tribes like the Gaddi, the Jaunsari, the Naga, etc.), Middle India (with tribes like the Munda, the Santal, etc.), Western India (with tribes like the Bhil, the Grasia), South Indian Region (with tribes like the Toda, the Chenchu, etc.) and the Islands Region (with tribes like the Onge in Bay of Bengal, the Minicoyans in Arabian Sea).

### **8.4.2 Racial and Linguistic Affinities**

The tribal populations in India have a long history. They have migrated to distant places in pre-historic and historic times and therefore, we find that almost all races of the Indian population are represented among them. Physical features do indicate the stock to which a population belongs and may also throw some light on their migration, the route they may have taken, and the traditions they carry with them.

#### **8.4.2.1 Three Main Racial Divisions**

Here, we discuss, in broad and general terms, the racial features and linguistic affiliations of Indian tribes.

On the basis of racial features, Guha (1935) considers that they belong to the following three races.

a) **The Proto-Australoids**

This group is characterised by dark skin colour, sunken nose and lower forehead. These features are found among the Gond (Madhya Pradesh), the Munda (Chotanagpur), the Ho (Jharkhand), etc.

b) **The Mongoloids**

This group is characterised by light skin colour; head and face are broad; the nose bridge is very low and their eyes are slanting with a fold on the upper eye lid. These features are found among the Bhotiya (Central Himalayas), the Wanchu (Arunachal Pradesh), the Naga (Nagaland), the Khasi (Meghalaya), etc.

c) **The Negrito**

This group is characterised by dark skin colour (tending to look like blue), round head, broad nose and frizzy hair. These features are found among the Kadar (Kerala), the Onge (Little Andaman), the Jarwa (Andaman Islands), etc.

#### 8.4.2.2 Linguistic Affiliations

Linguistically the situation is far more complex. According to a recent estimate the tribal people speak 105 different languages and 225 subsidiary languages. This itself indicates what great variety is found among them. For languages are highly structured and in many ways reflect the social structure and the values of the society. However, for the purpose of clarity and understanding, the languages have been classified into a number of families. The languages spoken by the tribes in India can be classified into four major families of languages. These are, with examples, as follows:

- 1) **Austro-Asiatic family:** There are two branches of this family, namely, Mon-Khmer branch and Munda branch. Languages of the first branch are spoken by Khasi and Nicobari tribals. Languages of Munda branch are Santhali, Gondi, Kharia, etc.
- 2) **Tibeto-Chinese family:** There are two sub-families of this type, namely Siamese-Chinese sub-family and Tibeto-Burman sub-family. In extreme North-Eastern frontier of India Khamti is one specimen of the Siamese-Chinese sub-family. The Tibeto-Burman sub-family is further sub-divided into several branches. Tribals of Nagaland and Lepcha of Darjeeling speak variants of Tibeto-Burman languages.
- 3) **Indo-European family:** Tribal languages such as Hajong and Bhili are included in this group.
- 4) **Dravidian family:** Languages of Dravidian family are, for example, spoken by Yeruva of Mysore, Oraon of Chotanagpur.

This broad classification does not necessarily mean that there is mutual intelligibility among the speakers of different languages within a family. For example, among the Naga there are at least 50 different groups, each one of them has a speech of its own and quite often the speakers of one speech do not understand the speech of others.

Let us now turn to the population-size of tribes in India.

### 8.4.3 Demographic Features

At one time, the Toda of the Nilgiri were facing biological and social crisis because their number had fallen to a mere 475 and there were not enough females in reproductive age. Biologically it was facing extinction, socially it could not maintain its various institutions. In the same predicament are, the Birjia in Bihar, the Sentinelese and the Great Andamanese in Andaman Islands. Their total population are just in two digits.

On the other side, there are tribes like the *Gond* of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, the Bhil of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and the Santal of Bihar, Orissa, and West Bengal whose population runs into lakhs. There are a very large number of groups which fall in the intermediate category like the Dubla in Gujarat, the Chenchu, the Irula in South, the Boro-Kachari in the North-East. Then there are small tribes like the Toda and the Kota in the Nilgiris, the Birhor in Bihar, etc. The larger tribal groups are spread over into a number of states and, therefore, the same group is subjected to different policies and programmes, which ultimately influence their social structure. For example, the Kurumba, a small tribe in south are distributed in Kerala, Tamilnadu and Karnataka states. Not only are they called by different names in different states but also are exposed to different development programmes. In each state they are given education in the official language of the State. In Kurumba's case, it is Malayalam, Tamil and Kannada in respective states. Their own language has become less important. This has far reaching consequences for their society. Besides many other changes, they have become endogamous, that is, they marry within the Kurumba group of the State of their habitation. Clearly the factors of isolation and interaction are quite crucial in describing social structures of tribal populations.

### 8.4.4 Isolation From and Interaction with Other Groups

The issue of isolation and interaction is of critical importance in understanding social formation among the tribes. The idea that the tribes have always remained isolated is not based on history. Migrations in India were frequent for political, economic and ecological reasons. We have already stated that some of the tribes had formed large kingdoms. Even the most isolated groups were part of a wider network of economic relations.

#### Some examples of Interaction

- i) The Jenu-Kuruba, a food gathering tribe of Karnataka, were adept in catching and training elephants and perhaps were the main suppliers of elephants to the temples as well as to the armies of different states. Many of them supplied various kinds of forest goods within their region and in return took the goods of their necessity. Many of them paid taxes, rents or whatever was levied on them. Some also participated in the regional religious practices. (For more details on Jenu Korba see the video program, 'simple societies' produced by the Electronic Media Production Centre of IGNOU).
- ii) The Toda of the Nilgiri in Tamilnadu worshipped the deity at Nanjangud in Karnataka, some 140 km away across dense forest. Those who practised settled cultivation had varying degrees of contact with neighbouring peasants and castes.

- iii) The Munda in the nineteenth century were socially and economically integrated with the neighbouring populations.

There are tribes, which are fully integrated with the wider social, economic, political and religious framework, and others are so integrated in varying degrees. Then, there are tribes playing the role of bridge and buffer to their neighbours. Let us see what this means.

**The Role of Bridge and Buffer**

In North-East India, the tribes played the role of bridge and buffer to their neighbours. That is some tribes allowed two powerful neighbours to interact through them, that was the role of a bridge. In some other cases they kept the two powerful groups separated, that was the role of buffer.

The Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh practised highly specialised terraced cultivation. They were also good in making swords, knives and in weaving. The Dafla, a neighbouring tribe, took rice, swords, knives and textile from them and in return gave them pigs, dogs, fowls, tobacco, cotton, etc. Often they fought because of uneven exchange for the goods they transacted.

There are only a few tribes, which are totally isolated like the Jarwa and the Sentinelese in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In their case, too, it appears that their isolation is a later development, as they are not the original settlers of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

For the people geographical distribution gives a sense of space and belonging to it. The features like racial, linguistic, demographic, and a group’s interaction with others give them an identity, which distinguishes them from others. These are elements that shape the institution of a society. After discussing these features, we will discuss now the economic activities of tribal populations in India.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- i) Give geographical distribution of Indian tribes. Illustrate each zone with suitable examples  
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- ii) Classify Indian tribes in terms of their physical features and languages spoken by them.  
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## 8.5 ECONOMIC PURSUITS AMONG TRIBES

On the basis of their economy, the tribes of India can be classified into the following seven categories.

### 8.5.1 Food Gatherers and Hunters

Food gathering, hunting and trapping animals were the first adaptations mankind made and it lasted for thousands of years before being taken over by animal husbandry and agriculture and then by industrialisation. The changes in human society were very rapid once human being learnt to produce food. The pace of these changes got accelerated with industrialisation. Now there are very few tribes on the mainland who live exclusively by food collection and hunting. However, the Cholanaiken of Kerala present a classical example of this kind of economy.

### 8.5.2 Shifting Cultivators

Several specialised techniques are used in this form of cultivation. Essentially, it means selecting a plot of forest land, cutting the trees and plants on it allowing them to dry and burning them, after which the seeds may be sown. This way a plot may be cultivated for a few years and then may be abandoned for several years. Such cultivation is widely practised in the tribal regions of North-East India. The Khasi of Meghalaya practise this form of cultivation. Of course, now they engage themselves in several other occupations. Shifting cultivation is practised by many tribes in Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, but as the restrictions on forests have increased and there is not enough land to shift, this form of cultivation has decreased considerably.

### 8.5.3 Settled Agriculturists

Settled agriculture is practised by a majority of tribal population in middle, western and southern regions of the country. It is the primary source of subsistence for them. However, the technique of cultivation practised by the tribes is generally simple. The tribes having a tradition of agriculture are being increasingly drawn into the economic, social, political network of the wider society.

### 8.5.4 Artisans

The number of tribes subsisting on crafts like basket making, tool making, spinning and weaving is small. Such tribes either combine these occupations with agriculture or may totally depend upon craft. Either way, they have to exchange their products for food articles through market or by establishing exchange relations with some other tribes. The Kota of the Nilgiris has exchange relations with the Badaga for agriculture products. The Birhor of Bihar make ropes and in the past were nomadic. The population of such groups is small. The members of the group learn the skill of the craft in the process of growing up. The craftwork is done at the family level but raw material may be collected at the community level. For example, the basket makers may go collectively for obtaining bamboos but basket making may be a family enterprise. Many tribes are known for their artistic skills of painting like the gond.

**Box 1: Gond Art**

Gond paintings are freehand drawings by the gond tribe of Madhya Pradesh. The art is known for its use of vibrant colours and geometrical lines and dots. They often depict trees, and animals, indicating their relationship with nature and animals. They were traditionally painted on walls and floors. They were typically drawn during significant events such as harvesting, sowing, or to indicate seasonal changes. They were also painted for important rituals such as marriage, birth, death etc. Now these paintings are also made for commercial purposes. And have found popularity among city dwellers. Famous Gond painter Janghar Singh Shyam's work was exhibited in places like New York, Tokyo and Paris.

**8.5.5 The Pastoralists and Cattle Herders**

The classical examples of the pastoralist tribe are the Toda in the Nilgiris and the Gujjar, the Bakarwal and Gaddi in Himachal Pradesh. Although the Toda have a fixed abode, in certain regions they move their buffaloes for pasture. The buffaloes are individually owned but certain tasks related to the buffaloes and their dairies are collectively done. Like artisans they too exchange the dairy products for other items of their use particularly agriculture products. In the past, the Toda had exchange relations with the Badaga.

**8.5.6 The Folk Artists**

There are a variety of groups who carve out a living for themselves by performing acrobatic feats, entertaining people and providing some services to their patrons. Some of them lead nomadic life and others inhabit villages but periodically move out to their clients. Movements are planned and organised. Movement is always performed in small units comprising a few families, closely related to each other. The essential feature of their economy is that their resource base is other groups of human beings. The Pradhan, a tribe of Madhya Pradesh, are the official genealogists to the Gond. Their women act as midwives to the Gond and also tattoo Gond girls. The Pradhan are dependent upon the Gond, but the visit of a Pradhan to his patron's house is an occasion for rejoicing, for recollecting the events of the intervening period since his last visit, recording of births etc. The Pradhan sing, recite poetry and are experts in story telling. They regale their patrons with ready wit.

**Activity 1**

Make a list of some notable visual tribal art forms in India. Share with the your list with fellow learners at the study centre.

**8.5.7 Wage Labourers**

At the turn of the present century large chunks of tribal territories came under plantations. Mining and industrial development also increased in tribal areas. Many of the tribal people had to leave their traditional occupations and seek

employment in these enterprises as wage labourers. The tribals of Chotanagpur were taken to North-East India to work on tea plantations. The Santhal have been employed in coal mines of Bihar. This was indeed a major change. From a subsistence economy they were pushed into cash-oriented industrial economy which had its impact on their society.

### 8.5.8 Recent Economic Changes

The economic scene in the tribal regions has been changing. The economic changes may be listed as follows:

- i) Forest resources have dwindled and forests have been increasingly brought under reservation. They are no more under the control of the tribal people except in certain areas of North-East India.
- ii) Tribal people have lost a lot of land to more experienced agriculturists, to industries, and for big projects like hydro-electric reservoirs.
- iii) A number of big industries like steel plants have been established in their areas. So, on the one hand, they have been displaced by such projects and, on the other, they have been given employment as wage labourers. Penetration of market economy resulted in the tribals producing for market rather than for meeting their own needs.
- v) Development measures are designed to promote settled agriculture and intensive cultivation.

All these and several other factors have made the tribal people more and more a part of the wider economic network. They now produce commodities for market and not for self-consumption. In the process their traditional skills, technology and organisation of labour have become redundant. They must learn new skills, have new technology and should have capital to produce. They are now less of a self-reliant people. All this requires different organisation of economic activities.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- i) Classify the tribes on the basis of their economic pursuits?

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## 8.6 MANIFESTATION OF ETHNICITY

Soon after Independence the most powerful manifestation of ethnicity in India was the demand for creation of state or province on linguistic basis. The State Reorganisation Committee was formed in 1956 and boundaries of the states were redrawn on the linguistic basis. This forming of linguistic states was a manifestation of ethnic identity. This process reinforced the regional and linguistic identity and ethnicity. Thus, the demand for separate state on various accounts

like ethnicity, language, etc. soon became a part of the political scenario. Various political parties were formed at the state level which were, by and large, identified with ethnic elements.

### **Jharkhand Movement as an Example**

The tribal belt of Central India comprising the portion of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa has seen the rise of the Jharkhand Movement, which agitated for the formation of a separate state for tribals and which they succeed in achieving. The Jharkhand Movement is a good example of politics of ethnicity. The movement drew its sustenance mainly from the growing discontent among tribals on account of their land alienation, exploitation and political neglect of their problems at the national level.

The principal arguments given for the demand of separate state were: the physical characteristic of the area is such as there is a large concentration of the tribals. Their mental make-up, language, culture and values are totally different from those of non-tribals. Also, the tribals felt that the welfare and developmental works both provided and carried out for them are pittance in comparison to the mineral wealth and forest resources exploited from the region. The tribals had a strong fear of losing their identity as they were in minority surrounded by the non-tribals.

The tribals were marginalised at all levels. This had generated tremendous frustration among them. This harsh reality had provided the ground for effective propaganda which had facilitated the growth of an internal solidarity and out-group antagonism. There was an antipathy among them towards the non-tribals or Dikus. Interestingly, the definition of Dikus has changed with changing context. Originally Dikus were Zamindars and their non-tribal employees. Later non-tribals of upper castes background were identified as such. As a result of this movement Jharkhand state was created in 2000.

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## **8.7 LET US SUM UP**

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In this unit we have tried to understand several terms associated with tribe and ethnicity. In trying to understand tribal society and ethnic formations and interrelationship among them it is important to first get a sense various features that define tribal communities. Tribes in India can be classified by their geographic distribution, racial and linguistic affinities, demographic features, isolation from and interaction with other groups and their economic pursuits. These features act like boundary markers and give them identity. They are also elements in giving shape to their social structure.

The tribal scene has been changing. They have lost control over their resources such as forest and land. There has been change in their economy. All round development efforts too have made their impact on their institutions. Lastly, we discussed the manifestation of ethnicity e.g. Jharkhand movements.

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## 8.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) To provide resources for their industries, the British administration began to reach different parts of Indian territory. In the process they faced rebellious protests on the part of tribal populations. In order to protect such groups, in 1833, they declared certain areas outside the limits of normal rules and regulations. In 1874, the British passed Scheduled Area Regulation to administer such areas. By 1919, people of these areas began to be recognised as different from the Hindu, the Muslim and other religious groups. The Act of 1935 provided a policy of reservation for the people notified as Scheduled Tribes. The Constitution of Independent India also maintains a list of Scheduled Tribes.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) On the basis of ecology, geographical distribution of Indian tribes can be grouped into five regions, namely (a) Himalayan region, with the Gaddi, the Jaunsari and the Naga tribes, (b) Middle India, with the Munda, the Santhal etc., (c) Western India, with the Bhil and the Grasia etc., (d) South Indian region, with the Toda, the Chenchu etc, (e) the Islands region, with the Onge and the Minicoyan etc.
- ii) In terms of their physical features Indian tribes can be divided into three racial divisions, namely, the Proto-Australoids, the Mongoloids and the Negritos. Examples of the first type are the Gond, the Munda and the Ho, of the second type are the Bhotiya, the Wanchoo, the Naga and the Khasi and of the third type are the Kadar, the Onge and the Jarwa.

Languages spoken by Indian tribes can be classified into four major families of language, namely, Austro-Asiatic family, Tibeto Chinese family, Indo European family and Dravidian. Examples of the speakers of the first type

are the Khasi, Santal and Nicobari, of the second type are Kha Bhotiya, Kachari, Dimasa, Angami and Singhpho. The examples of the third type are Hajong and Bhili and of the fourth type are Yeruva, Toda, and Oraon.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- i) On the basis of economic pursuits, Indian tribes can be classified into the following groups: (a) Food gatherers and hunters, (b) shifting cultivators, (c) settled agriculturists, (d) artisans, (e) the pastoralists and cattle herders, (f) the folk-artists and (g) wage labourers.

