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# UNIT 9 ETHNICITY AS A BASIS OF STRATIFICATION

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## 9.0 OBJECTIVES

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After going through this unit you should be able to:

- outline the different conceptions of ethnicity based on biological descent, cultural homogeneity and ethnic self consciousness;
- explain the rise of ethnicity with the help of cultural ethnicity and political ethnicity approaches;
- discuss the phenomena of ethnic stratification and ethnic nationalism; and
- differentiate between Nation and ethnic group and nationality and ethnicity and describe the rise of ethno-nationalism (with special reference to India)

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## 9.1 INTRODUCTION

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In the last three decades words like ethnic group, ethnic identity and ethnicity have become common place, being mentioned not only in academic analysis but also in the mass media. In fact, in recent times ethnicity is among the most common categories that present day human beings use to establish their ideas about who they are, to evaluate their experiences and behaviour and to understand the world around them. Although in some societies ethnic categories and ties are more important than others, yet ethnicity is among the most universal fundamental concepts of the twentieth century world. It is an omnipresent phenomenon in both developing and developed countries, past and present. The tribes, villages, bands etc., which until recently were considered the features of the third world societies only, are now becoming integral parts of new state structures even in the modern societies, being transformed into ethnic groups with varying degree of cultural uniqueness. As a consequence, the phenomenon of ethnicity has gained theoretical and investigative importance.

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## 9.2 ETHNICITY: HISTORY, DEFINITION AND ELEMENTS

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We will now discuss the history, definition and elements of ethnicity.

### 9.2.1 History of the Concept

The word ethnic has a long history. It is derived from the Greek word *ethnos* meaning nation which is not depicted as a political entity but as a unit of persons with common blood or descent. Its adjectival form *ethnikos* used in Latin as *ethnicus* referred to heathens, the 'others' who did not share the faith. In English, the term referred for a long time to some one who was neither Christian nor Jew, i.e., a pagan or heathen. In other words, ethnics were those 'others' who are not 'us'. By the twentieth century its meaning changed again with reassertion of its Greek roots indicating the end of the 'them vs us' idea, (*them* or the *others* being ethnics). Now it is used as a particular way to define not only others but also ourselves (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998).

Oommen (1990) using the French version of ethnics, namely, *ethnie* defines them as a people characterised by a common history, tradition, language and life style. However, he also adds the feature of 'uprootedness from home' to this definition. In other words, for him, ethnicity emerges when people are uprooted from their homeland due to conquest, colonization or immigration and diverse groups come into contact with each other in a new setting. If such displaced people are away from their homeland and yet continue to follow their 'native' life style, they are ethnics.

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## 9.3 EARLY CONCEPTIONS OF ETHNICITY

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A look at the literature reveals three popular conceptions of ethnicity: biological, cultural and psychological. The biological conception is based on a common *genetic* descent. In this sense, ethnicity has been treated as synonymous with race. In many earlier works (MacCrone, 1937; Dollard, 1937, Furnivall, 1972; Smith, 1965) biological factors have been considered to be the elements constituting ethnicity and emphasis was laid on the origins of race and racism in relation to colonialism. In this approach the cultural aspect of ethnicity was totally ignored. The second conception of ethnicity involved a new thinking which differentiated race from ethnicity. This view treated race as a *cultural* phenomenon (Burgess, 1978). Here the mere sharing of physical traits was not seen as a sufficient condition for defining an ethnic group. Rather, the symbolic differences among groups became the bases of ethnicity-with values, customs, historical back ground, life style, territory and most importantly, language and religion being the prominent symbols of ethnicity.

The third conception of ethnicity defines it in terms of the consciousness of a common identity. Both common descent and cultural distinctiveness, individually and together, were no longer considered enough to constitute ethnicity. Instead, *awareness* among the members of a group regarding their similarity to each other and differences from other groups was what gave them an ethnic identity (Patterson, 1953; Connor, 1978). What is *there* was not important but what is *perceived* and *believed* was seen as the basis of ethnicity. Simply put, sharing of physical, attitudinal, behavioural and cultural features was not considered sufficient to foster ethnic feelings. The group must also *perceive* themselves as distinct from others, that is, the members must define themselves as a we group.

### 9.3.1 Ethnic Groups

Paul Brass (1991) discusses three ways of defining ethnic groups: a) in terms of objective attributes, b) by reference to subjective feelings and c) in relation to behaviour. The first definition implies that there are some distinguishing *objective cultural features* that separate one group from the other-language, territory, religion, dress etc. All these are called *ethnic markers* through which distinctions between one ethnic group and another are emphasized between these are maintained. So, while the ethnic groups may interact with one another for the purpose of, say, economic activity, the objective ethnic markers ensure the continuity of separate group identity. The second aspect, i.e., presence of subjective feelings implies the existence of an *ethnic self-consciousness*. As mentioned earlier, at the base of ethnic affinity lies real or assumed common identity. The important thing to keep in

mind is that the fact of common descent is not as important as the belief in it. It is not what is that is critical but *what people perceive*. In other words, ethnicity is a subjective construct, it is how we see ourselves. The third dimension, namely, the behavioural one, points to the existence of concrete, specific ways in which ethnic groups do or do not behave in relation to, or in interaction with other groups. In this sense, the normative behaviour of an ethnic group may include practices related to kinship, marriage, friendship, rituals etc.

Thus, an ethnic group is a collectivity which is perceived by others in society as being different in terms of language, religion, race, ancestral home, culture etc., whose members perceive themselves as different from others and who participate in shared activities built around their actual or mythical common origin and culture. On the basis of these variables a group can be ranged from being barely ethnic to fully ethnic. It is a collectivity within a larger society characterised by elements like real or imaginary common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements such as kinship patterns, religious affiliations, language or dialect forms, etc. Also imperative is some consciousness of kind among the group members. Consequently, most definitions of ethnicity and ethnic groups focus on objective and involuntary external markers, as well as, subjective and voluntary internal consciousness as its major elements.

### 9.3.2 Major Elements of Ethnicity

Of the two major elements of ethnicity, namely, the presence of objective external markers and subjective awareness, the latter-“consciousness”-is considered more significant since genetic and cultural similarities are seen as the ‘givens’ of social existence. However, as I have discussed in an earlier article (Sabbarwal, 1992), this is only a partial explanation of ethnicity since it does not answer a fundamental question, namely, what creates this consciousness in the first place? Some like Kuper and Smith (1969) and Gastil (1978) hold that when different ethnic groups come into contact with each other and interact with each other ethnic consciousness or awareness arises. However, this too, is not a satisfactory explanation as mere contact between groups need not always result in ethnic awareness. To overcome this problem, a distinction, therefore, has to be drawn *cultural ethnicity* and *political ethnicity*.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Write a note on ethnic groups. Use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) Write a note on the political perspective on ethnicity. Use about five lines for your answer.

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## 9.4 CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

More recently, there have crystallized two major perspectives on ethnicity: anthropological and political. The *anthropological/cultural* approach to ethnicity refers to a belief in shared cultural values and practices. In this sense, ethnic group is identified in terms of cultural phenomena such as common customs, institutions, rituals, language etc. This conception of ethnicity is based on the functionalist view that people need a sense of belonging somewhere which gives them strength to sustain themselves in times of pressures and this is provided by the ethnic identity. It is held that with the emergence of urbanization, economic progress, technological advancement, mass education, mass media etc., the individual faces a loss of tradition and primordial identities. This, however, instead of making ethnic identities weaker, actually results in their reinforcement as in a mass society the individual feels the desperate need for some kind of identity which is smaller than the State but larger than the family.

### 9.4.1 Ethnicity and Functionalism

It is notable that functionalism did not always advance this idea. In fact, initially it held the view that 'obsolete' ascriptive collectivities like ethnic groups did not 'fit' in the modern societies. The assumption was that in universalistic and achievement-oriented modern industrial societies, ethnic and cultural differences decline, the society as a whole becomes increasingly homogenous and this results in the weakening of ethnic distinctions. Some scholars like Kerr *et al.* (1960), Rostow (1960) and Hyden (1983) attributed it to the homogenizing influence of market (economic) forces. Others like Gellner (1983) said that rise of nationalistic (political) tendencies unified the societies which ultimately resulted in the disappearance of cultural and ethnic differences.

#### Activity 1

Why does ethnicity not cease to exist in a modern society? Discuss with other students and knowledgeable persons. Note down your findings in a notebook.

Writers like Glazer (1975), however, have contended that not only does ethnicity *not* cease to exist in a modern society, but is actually 'revived' and what's more, the increasing importance of ethnic identities or *ethnicization* can be attributed to the very conditions of modernization. Similarly, Eisenstadt (1973), Murphree (1986) and Wallerstein (1986) point out that they see no visible signs of *de-ethnicization* in the modern world. Rather, one can witness a *resurgence* of particularistic tendencies. Sharma (1990) illustrates this clearly with examples drawn from the Indian society where despite technological, institutional, valuational and behavioural signs of modernization ethnicity reigns supreme. For instance, in terms of food, dress and interior decoration of one's home, being 'ethnic' is considered *chic* (fashionable). Similarly, a "modern" institution like electoral democracy has led to the reawakening of the primordial consciousness of religion, caste etc. In short, the later functionalist writings highlighted the persistence of ethnicity despite, or even because of modernization.



Vegetable Market in Kohima  
Courtesy : Prof. Kapil Kumar

## 9.4.2 Political Perspective in Ethnicity

More popular today, however, is the *political* perspective on ethnicity. It refers to the political awareness and mobilization of a group on ethnic basis, as a result of which certain groups *consciously* seek to assert their ethnicity, even exaggerating their ethnic characteristics to achieve the end of political autonomy or sovereignty. The argument is that the rise of capitalism has caused uneven development leading to reinforcement of parochial loyalties and ethnic self-consciousness. Most of the literature on ethnicity focuses on discrimination and highlights how the perception of unequal distribution of resources by the disadvantaged groups results in the rise of ethnic awareness among them. A minority group, for instance, in a culturally plural society may opt for political ethnicity when it is pushed to the wall by the majority group which tends to be oppressive in pursuit of its privileges. In such a case, minority groups may mobilize or even invent an ethnic identity in an effort to oppose discrimination. Groups may also exploit primordial loyalties for political reasons which may be used by them to advance their political interests and maximise their power. A key example of ethnicity being utilized for representing and advancing the interests of a group is its use in politics where ethnic groups employ ethnicity to make demands in the political arena for alteration in their status, economic well-being, educational opportunity, civil rights etc. Put simply, ethnicity is interest based and ethnic groups are interest groups.

Sharma (1996) has called these two categories *generic* and *emergent* ethnicity. In the generic connotation, it is an identity based on a set of objective cultural markers which help the members of a group differentiate themselves from other groups and be differentiated by the other groups as well. In this sense, an ethnic group is a *bounded cultural group* having certain distinguishing features separating it from other groups. What is highlighted here is the awareness of cultural diversity by different groups. However, when this awareness becomes consciousness of political differentiation, emergent ethnicity is born marked by a process of power struggle.

### Box 9.01

The origin and resurgence of ethnicity lie in intergroup contact, that is, when different groups come into one another's sphere of influence. Of course, the shape it takes depends on the conditions in that society. The second point is that ethnicity is used to meet the present demands of survival for the oppressed groups. When subjugated groups find it difficult to tolerate the dominance of others and make efforts to improve their position, ethnicity is generated.

## 9.5 ETHNIC STRATIFICATION

Stratification is a system whereby people are unequally ranked and rewarded on the basis of wealth, power and prestige. It is part of every society and may take various forms like class, gender, race and, of course, ethnicity. The earlier studies of stratification used to focus on the phenomena of caste and race while gender and ethnicity were treated as side issues. However, of late not only have ethnicity and gender been getting some attention in stratification analysis, but ethnic stratification is even replacing class as the foremost form of social division since now property relations tend to be determined by ethnic ranking instead of it being the other way round. The model of internal colonialism is used to analyse ethnic resurgence and conflicts by highlighting the dominant group's political control over, economic exploitation of and cultural domination over the minority groups, and their ideological justification of this unequal relationship. Ethnic stratification shares a lot of things with the other forms of stratification, such as, ranking, inequality, discrimination, exploitation etc. However, there is one crucial difference. Ethnic groups have the capability to acquire an independent nation, an option which is not available to class and gender groups.

### 9.5.1 Ethnic Nationalism

Membership of an ethnic group tends to determine a person's status in society. This can occur in two ways. Social rewards like money, prestige and power are often allocated along ethnic lines. Secondly, in most societies one or more ethnic groups dominate others in economic, political and cultural matters. Ethnic politics can, therefore, take the appearance of ethnic stratification resulting in the emergence of ethnic nationalism. As discussed

earlier, ethnic identity may sometimes be related to political necessities and demands. This happens when minority groups try to play the ethnic card in order to acquire a better deal for themselves in a plural society. However, some ethnic groups go a step further and demand a say in the political system or control over a piece of territory or even demand a national status, i.e., country of their own. If they succeed in achieving any of these objectives they become a nationality or a nation (Brass, 1991).

### 9.5.2 Nation and Ethnic Group

The concepts of nation, nation-state, nationality, national minority etc. arose with the rise of capitalism in Western Europe and spread to the rest of the world. Nation is derived from the Latin word *nasci* meaning to be born and Latin noun *nationem*, i.e., breed or race. It is a historically evolved, stable uniformity of languages, territory, economic life and psychological make up which can be seen in the form of a common culture. More importantly, it is a type of ethnic community which is politicized and has universally accepted group rights in a political system.

**Box 9.02**

Nation has a variety of meanings—country, society, state and even ethnic group. It has been defined as a country, or the inhabitants of a country united under a single independent government, a State. It is also defined as a people connected by supposed ties of blood which are generally observable in common interests and interrelations. The latter, interestingly, is also the definition of an ethnic group. Often nation and ethnic group are equated or nation is seen as a type of ethnic group characterized by a history or mythology of statehood or a strong desire for statehood. Reinforced by such myths, histories and aspirations nationalism often unites people for ethnic movements in search of higher socio-economic status, independence and autonomy. Thus, the desire of an ethnic community to possess or remember what they once had and wish to repossess, leads to the demands for autonomy and political sovereignty, thereby turning them into a national community.

Oommen (1997) holds that nation and ethnic group share many features but differ on a crucial point, namely, territory. An ethnic group becomes a nation only when it identifies itself with a territory. Contrarily, a nation becomes an ethnic community when the members are separated from their homeland. No single feature of ethnic groups can be identified as being more important than the others. Each gains importance in different situations. But a nation cannot be a nation without territory. Thus, he calls ethnic groups 'passive nations', groups with potential to become nations while nations are 'active ethnicity' as they emerge out of ethnic elements. Bacal (1997) too, offers the terms 'micro-nations' and 'macro-ethnies' for ethnic groups and nations, respectively supporting Oommen's emphasis on territory being the key factor in differentiating the two.

#### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Write on the nexus between nation and ethnic group. Use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) What is ethno-nationalism? Explain in about five lines.

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### 9.5.3 Nationalism and Ethnicity

Nationalism refers to the expressed desire of a people to establish and maintain a self-governing political entity. It has proven to be one of the most powerful forces in the contemporary world, both a creator and destroyer of modern states. Nationality and ethnicity are related, yet different. Ethnicity may become nationalism and nationalism is always based on real or assumed ethnic ties. Yet, at the heart of nationalism lie the three themes of autonomy, unity and identity. Autonomy implies an effort by a people to determine their own destiny and free themselves from external constraint. Unity means ending internal divisions and uniting, and identity involves an effort by a group to find and express their authentic cultural heritage and identity (Cornell and Hartman, 1998). Thus, nationalism is a form of ethnicity in which a particular ethnic identity is crystallized and institutionalized by acquiring a political agenda. Nations are created when ethnic groups in a multi-ethnic state are transformed into self-conscious political entities. Hence, it is the goals of sovereignty and self-determination that set nationalism apart from ethnicity.

#### Activity 2

Discuss the nexus between nationalism and ethnicity with students at the study centre. Also talk with people knowledgeable in the subject. Put down your findings in your notebook.

### 9.5.4 Development of a Nationality

According to Brass (1991) there are two steps in the formation of a nationality. First there is transformation of an ethnic category into a community which involves changes like creation of a self-conscious linguistic unity, formation of a caste association etc. This happens in the early stages of modernization in multi-ethnic societies where social divisions of various kinds are still prevalent. The second stage involves the articulation and acquisition of social, economic and political rights for the members of the group or for the group as a whole. When the group succeeds by its own efforts in achieving and maintaining group rights through political action and political mobilization, it goes beyond ethnicity and establishes itself as a nationality.

However, why does ethnicity become nationality? This question is answered by the *relative deprivation approach* which focuses our attention on the feeling of frustration caused by the differences between what people feel they legitimately deserve and what they actually get. Similarly, when subjugated groups fail to achieve success according to the norms established by the dominant group the nature of their response tends to be ethnic antagonism which may take the form of a) struggle of the indigenous people's right to their land and culture, b) efforts by minority groups to procure equal economic, political and cultural rights; c) competition by ethnic groups for obtaining scarce resources; and d) movements for a separate nation.

### 9.5.5 Ethno-Nationalism: The Indian Case

Sharma (1991) has described how ethnic antagonism has posed four serious challenges to the Indian state. These are:

**Casteism**-A curious mix of ethnic identity and modern interests in which the ethnic group uses the caste ideology to further its economic and political interests, e.g., a political party asking for votes of a particular caste group.

**Communalism**-the "unholy" alliance between religion and politics in which religion may be used for political or economic gains, e.g., the Hindutva concept used by the BJP.

**Nativism**-the 'sons of the soil' concept in which regional identities become the source of ethnic strife, e.g., the movement in Assam to expel the 'foreigners' from Bengal.

**Ethno-nationalism**-the transformation of an ethnic group to a nationality which may start demanding autonomous governance in a particular territory or even secession, separation and recognition as a sovereign nation, e.g., the movements in Kashmir and Punjab (Khalistan).

## 9.6 LET US SUM UP

The final question is under what conditions does ethnic diversity lead to conflict and

discrimination and when does it result in cultural affluence and social adaptability. Conceptually, ethnicity is a search for an identity by a group and a demand that this identity be publicly acknowledged. However, it also has a practical aim for that group, namely, the demand for progress, for a rising standard of living, for a more effective political order, greater social justice and of playing a part in the large arena of the world politics of exercising influence among the nations.

Ethnic lines will not disappear in the near future and ethnicity will persist. Ethnic behaviour, attitudes and identities have been, are being and will be determined by not only what goes on among the ethnics themselves but also by the developments in the larger society and by how society treats ethnics. In most multi-ethnic societies the various ethnic groups vary in wealth, power and status and ethnicity is a major factor in stratification despite weakening traditions. As a result, most individuals will continue to think of their ethnic group first when they examine their own identity. The solution is to harmonize the individual, ethnic and humanwide identities. All societies must create an environment which protects the right to ethnicity, strongly supports the concept of mutual respect and also works at making ethnic identity a relatively small part of a person's identity. The ethnic distinctiveness must not be given preference over the equally crucial issues of human individuality on the one hand, and identification with the national society on the other. A balance has to be reached so that ethnic resurgence does not endanger individual selfhood and national integrity and, in turn, individualism and nationalism do not pose a threat to ethnic identities.

## 9.7 KEY WORDS

<b>Cultural Ethnicity</b>	:	The anthropological way of defining ethnicity in terms of shared cultural values and practices.
<b>Cultural Markers</b>	:	Objective cultural features like language, religion, dress etc. which differences between groups are emphasised and distances maintained.
<b>Emergent Ethnicity</b>	:	When the cultural ethnic identity is used for political differentiation and gain.
<b>Ethnic Consciousness</b>	:	The subjective perception of a group's members that they are a collectivity different from others.
<b>Ethnic Group</b>	:	A collectivity which is perceived by others in society as being different in terms of language, religion, race, ancestral home, culture etc. whose members also perceive themselves as different from others and who participate in shared activities built around a real or imaginary shared descent and culture.
<b>Ethnic Nationalism</b>	:	The phenomenon of ethnic groups demanding a political and administrative autonomy, a national status or a country of their own.
<b>Ethnic Stratification</b>	:	The unequal distribution of financial, power and cultural resources on ethnic lines in a society.
<b>Ethnicity</b>	:	A shared (real or imagined) racial, linguistic or cultural identity of a social group.
<b>Generic Ethnicity</b>	:	An identity based on a set of objective cultural features.
<b>International Colonialism</b>	:	A concept used to describe political and economic inequalities between regions within the same society and the underprivileged status and exploitation of minority groups within a society.
<b>Nation</b>	:	A country or populace of a country connected supposedly by common blood ties and under a single government.
<b>Nationalism</b>	:	Expression of the desire of a people to establish a self-governing political entity
<b>Political Ethnicity</b>	:	Political awareness and conscious mobilization of groups on ethnic lines.



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## 9.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Bacal, Azril. 1997. "Citizenship and National Identity in Latin America: The Persisting Salience of Race and Ethnicity", in T.K. Oommen (ed.) *Citizenship and National Identity: From Colonialism to Globalism*. N. Delhi: Sage Publications.

Brass, Paul R. 1991. *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Theory and Comparison*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Burgess, M.E. 1978. "The Resurgence of Ethnicity: Myth or Reality", *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 1(3).

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## 9.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) An ethnic group has some objective culture features that separate it from other groups. Secondly it possesses an ethnic self consciousness. Thus an ethnic group is a collectivity which perceives itself as different from other and which perceives itself from being different in terms of language, religion, ancestral home culture etc.
- 2) The political perspective on ethnicity refers to the political awareness and mobilization of a group on an ethnic basis. On this basis certain groups consciously seek to assert their ethnicity even exaggerating their ethnicity to achieve political autonomy or even sovereignty.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Nation is a historically evolved stable uniformity of languages, temporary, economic life and psychological make up in the form of a culture. Thus nation is a type of ethnic community which is politicized and has rights in a political system. Nation and ethnic groups share many features but differ on territory. This an ethnic group becomes a nation when it identifies itself with a temporary.
- 2) Ethnic antagonism poses many threats to the state including, casteism, communalism and nativism. Above all the threat comes from ethno-nationalism which is the transformation of an ethnic group into a nationality. This is being attempted and has been attempted in India in the past.

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# UNIT 10 TRIBAL ETHNICITY : THE NORTH-EAST

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## Structure

- 10.0 Objectives
- 10.1 Introduction
- 10.2 Tribes and Ethnicity
  - 10.2.1 Distinguishing Features of Tribes
  - 10.2.2 Transformation of Tribes
- 10.3 Ethnic Composition of North-East
  - 10.3.1 Tribal Population of North-East
- 10.4 Social Stratification of Tribals in the North-East
  - 10.4.1 Mizo Administration
  - 10.4.2 Power and Prestige Among Nagas
  - 10.4.3 The Jaintias and Khasis
  - 10.4.4 Traditional Ranking Systems
- 10.5 Tribal Movements in the North-East
  - 10.5.1 The Naga Movement
  - 10.5.2 Tribal Policy in Tripura
  - 10.5.3 Tripura Struggle in Manipur
- 10.6 Mizoram
  - 10.6.1 Mizo Identity
- 10.7 Bodo Movement
- 10.8 Tribal Ethnicity as a Basis for Stratification
  - 10.8.1 Ethnic Movements
  - 10.8.2 Mobility and Ethnic Groups
- 10.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 10.10 Key Words
- 10.11 Further Readings
- 10.12 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 10.0 OBJECTIVES

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After reading and studying this unit you will be able to:

- Explain the relation between tribes and ethnicity;
- Outline the ethnic composition of the North-East;
- Discuss stratification of tribals in the North-East;
- Describe tribal movements in the North-East; and
- Delineate tribal ethnicity as a basis for stratification.

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## 10.1 INTRODUCTION

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The term tribe, which is of general use in anthropology sociology and related socio-cultural disciplines as well as journalistic writings and day-to-day general conversation, has attracted a lot of controversy about its meanings, applications and usages. For one thing the

term has come to be used all over the world in a wide variety of settings for a large number of diverse groups. This diversity and the fact that all the groups referred to have been undergoing varied changes while the term has remained more or less fixed has made the task of providing a definition rather unmanageable.

## 10.2 TRIBES AND ETHNICITY

According to the Macmillan dictionary of anthropology, the term has passed into general usage as a synonym for a primitive group. Related to this is the anthropological neo-evolutionary usage wherein the term figures as part of the ascending order (1) band. Mainly confined to hunting and food gathering society characterized by simple co-operation (2) tribe-referring to communities of subsistence with limited exchange between communities (3) chiefdom-related to more advanced horticulture or pastoralism with the beginning or social division of labour and constitutionalised authority and (4) state in which there are classes based on exploitation, centralised monopoly of force, and. Mobilization of surplus product .

In the context of Africa, E.F. Evans Pritchard used the term tribe to refer to a distinct politically organised unit of the wider Nuer linguistic and cultural group. Thus here the term is used to distinguish tribal from a political organization from a state as well as from the wide cultural group of which such an organised unit is a part. In the context of India, a number of earlier British colonial ethnographers used the term tribe not only to refer to distinct 'primitive' socio-cultural groups but also to castes, without making any real effort to distinguish between tribes and castes. Risley, Lacy, Elwin, Gignon, Talents Sedgwith, Martin were some of the more primitive among the ethnographers.

A. V. Thakkar who wanted to emphasize the autochthonal character of tribals (not necessarily true, for many had traditions of migration to the area they lived in) called them as a aborigines or aboriginals, implying thereby that their Hindu and other neighbours were latecomers to the areas. G.S. Ghurye on the hand, called them backward Hindus to emphasize the religious and cultural overlap between the tribals and neighbouring Hindu peasants. However, it is only after the independence of India in 1947 that political and scholarly concern for providing a more systematic definition of the term tribe and to distinguish clearly the tribals from the peasant became more pronounced.

Dube while pointing out the lack of precision and unsatisfactory nature of attempts to define the term tribe in India content, notes that of late the usage has 'tended to be restricted only to the autochthonous; the aboriginal and the premature groups. At no stage, however, we had a set of clear indicators of tribalness' (Dube 1977:2). He further notes that popular definitions mostly see in the tribes some, if not all of the following characteristics. They are original or oldest inhabitants, live in relative isolation in hills and forest, have a shallow sense of history, remembered upto five to six generations, have a low level of techno-economics development, stand out from other sections of society in cultural ethos, are non hierarchic and undifferentiated if not egalitarian. Although none there criteria are fully satisfactory, yet, Dube finds, distinctions between tribes and non-tribes and 6.9 percent of the country is classified as tribal. Since the classification is influenced by political consideration and includes groups known to the non-tribals and excludes others known to be tribals it has failed to satisfy the scholars as well as those excluded from the list. Finding the debate over the definition of tribe. Still Dube (1977:4) suggests it may be best now to view it as an ethnic category defined by real or putative descent and characterized by a corporate self-identify and a wide range of commonly shared traits of culture.. racial, religious and linguistic groups can also acquire ethnic character and it is necessary for us to consider tribal ethnicity alongside the ethnicity of such groups.

### 10.2.1 Distinguishing Features of Tribes

On the scholarly level the distinguishing features of tribes are emphasized in comparison to caste. It is assumed that tribes and castes present two different kinds of social organisations, attributes like hereditary, division of labour, hierarchy, principle of purity and pollution, civic, and religious disabilities, regulating castes; while tribes function purged of these factors. Similary in terms of governance of social organisations kinship, leanage clan are paramount in tribal societies.

While inequality dependency and subordination highlight caste societies. Similarly in terms

of this contrast tribes do not differentiate sharply as caste groups do between the utilization and non-utilization function of religion. Tribal society is seen as more homogeneous in contrast to society which are more homogeneous. Tribal societies are seen to be segmental in character with distinct customs, rituals taboos and trace their origin to common territory, ancestor etc. However, this ideal distinction does not exist in India while some may be marked on either end of a continuum, the majority of tribal groups stand somewhere in the middle possessing a number of diverse elements. The feature common among them which has been emphasised by Betilla relates to 'that they all stand more or less outside Hindu civilization.

Bailey tries to explain this distinction in terms of the relationship of a community with land. 'The larger the population of a given society which has direct access to land, the closer is that society which has direct access to land, the closer is that society to the tribal end of the continuum.. the larger is the proportion of people whose right to land is achieved though a dependent relationship the nearer that society comes to the caste role, (c.f. Chanana 1994: 170).

While Surajit Sinha criticised this criterion of Bailey and gave his own distinction, 'it (Tribe) is isolated in ecology, demography, economy, politics.. from other ethnic groups. This isolation generates, and in turn is bolstered by a strong in group sentiments. .. Viewing ones culture as autonomous with reference to those of other groups and consequently disconnections from the great traditions of Indian civilizations in terms of objective reality and in terms of subjective awareness, a value of system of equality, closeness of the human, natural and supernatural world, lack of systematization of ideas, a sophisticated stratum of culture, ethical religion, and puritanic asceticism. In contrast caste is seen as 'typically connected heterogeneous and stratified and is characterized by multiethnic residence in the local community: inter-ethnic participation in an economy (c.f. Channa 1994: 171).

### 10.2.2 Transformation of Tribes

A major discussion on tribal society relates to the transformation of tribes to caste and their gradual absorption in the caste structure. This process largely undertaken through the process of:

- i) Adoption of technology
- ii) Sanskritization
- iii) State formation
- iv) Hindusation
- v) Language
- vi) Religion

This is followed by the transformation of tribes to peasant and socially differentiated societies.

However, this approach ignores the study of tribe as they are and as communities. To resolve this crisis these days attempts, have been made to study the problem of tribals from the concept of ethnicity in order to have deeper insight into inter-group relations and how the tribals perceive themselves in contrast to the others. 'The key feature of this concept are the identification and labeling and contrast applied to groups and categories of people.. study of self, identify systems, stereo typing class, systems, systems of recourse competition systems of political and economic domination and change.. cultural persistence and the construction of boundaries that both separate and bind together people in a myraid of ways.

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## 10.3 ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF NORTH-EAST

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The North-East India is a well defined region and is characterised by a diverse and heterogeneous, geographical economic and cultural tapestry. The region represents 'an ethno-cultural frontier, encompassing much of India's rich but lesser known Mongloid heritage, a complex transition zone of linguistic racial and religions streams. It is also a unique bio-geographic frontier where the mingling of India, Sinic and Malaysian-Burmese strains have produced a treasure house of floral and faunal bi-diversity' (Verghese 1994:2).

However, its role as a 'bridge and buffer' region changed after the partition which physically separated the North-East from the rest of India. Now it has virtually 3000 km. Of international borders touching China, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Bhutan and is linked to the rest of India by a narrow corridor. It covers an area of over 2.55 lakhs. The total population of the region in 1991 was 314 lakhs representing 3.73% of the country's total population (Verghese 1994: 2).

It is composed of seven states Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura. In terms of its terrains two sub-regions can be differentiated. These are a) the plains of the Brahmaputra, Barak, Imphal rivers, and b) the vast mountainous terrain covering almost 72% of the area. The states of Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Meghalaya and Assam are largely hilly, while Assam, Manipur and Tripura are encompassed by the plains. The division between the tribal and non-tribal population too takes place along these lines. While the tribals who constitute almost 6 million inhabit almost 80% of the hilly states of Meghalaya, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh (with the exception of Assam), the non-tribals inhabit the plains. The majority of the tribals are of Mongoloid origin while the plains people trace their origin to the Caucasoid who migrated in different epochs.

### 10.3.1 Tribal Population of North-East

However, the tribal population of the North-East displays a great deal of heterogeneity and diversity. There are more than hundred tribal groups with different language, rituals, beliefs religions and cultural patterns. Similarly out of the 325 languages listed in the people of India, Vol. IX series, the largest number belong to the Tibeto-Burman family and 175 north-east communities are shown speaking them. This heterogeneity is also reflected in the types of customs prevailing, specially contrast between the matrilineal and patrilineal tribes. The similarities between the different tribal groups relate to their preservation of traditional economic patterns, indulging in shifting cultivation, social and cultural patterns etc. Similarly the manner of their response to modernization and development of ethnic consciousness gives them a bonding of kind with each other. The composition of different North-Eastern states are:

- i) The state of **Mizoram** has almost 94.26% of tribal population. The oral traditions of Mizo history show the emergence of the Mizo ancestors from a cave or rock known as Chunlung in distant China from where they moved through Tibet, into the Hukwang valley in Burma and finally entering the Lushai hills in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, the Mizo's maintained their isolation for a very long time finally becoming a part of the British empire in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The term Mizo means hill men and is a generic term which encompasses almost fifteen tribes (e.g. the Lushais, Ralte, Hmar, Pawis or Pols, Laker ses) who have got together under the rubric of the single Mizo identity. The two important factors which facilitated this process were adoption of christianity and the Luesi dialect; written with the roman script.

Mizoram consists of two cultural sub-regions, the first influenced by Christianity constitutes the Lushai hills area which include most of the Mizo groups. The second region is inhabited by the Buddhist chakmas and Maghs and the Hindu influenced Riang who inhabit the western belt bordering the Chittagong Hill tracts (Verghese 1994: 135:165; Chib 1984: 132-142; Singh 1998:19).

- i.) The state of **Nagaland** is dominated by 88.61% of tribals. Naga is a generic term roughly meaning warrior for a cluster of thirty-two tribes, five of who reside in Burma while the others are scattered in Nagaland (sixteen), Manipur (seven), Tirap in Arunachal Pradesh and the North Cachar and Karbi Anglong district of Assam. The important tribes among the Nagas are the Angamis, Ao's Chakesangs, Sangtams, Metikumi, Yimchunge etc. The different tribes speak their own Tibeto-Burman dialects and use Nagamese as Christians which has played an important role in forging a sense of unity within them. Thus 'Ethno-Linguistically and culturally the individual Naga tribes maintain internal uniformity and intra-community homogeneity' (Verghese 1994:83-84). However, there has been a tendency for larger groups formations to take place with different tribes having some common traits coming together e.g. the Zemis, Langmei and Rongmei came together in 1974 as Zeliangrong. While the Chakrlu, Kheza and Sangtam formed the Chakesang and the Sapo, Kechue and Khury became the Pochury. (Chib 1984: 156-158, 160-162)

- iii) The state of **Meghalya** distinguished by its matrilineal society is one of the more comparatively peaceful states of the North –East. Almost 80.84% of the state is comprise by the tribals population. The dominant tribes living in Meghalya are the Garos, Khasis and the Jaintias. The Garo's who consist of the Bnodo Tibetan – Burman stock have been inhabitants of the Garo hills for the past four hundred years. They are divided into five matrilineal clans, the Sangmas and the Maraks being among the most prominent. The head of the clan or nokma family is the youngest daughter whose husband administers the property.

The Khasis belong to the Mon-Khmer group. They are also matrilineal groups with the mothers brother having an important control and dominance. The twenty-five Khasi principalities were divided into sixteen limas or territories, each under a Syiem or chief. This was followed by three semi-independent units under Lyndohs, five subedarships and a Wahadar. The Jaintias are also a generic term for the Syntax or Pnars. They are also matrilineal tribes and the inheritance which is handed on from uncle to nephew. The Jaintias have been strongly influenced by exposure to Hinduism and Islam. However, Christianity continues to have a strong presence in the area with almost 47% of the population following the faith. On the other hand revivalist movements like the Seng-Khasi have tried to bring back the traditional tribal customs, religion and festivals (Verghese 1994: 195-197; Chib 1984: 132-142).

- iv) Manipur is an ancient state of the North-East. The name Manipur came into prominence in the eighteenth century under the King Garib Nawaz when Vaishnavism became the state religion. The important tribes dominating this area were the Meities, Marangs, Luwangs, Khumans, Among these the Hindu Meities are the most powerful and dominant tribe. They are probably of Tibeto-Burman origin and consist of seven clans locally called Salai: Ningthouja, Luwang, Khuman, Moirang, Angom, Khaba – Nganea and Chenglei. The other important tribal communities are Aimol, Anal, Angami, Chiru, Chothe, Gangte, Hmar, Kabui, Kacha, Koirao, Kioreng, Kom, Lamgang, Marram, Marring, Mao, Monsang, Moyuon, Sema, Tangkhul etc. However, these tribal groups are sub-divided into two broad general categories the Nagas and the Kukis or Kuki Chin as they are probably known since they inhabit the hilly terrain of Manipur, Cachar, Letha and Arakan hills of Burma. In Manipur almost 60% of the population is Hindu, while the rest are Christians with a smattering of Muslims. (Chib 1984: 75-76, 86-87; Verghese 1984: 198-202).
- v) The state of **Arunachal Pradesh** previously known as NEFA constitutes of nearly 79.02% of tribal population. It has roughly 110 tribes of which twenty-six are quite popular. The prominent tribal groups being the Bafflas and Bagnis, Minyongs, Mishumis, Noctes, Apatanis, Miris, Akas, Shredukpens, Mikirs, Tangeas. Compared to the rest of the North-East, the Arunachal region has remained more remote, distant and isolated. (Chib 1984: 280-281, 288-295; Elwin 1959: 38-39)
- vi) The large state of **Assam** has around only 10.99% of tribals who inhabit the plains of Brahmaputra. The important tribes being the Ahoms, Bodo-Kachari, Raba, Mech, Jojai, Lelung, Mikirs, etc. A majority of them have been absorbed by Hinduism and reflect a transition from tribe to caste.
- vii) The state of **Tripura** is interested by six low ranges of hills from the northwest to the south east with an elevation between 100 to 3000 feet, the height increases from the southwest to the north east, while the margins are characterised by a strip of plains. There are a total of eighteen tribes largely belonging to the Tibeto-Burman groups. They are mostly Hindu with two Buddhist trines Chakma and Magh and six tea garden tribes. The important tribes are the Tripuris (who belong to the Bodo stock). Reang, Jamatia, Naotia and Halam.

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## 10.4 SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF TRIBALS IN THE NORTH-EAST

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The system of social stratification covers two main dimensions, the traditional system of stratification based on age, sex, kinship, etc. and the stratification emerging in the society as a result of the influence of a number of modernizing processes, education, industrialization, occupational differentiation, status hierarchies associated with

parliamentary democracy, government employment etc. which tend to stratify the society in terms of new class and status hierarchies modifying, reinforcing or undermining the traditional hierarchical divisions.

Traditional the tribe of the North-East have not been homogeneous egalitarian units. A number of factors have contributed to the development of the stratification system among the different tribal communities, most important being lineage, relationship to land, ritual status, position of economic, social and political dominance. The manner in which these factors are distributed leads to the formation and perpetuation of hierarchies within the various tribal groups and of the dominance of one tribal group over the other. Among the Garos, for example, the land meant for shifting cultivation and homestead plots was the property of seven lineages (Mahari) known as a king.

**Box 10.01**

The right of management of a king is vested in a particular family. Similarly, among the Khasi, while every member of the village of Reid could claim his right on the Ri land (Communal Land); the Ri Kynti were lands exclusively meant for some clans who enjoyed on it proprietary, hereditary and transferable rights. A village study of the area showed that 22 percent of the households controlled 70% of the village land, 54% of the household controlled the remaining 30% leaving no land at all to cultivate for as much as 24% of the household.

### 10.4.1 Mizo Administration

The Mizos had a well established system of administration through their chiefs. All activity in the life of a village involved around the chief and his house. Each village was ruled by its chief. It was the normal practice that the son of a chief was given on marriage a certain number of households by his father to set up their own village and become independent. Generally, the youngest or the eldest son depending on the clan would remain with the father to succeed him and all his property on death.

Among the Silos hereditary succession is through the youngest while for the Paite it is the eldest. In his work of administration the chief was assisted by council of elders known as Upa and Zawlbuk, the youngmen's dormitory. Upa were given preference in the choice of field for Jhums and favour at the time of feast or any other functions organised or patronized by the chief. The other important functionaries in the village were the Tlangau (the village crier), the Thirddending (the village Blacksmith) and the Puithiam (the village priest) each of these functionaries received a basetful of Paddy for performing professional work for the members of the village. Similarly the Zawlbuk was a impt institutional and played a very crucial role.

The Mizo chiefs also had certain rights and privileges like (i) Fathang (paddy tax); (ii) Schhiah (meat tax) (iii) Salam (fee in the form of fine) (iv) building and repairing of chiefs house whenever asked to do so. The chiefs also granted the privileges to a class of farmers called Ramhual and Salen who the first choice of jhum fields.

However after independence it was through the internal struggle, awareness, growth of urbanisation and emergence of middle class with its aspirations that the institution chieftainship was abolished giving rise to stratification on the basis of class and other new emerging interests (Thanga 1998:26-256).

### 10.4.2 Power and Prestige Among Nagas

Among the Nagas too this inequality if reflected through the unequal sharing of power, prestige and wealth, largely acquired through the feast of merit where, 'perishable food substances were redistributed which has social function to secure symbolic prestige, and honoured alliances during the war as well peace for example the Semas were differentiated in term of (i) Kekami (chiefs), (ii) Chockomi (chiefs associated) (iii) Mughamis (Orphans or commoner), Akahemi (chiefs dependents) and (v) Anukeshimi (chiefs fields cultivators). Haimendorf has shown how the institution of chiefs survived among the knyaks on the principle of purity of blood.

**Activity 1**

In which way does power and prestige among Nagas differ or is similar to from other groups in the North-East. Discuss with students at the study centre and put down your findings in your notebook.

Further Haimendorf's (1992: 29, 286-313, 315-323) elaborate study of Arunachal Pradesh drew attention to the prevalence of similar trends there too. The most important tribes of the region are the Apatanis who live in seven villages ranging in size from 160 to 1000 houses. The Apatanis are agriculturists and live in a rigidly stratification society. There are primarily two classes differing in status. There are primarily two classes differing in status: an upper class whose members owned a large part of the land and wield political power in class and villages, and lower class which used to consist of few men owning their own land as well as domestic slaves. The primary difference being between the Mate, Mite-Guth (Patricians) and the Mura, Cuchi (slaves/commoners).

#### 10.4.3 The Jaintias and Khasis

The Jantias too had a more elaborate stratification system. They were differentiated between.

- i) Raja (king),
- ii) Dolois (Governor),
- iii) Wahan Ch Nong (Village headman),
- iv) Myntries, Patas, Laskars, Sangat, Maji (who are commoners and include all categories of officials).

Tilput Nongbri has discussed an interesting aspect of the stratification system of the Tribals in the context of gender. She mentions that tribal customary laws like the non-tribal societies deny them equal right to property. This discrimination is specially meted out in the case of inheritance laws, where women are entitled only to maintenance rights and expenses. In matrilineal society too, in the context of land, a sharp distinction is made between 'ownership' and 'control'. Thus while ownership is passed on through women, the control rests with men e.g. the Khasi, Jaintia, Garo, Rabha etc. Similarly where women possess usufructory rights in the patriarchal societies, they are subject to a number of conditions like their remaining unmarried, having no brothers, being widowed and forced to marry a prescribed in. Similarly women face a bias in the allocation and management of common property resources. Women also face discrimination in matters of marriage and divorce. The practice of bride price by which women become almost like commodities is particularly delimiting. The women also face the problem of being treated as threats to their descent group and ethnic identity particularly in the context of the demographic repercussion of a women's marriage with the outsiders have made many men want to change the matrilineal system of inheritance to patrilineal thus weakening its base.

#### 10.4.4 Traditional Ranking Systems

All these examples show elaborate and varying traditional ranking systems conditioned by the particular ecological and historical circumstances of different tribes. The beginning of the colonial rule and its ending at the time of independence of the country led to a number of important changes which shook the carefully protected relatively isolated world of the North-East Tribals. These included linking up the tribals with colonial system of administration with meant opening up further towards. Shillong, Calcutta, Delhi and even London, the coming in of the Christian Missionaries, introduction of the market economy, the formalization and consolidation of status hierarchy within the tribes by the British for their administrative and political convenience, extension of protective discrimination and development schemes for backward areas and finally participation in the democratic process in independence India and resulting changes at various levels.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Write a note on Mizo Administration. Use five to ten lines for your answer.

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- 2) Discuss social stratification among the Jaintias and Khasis of North-East. Use between five to ten lines for your answer.

These led to a weakening of the traditional system of social stratification, the emergence of new socio-economic and political interests and linked disparities together with a growing emphasis on class position in society. Thus co-existing with ascribed status and both reinforcing and modifying it, the achieved status became a significant factor of increasing importance.

**Box 10.02**

The emergence of a new middle class, the contractors, middlemen, businessmen and the politicians operating at local, district, state or national levels, all tended to divide the society along class lines. However, those who held an economic and socially dominant positions traditionally were often able to exploit their initial advantage to obtain high ranked positions in the new setting as well. Thus all these interactions created a society broadly stratified and linked to political, economic and social trends outside the region, state and even nation.

At the same time these factors created also a need to preserve, protect and emphasize a distinct identity.

## 10.5 TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN THE NORTH-EAST

We need to bear in mind the unique geo-political and historical background of the tribal people of the North-East in order to understand the specificity and very different character of the tribal movements of this region from those of other areas. These background factors include:

- i) Because of their location of international borders, many of these tribal communities played the role of bridge and buffer communities and so had developed bonds with certain groups across the borders.
- ii) British colonial administration followed a policy of insuring economic social and political isolation on these tribes from the rest of the country. The tribal areas were categorized as excluded or partially excluded areas and contacts of the outsiders with

these areas were strictly regulated, particularly in the excluded areas where no outsiders could enter without obtaining a permit. Thus their areas not only remained unaffected by the political influence of the freedom struggle in the country, but also developed apprehensions about maintaining their own separate identity and political autonomy in relation to independent India.

- iii) Unlike the tribals of middle India, tribals in the North-East have throughout constituted an overwhelming majority (except in Tripura) and being free from exploitative economic and social contacts with their Assamese neighbours including alienation of their land and forests, failed to develop agrarian and millenarian movements which frequently characterised the tribals of other regions of the country.
- iv) Spread of the Christianity and mission education gave the tribals a distinctive sense of identity and made them apprehensive about their future in Independent India.
- v) Influence of the second world war as threatres of war came close to their habitat in the North-East.
- vi) Impending independence of India and resulting heightening of political consciousness and struggle.
- vii) After independence there was open unrestricted contact between the tribals and outsiders. A number of traders, refugees and other migrants began to settle in the area, acquiring land and resources. All these generated fears of being swamped by outsiders and loosing land, forests and other resources to the outsiders.
- viii) The impact of modernization on Tribal life and social institutions, especially the conflict between members of the growing middle class and traditional chiefs as well as dislocations of the traditional pattern of land control and land relations.

Depending on the particular circumstances and objective of the individual movements, many of these factors in different combinations affected the formation and development of the different tribal movements. Because of the characteristic conditions of their genesis, thrust of these movements has been largely political, centring on issues of 'identity and security', with 'goals ranging from autonomy to independence and means from



**Tribal Woman in North-East**

*Courtesy : Prof. Kapil Kumar*

constitutional agitation to insurgency'. Although a majority of the movements have also centred on issues of language, script and cultural revival, the same political struggle appears to have been reflected in these movements also. We will now look at some of the movements in detail to understand their specificity.

### 10.5.1 The Naga Movement

A large number of factors acted as catalysts for the Naga Movement. These were:

- i) fear of the losing special privileges bestowed upon them by the British
- ii) the danger of erosion cultural autonomy and district 'ethnic identity'
- iii) fear of losing the customary ownership of the hills.
- iv) The spread of Christianity
- v) Development of format education in the Naga Hills.
- vi) Reaction to the formation of complex political structures.

Though the Naga ethnic identity and the movement were sharply articulated after independence, the roots were sworn with the formation of the Naga Club in 1918 at Kohima. The first taken by the club was a memorandum submitted to the Simon commission in 1929 seeking the continuity of the direct British Administration of the hills and number of other issues. The memorandum was signed by representatives of most of the Naga tribes.

A very important role in the resurrection of Naga identity was played by Zapu Phizo, who had assisted the Japanese and the INA with the hope of getting help to form a sovereign Naga State (Verghese 1994: 85). There was a great deal of debate over what the Naga's wanted after the British left India. The issue centred primarily on autonomy Vs independence.

#### Box 10.03

The Assam Governor reached a nine-point agreement with the Naga National Council in Kohima on June 29, 1947. An agreement which too was not without its controversies specially the interpretation of clause 9. While the Naga's claimed it meant a right to self determination after ten years, the government felt that all aspects of the agreement had been subsumed and taken care off under the sixth schedule of the constitution. While a large number of members of the NNC were prepared to give this agreement a fair chance, a majority under Phizo were arrested, but after his release took charge of the NNC and conducted a 'plebiscite' on the question of Naga autonomy which on the basis of the opinion of a few thousands declared a 99% preference for Independence.

The Nagas boycotted the first General Election in 1952 and the District Council Scheme. This agitation took a violent turn when Phizo announced the formation of a Republican Government of Free Nagaland at 'Kautaga' on September 18, 1954. In this endeavor the moderate elements like Sakhrrie were completely outnumbered. Soon, he was assassinated and underground gorilla warfare began in earnest. The army was called out to aid the civilian government on August 27, 1955. Gradually the gorilla struggle lost momentum but the people continued to suffer acute hardship under harsh army control. This situation became a rallying point for the moderates who abandoned independence and discussed the possibility of a Nagaland within the Indian Union with full freedom to preserve and protect their heritage and way of life. A Naga Peoples' convention was called in Kohima in August 1957. It was a conglomeration of 1760 delegates representing all the tribes in the Naga Hills and the Tuensang district of NEFA. After a long deliberation, the council decided to seek a single Naga Hills - Tuensang administrative unit within the Indian Union. The NHTA was created as an autonomous district directly administered by the governor of Assam on behalf of the President. This convention was followed by two more conventions. The deliberation of the October 1959 convention led to a historic landmark agreement with the government of India in July 1960. Under the agreement the NHTA was to be redesigned as Nagaland and became an independent state in December 1963. Even as the elections took place to the assembly, the underground movement continued. Several inconclusive rounds of the talks were held between the underground leadership and the Government of India. A peace mission was set up in 1964 which had J.P. Narayan, B.P. Calika, Rev. Michael Scott and Shandkaro Dev as its members. All these activities and efforts finally culminated in the Shillong accord of November 11, 1975.

Under this agreement the underground accepted the constitution of India; deposited their arms, security forces halted their operations and gave enough time to the underground organisations to formulate other issues for discussion for the final settlement to take place. Though this accord brought peace to the area, a section of the underground under the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland set up in 1980 is still struggling for a sovereign state. (Doley 1998: 16-20; Verghese 1994: 87-85, 89, 90; Dhanda 1993: 482-485).

### 10.5.2 Tribal Policy in Tripura

Tripura represents an example of a state which despite being ruled by a tribal ruler followed policies which reduced its original tribal inhabitants to a minority. The state consisted of nineteen major tribes of which the Tripura is to which the ruler belonged were the most dominant. Due to a variety of historical reasons most tribals had come under the influence of Hinduism, particularly Vaishnavism. For economic reasons the Maharaja, who had zamindaris in the adjoining districts of Comilla, Noakhali and Chittagong, invited the Bengali peasants from there to develop settled agriculture in Tripura. They were known as Ziratia tenants and, they apart from promoting agriculture, generated much needed revenues for the state. For humanitarian considerations also the ruler allowed the Bengali refugees to settle in his kingdom and reclaim forest lands for cultivation. Similarly a number of entrepreneurs were encouraged to establish tea gardens. Bengali being the language of the administration a number of Bengali professionals and white collared workers, teachers and others also got settled in the state.

#### Activity 2

Evaluate through discussion with other students at the study centre, the tribal policy in Tripura. Put down your findings in your notebook.

This process changed the demographic profile of the state, the tribals who constituted 64% of the population in 1974 were only 36% of the population in 1911, and by 1931 the number of immigrants from various other regions mostly Assam and Bengal had risen to 114,383. However the maharaja of Tripura in his proclamation of 1931 and 1943 reserved certain area almost 5050 sq. km. for settled agriculture of five designated tribes the Tripuris, Reangs, Jamatis, Naotis and Halams.

#### Box 10.04

With Independence of the country, Tripura acceded to India on 13 August 1947. However, surrounded by east Pakistan on all (except one) sides, socio-political developments there, particularly communal riots, had a tremendous effect on the state particularly in terms of the influx of the Bengali refugees. Not only the population of the state increased considerably (from 645,707 in 1951 to 1156,342 in 1971) (Mukherjee and Singh 1982: 320). There were also important repercussions for the tribal population, which though increased in numbers, was reduced to 28.44% of the total in 1971. Further population density rose from 17 per sq. km, in 1917 to 49 in 1941 to 196 by 1981).

- i) This demographic change meant an increasing dominance and control of immigrants in various departments particularly the market and the credit system as well as professional and service sectors. This also resulted in large number of tribals being pushed back to the interior, tremendous pressure on land, increase in mortgages and indebtedness, banning of slash and burn cultivation, increased alienation of land and transfer from tribals to non-tribals. Thus, the changing demographic balance, economic pressures created by the sudden influx of population, and the spread of education, combined to generate new impulses, a mix of expectations and discontents (Verghese 1994: 171).

The first response to this unrest was the formation of the tribal militant organisation the Seng Krak in 1947. This was followed by two other tribal bodies, the Adivasi Samiti and the Tripura Rajya Admivasi Sangh, both of which came together in 1954 in the Adivasi Sansad. The Eastern India Tribal Union also established its branch in Tripura and contested election in 1957 and 1962. Similarly the communists had established a strong presence in Tripura forming the Rajya Mukti Parishad in 1948 and taking up the cause of the tribals vis-à-vis the non-tribals, communist leaders. The split and decline in the communist party and the reemergence of the congress as a result of changing equations created a lot of disillusionment and resentment among the younger generation who formed

the Tripura, Upajati Juba Samita (TUJS) under Samacharan Tripura on June 10, 1967. TUJS is a political organisation of the Tribals, With a four point agenda (a) creation of an autonomous district council for tribals under the sixth schedule of the constitution (b) restoration of tribal lands illegally transferred to the non-tribals (c) recognition of the Kek-Barak language (d) adoption of Roman Script.

- ii) The TUJS campaigned massively for the fulfilment of its demands. Resorting to agitation, propaganda, petitions, dharnas and protests, through phases of upswings and downswings, the TUJS managed to retain its hold and work for the cause of tribal upliftment as Tripura became a full fledged state in 1972. The 1977 elections saw the recovery of the communists who were returned back to power marginalising both the congress and the TUJS.

The CPM government made a number of moves to restore and strengthen the tribal position. Among them being the recognition to the Kek-Barak language, measures to implement the agrarian laws on illegally alienated lands, set in motion the process of forming an autonomous hill council. Though these moves were welcomed by the tribals and the moderate section of the TUJS, a section of radicals smarting under the declining influence of the TUJS, came into prominence under the leadership of a Christian Missionary Vijay Kumar Rankhel who saw the bond of Christianity as an important vehicle to forge unity and assertion among the tribal. He also sought the help of the MNF and other organizations to train the TUJS volunteers. He became the self-styled leader of the Tripura Tribal National Front and the Tripura Sena. The secession and independence of Tripura became important goals for him. This revival of the movement coincided with the movement against foreigners in Manipur, Meghalaya and Assam. The TUJS Conference of March 1980 gave a call for the deportation of all foreigners who came to Tripura after 15 October 1949. The violent agitation was begun by a call for boycott of foreigners, particularly traders and protests outside important government offices. A lot of violence took place against the Bengali and other settlers who countered it through the Arma Bengali. The carnage reached a crescendo in almost a month. The fuse being ignited by the Lembucherra incident.

- iii) The Dinesh Singh Committee on Tripura set up by the centre saw the real solution of the problem in the economic development of the region. It took note of the transformation brought in the state as a result of inroads made into tribal society by traders, land grabbers, refugees and missionaries. The committee made an elaborate list of suggested short and long term measures to ameliorate the problem. These included elimination of disparities, restoration of land to the tribals and ensuring their rehabilitation. The TUJS disassociated itself from the militant Tripura National Volunteers led by Rankhal and called a peaceful agitation for implementation of the Dinesh Singh Committee report, a judicial inquiry into the June incident and the formation of Tribal Area Autonomous Council, while the Anti-foreigners agitation was put on hold. After a period of intense struggle the TNV militants finally negotiated a settlement with the government on Aug. 12, 1988. Under the agreement promised speedy action in the restoration of alienated lands, the formation of a Autonomous district council, stringent measures to prevent infiltration from across the border, etc.
- iv) However, not all factions of the TNV were satisfied with this agreement. They established breakaway groups to continue the agitation like the All Tripura Tribal Force (which signed agreement with the state in 1993), the National Liberation Front of Tripura. The Tripura Rajya Raksha Bahini Tripura State Volunteers, Tripura National Democratic Tribal Force. However, the intensive, conviction and commitment of the agitation has waned. But the groups continue to survive patronized and supported simultaneously by different political parties and underground movements across the borders who provide resources and ammunition.

(317-339; Doley 1998: 30-32; Verghese 1994: 165-195).

### 10.5.3 Tribal Struggle in Manipur

Manipur has a long history of struggle. The prominent among them being the Zeliangrong Naga uprising (1930-32), the Kuki rebellion (1917-19), the womens agitation, Meiti state committee and a number of other agitations. Manipur was a princely state which merged with India in 1949, remained a UT till finally granted statehood in 1972. To account for the

agitations to resurface in the state, Kabui relates it to crisis of identity, weakness of the Indian political system, economic exploitation, corruption, unemployment and influence of foreign power and ideology (cf. Doley 1998: 21). The various agitations launched in the state were.

- i) The Meitei State Committee was formed in 1967 in protest at Manipur's merger with the India Union. This organisation gradually became a revolutionary body seeking an independent Manipur governed on the lines of a Socialist ideology developed by Irabot Singh. The movement weakened and the committee surrendered in 1971. This movement failed as result of (a) low level of education of leaders (b) lack of clarity about the objectives of the movement (c) lack of strong infrastructural organization and support. (Doley 1998: 24).
- ii) The Kukis in Manipur revolted against the British in 1917-19 in response to the alien intervention in the traditional pattern of and way of life of the tribal people. Though this response was suppressed by the British. It found expression against the treatment of the melties by the government became an important turning point in the agitation. A fillup has been provided by the growing prominence of the Sanmahi cult, which explodes the myth of the Aryan origin of the Meities who converted to Hinduism in the eighteenth century. An important role has been played by the Manipur National Front which aims to revive the Mongloid heritage which would unit the Sanamahis as well as other Mongloid people of the NE. The front, as it trines to go back to its own tribal religion, seeks to get rid of the borrowing and domination and exploitation imposed on them by brahmin and Vaishnav practices. The Resurgence of the Sanamahi cult revived the Meteir script, language and literature, thus giving from to a distinct Meitei identity. At the same time this asertion was also a reaction against Hindus and outsiders. It emphasised the glory of Manipur and its cultural distinction from India. An offshoot of the emergence of Meitei, Nationalism has been the gradual erosion of the word Manipur and Manipuri and its repalcement by Kangleipak and Meitei respectively (Kabui: 1983, p. 236-237) which can only be achieved by the formation of a Meitei homeland.

All these factors have contributed to the spread of insurgency in Manipur. of the two main organizations active in the state, the people's revolutionary party of Kangleipak (PREPAK) and PLA (people's liberation army), PREPAK is seen as a Marxist - Leninist party closely linked to Meitei revivalism while the PLA has a radical ideology and a strong rural base and prefers to propogate communist ideology and integrated insurgent groups across the N.E. Thus the Meities represent an interesting group at the cross roads who have revived their traditional religion and yet are unable to get the status of tribals which they aspire for and failure to achieve which prevents them from getting privileges under the sixth schedule (Doley 1998: 22-27, Verghese 1994: 113-134; Kabui 1983: 234-237; 1992: 5357)

Resurfaced with the Kuki National Assembly in 1946, which gradually articulated a political demand for a autonomous district or state for Kuki Inbals in order to fully reaplise the cultural and glory of their own culture and may of life. (Doley 1998: 25).

- iii) The Manipur women protested agaisnt the British regarding Rice Trading and the British export policy. The immediate cause of the movement was the shortage of foodgrains in Manipur due to the vagaries of the weather; the high price of rice in the local market due to exports and the pressure of the vested business interests. It was one Manipuri woman, Aribam Chaotian Devi, who organised a few women to stop selling rice to the mill owners. A chain reaction followed and other women got involved in the agitation. Though this was suppressed by the British in 1941 but left its impact on the administrative set up and cultural pattern of the state. (Doley 1998: 26-27).
- iv) The Zeliangrong movement was started by three tribal groups the Zemei, Liangmei and the Rongmei who together were called the Zeliangrong. This movement began essentially as a social reform movement and was led by a young Rongmei Naga Jadonang and his cousin Rani Gaidinliu. They formed the Heraka cult which sought to abolish some cuational customs, and to reform and revive the traditional religion, as a response to Hinduism and impact of Christianity. The movement was also anti-British and anti-Kuki, and it sought to establish Naga rule by forging a single Zeliangrong identity Jadonang's subsequent arrest and execution gave a jolt to the

movement. However, his cousin Gainilui carried it forward linking it to the struggle against British rule and civil disobedience movement of the Congress (Kubui 1982: 56). She was, however, imprisoned for almost 14 years and in the mean time the movement lost much of its steam. It gradually got converted to a purely peaceful movement and various tribal organisations like the Kabnui Samity (1934), Kabui Naga Association (1946), Zeliangrong Council (1947) Manipur Zeliangrong Union (1947) all came into the picture with the objective of overthrowing the British rule. After more than two decades the aim of the movement became political, seeking the creation of a separate Zeliangrong Administrative Unit consisting of the Zeliangrong inhabited areas of Manipur, Nagaland and Assam's Cachar hills.

## 10.6 MIZORAM

The process of identity formation among the Mizos was essentially about 15 local tribes assuming a district Mizo identity. Political consciousness began in the Lushai hills area with the return of a number of first world war veterans. However, the level of political articulation was low, and no expression of political solidarity took place before the Simon Commission. The area remained concerned as an 'excluded' area under the 1935 act. With the end of the second world war and the impending grant of independence, the new Christian educated elite, curbed by the authoritarian style of functioning of their chiefs, formed the Mizo Common People's front and a Mizo Union in 1946 demanding equal right to vote for chiefs as well as commoners. Gradually as they organised themselves they sought to assert their cultural and political distinctiveness as well as demand self determination and a number of other benefits to preserve and protect their identity. The commoners were incorporated in the District Conference. This also created a cleavage between the common people and chiefs who began to feel sidelined. They formed a political party the United Mizo Freedom Organization on July 5, 1947 which sought to merge the Mizo area with Burma. However, the leaders of the Mizo Union felt an affinity with India and opted for remaining within India with limited autonomy and the freedom to opt out when they wished to do so. The government in response gave protection to the tribes under the sixth schedule and certain special privileges to the Lushai hills including a District Council.

### 10.6.1 Mizo Identity

However, the perceived threat to the Mizo Identity became sharpened in reaction to the decision of the Assam Government to introduce Assamese as the state language. The UMFO teamed up with the Eastern India Tribal Union seeking separation from Assam. In this endeavour they were also supported by the All Party hill Leaders Conference.

The immediate cause for the Mizo unrest was the 'efflorescence of the bamboo ormautam in 1959' which led to acute famine in the region. The inept handling of the issue by the government, suppression of the farmers and the inadequate relief measures added fuel to the fire on the issue of separate statehood. In an attempt to come to terms with this situation, the Mizo cultural society was converted into a Mizo National Famine Front, which gained popularity for its activism relief measure. Later it emerged as Mizo National Front in 1963 under the leadership of Laldenga. The organization gained popular appeal and sought help from Pakistan for its cause. On February 28, 1966 Mizoram was declared an independent sovereign state with the launch of 'operation Jericho' Major government buildings, installations, etc. were taken over. The IAF and the army had to move in. Consequently MNF was declared unlawful and the 'rebel govt.' was forced to move underground. Mizoram was declared a disturbed area and placed under Army control. Following this, a strategy of grouping of villages was carried out in four phases between 1967 and 1970 under the Defence of India rules and Assam maintenance of Public Order Act.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Discuss the Naga Movement in the North-East. Use about ten lines for your answer.

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2) Elaborate on tribal struggles in Manipur. Use about 10 lines for your answer.

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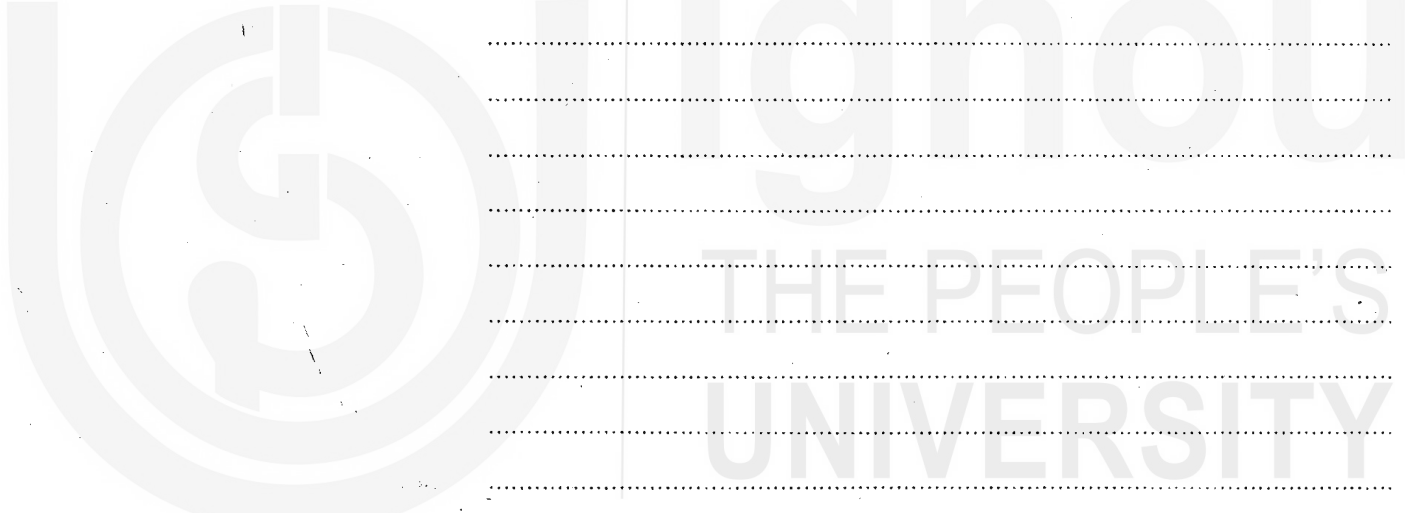
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The MNF went underground and its leader Laldenga escaped. A further degrouping of villages took place and Mizoram became a Union Territory. After a long arduous struggle Laldenga came to the negotiating table and a mutually agreed 'peace accord' was signed on July 1, 1976. Under this record the MNF agreed to end insurgency offer surrender and seek a political settlement within the constitution. However the underground movement continued and hostilities resumed. Phases of continued suppression and negotiations followed. The process of negotiating eventually came to an end with formal agreement signed by Laldenga, Lal Thanwala and Pradhan in Delhi on June, 30, 1986 and Mizoram finally emerged as a separate state within the Indian Union (Verghese 1994: 135-165)

### 10.7 BODO MOVEMENT

The Bodos movement is of considerable interest in contemporary times. The movement was started by the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) in 1987 seeking (a) a separate state on the banks of the Brahmaputra (b) Inclusion of the Bodo-Kaharis and some other tribes in the Sixth schedule. The origin of this movement could be traced to the particular position of the Bodos as a dominant tribal group, in a largely non-tribal state. The other factors which were catalyst in this movement are government neglect and apathetic attitude towards the tribals, fear of erosion of Bodo identity in terms of exploitation, control over land, jobs, other resources, language, scrip and other cultural aspects on life.



## 10.8 TRIBAL ETHNICITY BECOMES AS A BASIS FOR STRATIFICATION

An important feature of ethnicity is that like caste it is a status group; intermediate between the family and the state or nation. In Weberian terms a status group is a group which enjoys a characteristics prestige and honour in relation to similar other groups. In any wider group there are always cultural differences, but with the rising ethnic consciousness, certain cultural differences come to be used as ethnic markers of group identity. This stress on group identity and selected markers facilitates the mobilisation of the group for various collective ends, economic, political, social cultural etc. These collective ends to the extent they are realised and not realised affect the process of stratification.

### 10.8.1 Ethnic Movement

Ethnic movements are generally seen as a reaction to a particular social situation in which the groups feel deprived because it fails to get what it feels as its due recognition. This due recognition may be that their members are not treated as status equals, or are ranked inferior to some other unduly. Concern may be for equality of status or for higher status as ones 'due'. Thus aside from considerations about material interests, concern about status, social recognition, prestige becomes equally important. The tribe may seek equality, or emphasise the superiority of their culture and language e.g. The carving out of states of Nagaland, Mizoram, and Meghalaya after an intense struggle by the tribal people from the state of Assam. Followed by the continuing struggle of the Bodos for their own state as well as language and script affected the inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic stratification system in important respects.

An important aspect of ethnic struggle is concerned with mobilization to gain positions of economic advantage, jobs, educational facilities etc. This may take the form of demands that certain positions may be given exclusively to a particular tribe or distributed in relation to the respective ethnic population. Thus the process of ethnic mobilisation effects at two general levels struggle for (a) due recognition and (b) for greater economic and political advantage on some special ground. As soon as the ethnic mobilisation process and struggle starts, new positions come into existence at the various organizational and leadership levels enjoying varying amount of power, prestige and economic advantage, this new phenomena may alter already existing similar relationship within the group.

### 10.8.2 Mobility and Ethnic Groups

This new kind of opportunity may become available to individuals and sub-groups within the broader ethnic groups leading to upward and downward mobility between sub-sections and the individual levels. The overall occupational differentiation in income, lifestyle, education etc. may further develop with one group emphasizing within group differences in culture, honour, prestige etc. This process may even threaten the boundary markers between ethnic groups by creating cross group similarities and increasing intragroup differences, especially when class affiliations and class lined lifestyles cut across ethnic group may form a new formation combine, emphasise closeness to win material recognition and reward. It may even seek a claim for a separate state or separate provincial autonomy. The moment this objects is achieved, then there is a possibility of new fault lines developing in this group particularly in the context of the North-East the implementation of the sixth schedule of the constitution, policy of protective discrimination, policy of development and integration, participation in the electoral process have sharpened the ethnic consciousness as a stepping stone towards greater political power, resources, and mobility. Due to these factors the overall relationship between the tribals and non-tribals is also changing. Tribals as a category are no longer despised or inferior; infact they may be the dominant group in the state. The tribal group may be a deprived group within which strong inequalities exist. Thus to an extent differences between tribals and non-tribals are getting reduced as against people of comprable educational, class status, where similarity may be much more egalitarian then between Tribals and Non-Tribals.

## 10.9 LET US SUM UP

Viewed positively Ethnicity is a means of equality, greater means of self-worth, preserving

cultural heritage, cultural diversity, spreading egalitarianism social order etc. In that sense the ethnic group mobilization may be seen as a means of curtailing the power of the state. However at the same time it can lead to strife, ethnostrife, ethnic-intolerance subordination of groups etc.

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## 10.10 KEY WORDS

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<b>Absorption</b>	:	A process by which tribes were assimilated into other groups and communities.
<b>Ethnicity</b>	:	Comprises cultural layers of habits, traits and origin which bind into solidarity the entire community which is of a particular ethnic stock.
<b>Identity</b>	:	Characteristic features of a particular person group or community
<b>Power</b>	:	Ability to influence a person or group, even against their will.
<b>Prestige</b>	:	a type of status which has become associated with a person, group or community.
<b>Tribe</b>	:	Can be distinguished through various features of such a group/ community. See text for elaboration.

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## 10.11 FURTHER READINGS

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A.C. Bhupender Singh (ed.), *Tribal Studies of India Series T. 183 Antiquity to Modernity in Tribal India*. (Vol. II) (p. 221-247).

Burman, B.K. Roy, 1972. 'Integrated Area Approach to the Problems of Tribals in N.E. India' in K. Suresh Singh (ed.) *Tribal Situation in India*. New Delhi/Shimla: Motilal Banarsidas.

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## 10.12 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Through the institution of their chiefs, the Mizos had a well established administration system. The chief and his house were the centre of activity. On marriage the son of a chief was given some households to set up their own village and be independent. One son however remained with the chief to succeed him. Administration of the village by the chief was aided by a council of elders.
- 2) The Jaintias were divided into king Governor, village Headman and Commoners (including officials) ownership is passed on through women, the control rests with the men. Where usufructory rights were there women were to remain unmarried, have no brother etc. Women also face discrimination in matters of marriage and divorce. Bride price was also a humiliating practice.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) There were many factors which were important in creating the Naga Movement. These included fear of losing privileges created by the British and erosion of their ethnic identity. Naga ethnic identity traces back to 1918 when the Naga Club was formed. In 1947 the Assam Governor reached an agreement with Nagas. The Nagas boycotted the General Election of 1952 was reached, and the Naga underground accepted the Constitution of India. However in 1980 the Nationalist Socialist Council of Nagaland was still struggling for a sovereign state.
- 2) Tribal struggling in Manipur have a long history including Zeliangrong Naga 1930-32 uprising and the Kuki rebellion 1917-19. These struggle have been attributed to various reasons including identity crisis, weak political system of India exploitation of all sorts, corruption, and unemployment. Other agitations include the Meitee State Committee formed for an Independent Manipur in 1967. The Committee surrendered in 1971. Lack of education, and weak infrastructure were reasons which led to failure. The Kuki rebellion of Manipur (1917-19) was against the British. Other organizations include Manipur National Front which aims to revive the Mongoloid heritage. Finally script language and literature, provided to them a distinct Meitei identity.

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# UNIT 11 RELIGIOUS ETHNICITY : THE CASE OF THE PUNJAB

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## Structure

- 11.0 Objectives
- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Concepts of Ethnicity and Ethnic Identity
  - 11.2.1 Religion as Form of Ethnic Identity
- 11.3 Religious Ethnicity as a Basis of Stratification: Minorities and Majorities in the Modern Nation States
  - 11.3.1 Politics of Religious/ Ethnic Identities in Punjab
- 11.4 Historical Background
  - 11.4.1 Punjab after the Independence
  - 11.4.2 The Rise of Militancy
  - 11.4.3 Militancy and Human Rights
  - 11.4.4 Implications of Militancy
- 11.5 Conditions Under which Religious Ethnicity becomes a Basis of Stratification
- 11.6 Key Words
- 11.7 Further Readings
- 11.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 11.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit teaches you to the concepts of ethnicity and religion and they can become a basis of social stratification. After studying this unit you should be able to:

- Describe ethnicity and religion as a form of ethnic identity;
- Discuss religious ethnicity as a basis of stratification;
- Outline politics of religious and ethnic identities in Punjab; and
- Describe conditions under which religious ethnicity becomes a basis of stratification.

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## 11.1 INTRODUCTION

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Human societies are made up of different types of social grouping. The most important of these, in modern times, are the nation states. However, nation states are not the only collective identities that individuals in contemporary societies identify themselves with. Most of the nation states today, industrialized developed countries of the West and the developing countries of the third world alike, are inhabited by a variety of social grouping, distinct cultures and ways of life. In other words, most countries of the world today are **plural societies**. Plural societies are those in which there are several large ethnic groupings, living in a common political and economic system, i.e. the nation state, but otherwise largely distinct from each other.

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## 11.2 CONCEPTS OF ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

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It is in the context of the modern nation states that the term ethnicity became popular in the disciplines of sociology and social anthropology. It began to be used around the middle of the twentieth century in American sociology to describe people of different national origin. Ethnic groups are supposed to differ from each other on the basis of some cultural criteria. An ethnic group, according to R.A. Schermerhorn, is a 'a collectivity within a

larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memory of shared historical past, the cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood. Examples of such symbolic are: kinship patterns, physical contiguity, religious affinity, language or dialect forms, tribal affiliation, nationality, phenotypal features, or any combination of these. A necessary accompaniment is some consciousness of kind among members of the group' (as in Sollor, 1996: xii). Members of an ethnic group not only share a common identity of belonging to that group but are also seen to be so by others in the society.

However, ethnicity is not merely a symbolic or cultural phenomenon. In certain contexts it could also become a source of political mobilization and conflict. As Sharma points out ethnicity has two dimensions, dormant and salient. In its dormant form, 'ethnicity represents an innocent mode of identification based on certain relatively distinct cultural attributes. In its salient form, ethnicity signifies an urge for political power based on a sense of cultural distinction' (Sharma, 1996: 105). The distinctive cultural consciousness of an ethnic group could get politically activated due to various sociological and historical reasons, such as a fear of assimilation into the mainstream culture, experience of discrimination or the emergence of political aspiration for autonomy and self-governance.

### 11.2.1 Religion as a Form of Ethnic Identity

Religion has often been associated with the idea of the "sacred" or "God". According to Anthony Giddens, all religions 'involve a set of symbols, invoking feelings of reverence or awe, and are linked to rituals or ceremonials practiced by a community of believers' (Giddens, 1989: 452). This definition suggests that the concept of religion involves two aspects. One, a system of rituals and beliefs including the ideas of a sacred symbol or a notion of the divine; and two, it involves a "community" of believers who share those ideas. Emile Durkheim had also emphasised the point that religions are never just a measure of belief. All religion involves regular ceremonial and ritual activities, in which a group of believers meet together. Regular participation in these ritual activities helps in binding the members of such groups together into communities. These religious "communities" in the contemporary context of the nation states, particularly those inhabited by believers of more than one faith, have tended to pursue their distinct cultural identities and have tended to identify themselves as distinct ethnic groups. Thus religion in these cases becomes the basis of ethnic identity.

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## 11.3 RELIGIOUS ETHNICITY AS A BASIS OF STRATIFICATION: MINORITIES AND MAJORITIES IN THE MODERN NATION STATES

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Ethnic distinctions are rarely neutral. As Giddens points out, they are commonly associated with marked inequalities of wealth and power. The ethnic composition of the most plural societies is such that their citizens is generally made of one large ethnic group and many other ethnic with small populations. This divides the nation states into one "majority" and several "minorities". The majority group invariably controls power in most of these societies while the minorities tend to be the victims of prejudice and discrimination. This obviously leads to a relation of inequality and social stratification among the ethnic groups, a powerful and dominant majority and several subordinate ethnic minorities.

Though the expressions minority and majority are often used in numerical terms, sociologically their distinctions involve much more than that. According to Giddens (1989: 245), a minority group has the following features.

- i) Its members are disadvantaged, as a result of discrimination against them by others. Discrimination exists when rights and opportunities open to one set of people are denied to another group. For instance an upper caste Hindu landlord may refuse to rent a room to someone because she or he is a Muslim or a tribal.
- ii) Members of a minority have some sense of group solidarity, of 'belonging together'. Experience of being the subject of prejudice and discrimination usually heightens feeling of common loyalty and interest. Members of a minority group often tend to see themselves as 'a people apart' from the majority.

- iii) Minority groups are usually (at least to some degree) physically and socially isolated from the larger community. They tend to be concentrated in certain neighbourhoods, cities or regions of a country. There is little intermarriage between those in the majority and members of the minority groups. Members of the minority groups attempt hard to maintain their ethnic and cultural distinctiveness.

Some have suggested that, the notions of minority and majority are sociological rather than numerical, a minority group might in certain circumstances consist of the majority of population. The example that is cited in this context is that of South Africa during the apartheid regime when a small number of White people ruled over a large Black majority. This, however, happened only in rare circumstances. In most cases, the minorities groups are constituted of those ethnic communities that are numerically smaller in number. However, it may be kept in mind that not all groups that are numerically small in number necessarily constitute an ethnic minority. An ethnic group can be described to be a minority only when it fulfils the above mentioned sociological criteria. There are many instances where small ethnic groups are well integrated into the power structure of a country and do not experience any discrimination vis-à-vis the other groups. Similarly, there are no permanent minorities. It largely depends upon the political process. Changes in political regimes and their ideologies can change the position of different ethnic groups in the power structure of a society. In a democratic society the chances of minority groups feeling marginalised and discriminated against are lesser than in an authoritarian regime. Also, over a period of time certain groups that were well integrated in the power structure could develop a distinct identity and begin to experience prejudice and discrimination. This process is called **minoritization**. It is in this framework of minoritization that we can understand the case of the Sikhs in Punjab, who over a period of time have come to develop to distinct self-image of a minority group.

### 11.3.1 Politics of Religious / Ethnic Identity in Punjab

The present day Punjab is a rather small state located in the northwest of India. Despite it being relatively small in size, the state of Punjab occupies an important place in the India politics. The state is located on India's border with Pakistan. The effects of the partition of the sub-continent in 1947 were felt the most in Punjab. A large number of people migrated from both sides of the "new" border. Most importantly for us, Punjab is one of the states of India where a majority of the population belongs to a minority religion. Nearly sixty percent of Punjab's population is that of the Sikhs. Not only that, the state has also witnessed various ethnic mobilizations during the late nineteenth century. But the most important separatist movement occurred during the decade of 1980s. As a consequence of these mobilizations, the Sikhs of Punjab acquired a separate ethnic and religious identity.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Describe religion as a form in ethnic identity. Use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) Write a note on religious ethnicity as a basis of stratification. Use about five lines for your answer.

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## 11.4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historical speaking, the state of Punjab was among those regions of the sub-continent that experienced strong mobilization against the British colonial rule. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the state witnessed variety of social reform and protest movements. It was around this time that the consciousness of a separate religious identity first emerged among the Sikhs.

### Activity 1

Enquire about the background of the state of Punjab, from your Punjabi friends. Make a note in your notebook of the important reform and protest movement that happened in Punjab.

The process of social and economic development experienced in Punjab after the British established their rule in the state led to the emergence a new middle class among the Sikhs. This class initiated reform movements among the Sikhs in the region and began to assert that Sikhism was separate from Hinduism. The campaign was spearheaded by two of the reformist organizations, the Singh Sabha movement and the Chief Khalsa Dewan. Their main mission was to strengthen internal communication among the Sikhs and define clear boundaries between the Sikhs and the Hindus.

The process of redefining communal boundaries culminated in some important social movements among the Sikhs. Foremost of these being the movement for the "liberation" of Gurudwaras (the Sikh Temples) from the Hindu *mahants* during 1920s. The Sikhs demanded that all the historic Gurudwaras by brought under the governance of newly fomed Sikh organisation, the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC). The Sikh political party, the Shiromani Akali Dal was also formed during this movement.

While on the one side, the movement helped in developing a distinctive self-image among the Sikhs, on the other, it brought the Sikh masses into the freedom struggle. The British, during this movement of the Akalis, sided with the Hindu *mahants* and the Sikhs in Punjab turned against the colonial rulers, Being a non-violent mass movement, the Akalis received the support of the Indian National Congress and became part and parcel of the broader nationalist movement. After a long drawn struggle, they succeeded in getting the Gurudwaras 'Liberated' from the *mahants*.

### Box 11.01

The process of social differentiation among the Hindus and Sikhs received a boost when the British conceded separated electorate to the community in 1921. Similarly, the introduction of census during the late nineteenth century by the colonial rulers played its own role in redefining communities in Punjab. For certain administrative and political purpose, the British rulers began to categorise populations into well defined religious communities. The people of Punjab were asked to chose between Hindu and Sikh identities even when the two communities were not clearly distinguishable in the region.

### 11.4.1 Punjab after the Independence

Due to the multiplicity of factors, the ethnic composition an self identities of different religious communities underwent significant changes during the British rule in the state, particularly during the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From a religious sect, the Sikhs emerged as a separate ethnic group, objectively differentiated as well as subjectively self-defined community. This process continued to unfold itself during the post - Independence period also.

When the states were reorganised on linguistic lines after Independence, Punjab was left undivided, even though it included a large Hindi speaking area. The Sikhs were unhappy about it. They wanted a state where they were in a majority. The changes that came in the demography of the region with partition had made it possible for the Sikhs to achieve this goal. The partition of India was accompanied by a "population exchange" between India and Pakistan.

Almost the entire population of Sikhs and Hindus living in the western Punjab migrated to the Indian side of the border and the Muslims migrated to the Pakistani side. As a consequence of this, the Sikhs became a majority in certain district of the state. In

undivided Punjab, Sikh constituted only around 13 to 14 percent of the total population. The mass migration of the Sikhs from the western districts that went to Pakistan increased their proportion to nearly 55 percent in the northwestern districts of the post - partition Indian Punjab. The Akalis saw in it an opportunity to demand for a Sikh majority state. They began to mobilize the Sikhs for a re-organization of Punjab in a manner that the state boundary included only the Sikh majority districts. Since the Punjabi Hindus opted not to identify with the Sikh aspirations and went so far as to record Hindi as their mother tongue during the census enumeration after Independence, the Akalis could demand a Sikh majority state on linguistic lines as well. After a long struggle, the state of Punjab was divided on September 1, 1966. The Hindi speaking districts of southern Punjab were put together into a new state the came to the known as Haryana. Some of the hill districts on the northeast were transferred to the state of Himachal Pradesh.

**Box 11.02**

In the new Punjab, the Sikhs were in a clear majority but Hindus also continued to be a substantial number. While the Sikhs have clearly dominated the political institutions in the state, their position in the Punjab economy has been only partially dominant. The demographic and economic structure of Punjab is such that while the Sikhs almost exclusively control the agricultural land, the urban trade has been a near monopoly of the Hindu trading castes. This is reflected in the table presented below. While the Sikhs are clearly in majority in the state as a whole, they are a minority in the urban areas of Punjab. Nearly 69 percent of the Sikhs live in rural areas of Punjab, more the 66 percent of the Hindus live in towns. In the Sikh concentrated districts, like Amritsar and Bhatinda, this pattern is even more pronounced.

The tension between Hindus and Sikhs became more acute with the success of the Green Revolution Technology in Punjab's agriculture. With Green Revolution came an extensive use of modern inputs in farming. This increased the productivity of land many folds. Farmers shifted to cash crops and took their surplus farm produce to the market. They also needed to buy modern inputs, such as chemical fertilizers, high yielding variety seeds and pesticides from the urban markets. In the market place traders were much more powerful than the farmers, Farmers, particularly those with smaller landholdings, became dependent on the traders. They often had to borrow money from the traders. There was a new relation of dependency that the otherwise politically dominant farmers felt in relation to the traders. This economic conflict between the Sikh peasantry and the Hindu traders was also seen in communal terms by some. Some scholars have even explained the rise of militant movement among the Sikhs during the 1980s in terms of this very factor.

**Table 1**

DISTRICT	HINDU			SIKH		
	Total	Rural	Urban	Total	Rural	Urban
Bhatinda	22.56	12.92	61.13	76.93	86.67	37.96
Amritsar	23.43	8.23	60.31	74.22	89.29	37.65
Sangrur	27.14	21.25	50.25	66.90	75.20	34.33
Ludhiana	33.22	16.88	63.82	65.71	82.47	34.34
Ferozepur	33.58	24.02	72.22	65.07	74.82	25.69
Kapurthala	38.02	28.45	69.69	61.26	70.80	29.68
Ropar	43.49	39.21	67.46	55.61	60.10	30.51
Patiala	44.37	37.49	63.92	54.24	61.03	34.93
Gurdaspur	48.02	40.94	75.90	44.82	51.03	20.38
Jullundher	53.91	44.91	76.49	440.90	54.73	24.04
Hoshiarpur	59.25	57.13	74.65	39.38	41.60	23.23
<b>Punjab Total</b>	<b>37.54</b>	<b>28.56</b>	<b>66.33</b>	<b>61.21</b>	<b>69.37</b>	<b>30.79</b>

Source: D' Souza in Samiuddin ed. 1985 p. 54.

### 11.4.2 The Rise of Militancy

The state of Punjab witnessed another powerful movement on religious/ ethnic lines among the Sikhs during the decade of 1980s. The Akali Dal started the movement focussing purely on secular issues. But gradually it was taken over by militant elements within the Sikh communal politics and its become a movement for secession from the India State. The Akalis had initially started mobilizing the Sikh peasantry for Punjab in the early 1980s on the question of the distribution of irrigation water of the rivers that passed through the state. Even the Communist Party of India (Marxist) was one of their allies in this struggle. Gradually the Akalis shifted the focus of their struggle towards the demand for greater autonomy to the states within the framework of a resolution passed in 1974 at a meeting of some Sikh organizations in a town called Anandpur Sahib. "The Anandpur Sahib Resolution", as it came to be known, demanded more autonomy to the states of the Indian union. It asked the Central Government to keep only the critical areas of governance with it, such as, issuing currency notes, management of armed forces, and formulation and management of the foreign policy. The rest should be transferred to the state governments. The Akalis initially projected the Anandpur Sahib Resolution in a secular framework asking for more autonomy to all the states of the Indian union and an over-all decentralization of powers. They even received support from other regional parties. However, the central government saw in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution suggestions of secessionism. The political intentions of the Akalis became suspect.



United Akali Dal Meeting in Golden Temple

*Courtesy : IT*

A new political trend had begun to gain momentum in the Sikh politics around the same time. Under the leadership of a religious preacher by the name of Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a militant movement for a separate nation for the Sikhs began to take shape. The rise of Bhindranwale could be traced to a religious struggle between the followers of the Sant and those of the Nirankari Panth, a reformist religious sect of the Hindus and Sikhs. Some Congress politicians also patronized the Sant who, they thought, would emerge as a alternative to the Akalis in the Sikh religious politics. However, the Sant soon began to act on his own and started mobilizing the Sikhs for a separate state of Khalistan. He received active support from across the border. The political strategy adopted by the militants was that of creating panic by terrorizing the public through both selective and indiscriminate killings. Interestingly, the Khalistanis were given much more attention by the media than the Akalis had ever been given. Consequently, the Akalis began to get marginalised in the Punjab politics.



Activity 2

Discuss among your fellow students whether violence is acceptable as a solution to intra-nation political problems. Make a note on this in your notebook.

After having initially encouraged them, the Congress government at the Centre came to realise that things were getting out of hand. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of the country, decided to deal with the Sikh militants by the use of force. The Government of India issued an order for army action at arrest Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, who, along with his heavily armed followers, was hiding inside a Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple at Amritsar. This armed operation was termed as "Operation Bluestar". The strategy adopted was that of direct confrontation with the militants. The Indian army, fully equipped with tanks and other arms, attacked the Sikh shrines on June 3 1984 and the first phase of the "Operation" was over by the night of June 6, 1984.

The army entered the Golden Temple on a day when pilgrims had come to visit the Gurudwara on the occasion of a Sikh festival. A large number of these pilgrims, including women and children, died in the crossfire. According to one estimate, the total casualties of officers and army men were about 700 and of civilians about 5,000 (Joshi, 1984:161). While the Akali leaders who were inside the temple were brought out safely by the army, Bhindranwale, as well as most of his close associates, were killed during the operation. However, although the militant leadership had been liquidated, the political crisis in the state was far from over. In fact the post-operation Bluestar phase of the militant politics in the state was even more violent. The army action had made most of the Sikhs very angry against the central government and as a consequence the militant outfits increased in numbers as well as swelled in strength. The violence against innocent Sikhs in different parts of the country that followed the killing of Mrs. Indira Gandhi in October 1984 only served to further broaden the militants' support base. Members of these "terrorist" organizations were able to acquire sophisticated weapons from across the border and some of them also trained in the neighboring country of Pakistan.

### 11.4.3 Militancy and Human Rights

However, the militant movement lost direction. It was not only the security forces that the militants targeted. Even common people, Hindus and Sikhs, living in Punjab and the neighboring states, became victims of their terrorist activities. Since the militants largely came from rural areas of Punjab and they often used these villages as their hiding places, the security forces too began to harass the average citizen. People of Punjab nearly forgot what it meant to live in peace. Their basic human rights were being violated both the terrorists and the security forces. Extortion kidnapping and indiscriminate killings became regular features of everyday life in the state. The militants also tried to impose a moral code of conduct on the common on the common Sikhs. The Sikh women were directed against wearing "western-style" dresses. They also issued directives on things like how the Sikh weddings should be arranged. The common Sikhs did not approve of these "reforms" initiated by the militants.

Box 11.03

The police and para-military forces too harassed common people on allegations of sympathizing and sheltering the militants, even when they had no proof of it. On the other hand the innocent villagers were forced to shelter a militant, if he so demanded, simply for the fear of the gun. In such cases, they could be at the receiving end both ways.

The democratic political process had come to a halt in the state and no elections were held for a long time. The militant's movement for an independent state of Khalistan could gain only limited support from the common Sikhs in Punjab. Though many Sikhs were angry at the Central Government particularly for the army action of Golden Temple and the massacre of Sikhs in Delhi in November 1984, they were also unhappy with politics of militancy. In the absence a popular political base, the Khalistan movement began to disintegrate by the late 1980s. The militant groups got divided and started attacking each other. The state police used this opportunity to repress the militants with force. In some cases the police even recruited ex-militants to fight the terrorist groups in Punjab. By early 1990s, most of the groups had either disintegrated or had been physically eliminated, directly or indirectly, by the security forces. The militant Sikh movement was thus over

without having achieved anything at all in political terms the democratic process was revived in the state and the Akalis came back to power in the state in 1996.

#### 11.4.4 Implications of Militancy

Though politically movement failed and could not achieve anything concrete for the Sikhs, its implications for the community as well as for the country were many. It created an unprecedented sense of political crisis all over. Those in academics and in policy-making began to review the process of nation building in India afresh. For the Sikh community, the crisis of 1980s was a testing time. Apart from tragedies like the "Operation Bluestar" and the anti-Sikh riots in Delhi and in other parts of India, the "crisis" redefined their identity. Their sense of being a minority ethnic group became much more acute. Not only the Sikhs began to see themselves as being a distinct minority; others also began to see them in similar light. The "Operation Bluestar" and the anti-Sikh riots in different part of India provided them for the first time, with a proof of their being discriminated against as a community which also reinforced their sense of a collective identity. They began to see their status as being much closer to the above-mentioned notion of an ethnic minority. To put it in different words, the militant movement and the crisis of 1980s furthered the process of minoritization of the Sikhs in India.

The Sikhs constitute a little more than two percent of the total population of the country. Nearly 75 percent of the live in the state of Punjab and the rest 25 percent in different part of the country and the globe. Since they continue to be in majority in the state of Punjab, for a large majority of the Sikhs their sense of being a minority is not experienced in everyday life. However at the level of consciousness, they continue to see themselves as an ethnic minority.

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### 11.5 CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH RELIGIOUS ETHNICITY BECOMES A BASIS OF STRATIFICATION

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In much of the classical sociological literature, the structure of social stratification has generally been conceptualized through "secular" categories. Almost all theories of social stratification have emphasized on categories like class, occupation or power. It is only recently that sociologists have come to recognise the significance of factors like gender and ethnicity in determining the structure of social stratification. Ethnicity has been seen to work as a basis of social stratification in two different forms. First, in the form racial discrimination, as it has existed in the western societies for a long time. Second the discrimination on the basis of religion, against those belonging to the religious minority groups.

The classical example of the racial discrimination is that of the Blacks. In most of the Western countries, the dominant White population has for ages discriminated against the Blacks. Racial discrimination operates at various levels. It has been seen to work within organizations and also in the larger society. For example, the senior positions in organizations are likely to be occupied by the members of the "superior" race and the positions at the lower levels are largely occupied to those coming from the "inferior" races. There have been many political movements against the practice and ideology of racism. Over the years, the racial prejudice against Blacks has become much less.

Discrimination against religious minorities has been a feature many societies during the modern times. It has taken various forms, ranging form the extreme case of fascist extermination of Jews during the regime of Hitler, to more subtle forms of discrimination. Though most of the modern nation states claim to follow secular principles in governance, their origin in most cases could be traced to ethnic movements. Also, most of the present day nation states have citizens belonging to more than one ethnic origin, which makes them plural societies. However, the state power is generally not shared equally among different ethnic communities. It is this distinction that leads to inequalities and stratification on ethnic lines. Apart from language, religion has been the most important source of ethnic difference.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) Outline the historical background to religious ethnicity in Punjab. Use about five lines for your answer.

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- 2) Discuss the rise of militancy in Punjab. Use about five to ten lines for your answer.

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Ethnic/ religious differences in themselves do not lead to ethnic inequalities. There are many countries where members belonging to different religious communities enjoy more or less equal status. Religious ethnicity becomes the bases for social stratification only under certain circumstances. First and foremost of these is **the nature of the political regime**. If a particular society has a secular democracy, it is unlikely that those belonging to the minority religion will face any systematic discrimination against them. However, if it is a theocratic and undemocratic country, religious ethnicity becomes an important basis of stratification. Those belonging to religious minorities are not likely to be given positions of power in the society. Even in a secular - democratic society, an ethnic minority could face discrimination if a strong prejudice exists against it among the other sections of the society. Similarly, an ethnic group could become a victim of discrimination if a given political formation finds it useful to mobilise communities against it for electoral gains.

The second important factor that can lead to religious ethnicity becoming basis of social stratification is **the demographic structure** of a country. If a country is inhabited by one large majority and several religious minorities, the chances of religious ethnicity becoming a basis of social stratification would be much higher than in a country inhabited by a large number of religious communities without any single community enjoying the majority status. Or where the entire population belonged to a single ethnic community. Third important factor is the **relationship between religion and economy**. If the members of a particular religious community control the productive forces in the economy, they are likely to enjoy a much more powerful position than the other communities. Finally and most importantly **are the cultural and historical factors** that determine the relations between ethnic/ religious communities in any society. A society that has cultural values that encourage tolerance and mutual respect, is less likely to discriminate against the religious minorities than those societies that do not have such cultural values. Similarly, historical memories play their own role. If the past of a society is marked by ethnic rivalries, the present is also likely to be marked by prejudice.

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**11.6 KEY WORDS**

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- Ethnicity** : Pertaining to shared culture ancestral past, and a feeling of bondedness.
- Identity** : A recognition of the uniqueness of a group/individual based on factors such as ethnicity.

<b>Religion</b>	:	A corpus of data pertaining to an ideology directed towards the supranational i.e. the sacred and the profane.
<b>Militancy</b>	:	An aggressive violent stance used in conjunction with an aim such as demand for autonomy of a ethnic group.

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## 11.7 FURTHER READINGS

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Giddens, A. (1989), *Sociology*, Cambridge, Polity Press.

Grewal, J.S. (1994), *The Sikhs of Punjab*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

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## 11.8 SPECIMEN ANSWER TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Religion has regular rites and rituals which the believers enact. Such activities bind the believers into a community. In cases of nations with believers of more than one faith several cultural identities form. These tend to identify themselves as distinct ethnic groups. In these cases religion becomes the basis for ethnic identity.
- 2) Religious ethnicity divides a state into majority and minority where the former controls power and minorities tend to be discriminated against. This leads to a relation of inequality and social stratification among ethnic groups. There is usually a powerful and dominant majority and several subordinate ethnic minority groups.

### Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Punjab historically experienced strong mobilization against British colonial rule. It has also witnessed social reform and protest movements in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and a separate religious identity emerged. It also led to redefining communal boundaries. All the major religio-political groups were gradually formed. The sikhs were also involved in masses in the freedom struggle.
- 2) In the 1980's the Akali Dal begun a secular movement, which was gradually taken over by militants. Whereas formally issues such as irrigation rights were debated, gradually the demand shifted to autonomy from the Indian state. The history thereafter was conflict with the state which led to use of force in 1984 under 'Operation Bluestar'. Following this militancy lost direction as it had targeted not just military but civilians also.

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# UNIT 12 LINGUISTIC ETHNICITY IN INDIA

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## Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 History of Language in India
- 12.3 Linguistic Ethnicity: Re-Organization of States
  - 12.3.1 Linguistic Ethnicity and the State
  - 12.3.2 Language and Modernization
- 12.4 DMK Movement
  - 12.4.1 Birth of DMK Movement
  - 12.4.2 Role of Universal Primary Education
  - 12.4.3 The Language Issue
  - 12.4.4 Policy on Language Issue
- 12.5 Punjabi Suba Movement
  - 12.5.1 A Separate Linguistic State
  - 12.5.2 The Nehru-Master Pact
- 12.6 Other Linguistic Ethnicity Movements in India
  - 12.6.1 Reorganisation of States
- 12.7 Tribal Linguistic Movements
  - 12.7.1 The Santhali Language Movement
  - 12.7.2 The Language Movement of the Mishings
  - 12.7.3 Ethno Linguistic Aspirations of the Jayantia
  - 12.7.4 Language and Culture
- 12.8 Causes of Language Movement
- 12.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 12.10 Key Words
- 12.11 Further Readings
- 12.12 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

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## 12.0 OBJECTIVES

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After having read and studied this unit on linguistic ethnicity in India you should be able to:

- Outline the main aspects of history of language in India;
- Describe the reorganization of states on the basis of linguistic ethnicity;
- Discuss the DMK movement;
- Outline the Punjabi Suba Movement and other linguistic movements; and
- Describe tribal linguistic movements in India.

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## 12.1 INTRODUCTION

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It was in 1953, that the 'word' ethnicity found its accorded use, to describe the character or quality of an ethnic group. Ethnic Group in turn is derived from the Greek word *Ethnos* that refers to a category of people, who can be distinguished on the basis of their culture, religion, race, or language. Any group using one or more of these characteristics for identifying its-self need not be using these identification markers for discrimination. Individuals participating in these categories may assert these criteria for accentuating in-

group solidarity. Language remains one of the most significant medium of establishing this cohesiveness, and it is this feeling of intra group solidarity experienced by a group of people speaking the same dialect or using the same language that we define as *Linguistic Ethnicity*. In India, over the years more than 1500 mother tongues have been identified. Hindi as you are aware is identified as the National language, followed by fourteen regional languages identified by the Eighth Schedule of the constitution. All other languages are not accorded any official status. 1000 or more individuals each speak approximately 105 languages. Historically, there is little concurrence among the linguistic experts about the total number of languages spoken in India. In the Linguistic Survey of India conducted by George Grierson; 544 dialects and 179 major languages were recorded. The first linguistic census survey conducted in the nineteenth century recorded that 'language changes' every 20 miles in India'. The 1961 census recorded 1652 spoken languages, of which 1549 were indigenous of India. It was further assumed that out of 1549 indigenous languages, about 572 covered nearly 99 percent of India's entire population. The 15 languages initially recognized by the constitution, accounted for 387 spoken dialects, and it was claimed that they cover 95 percent of India's total population, India's multi lingual nature was acknowledged by the State Reorganisation Commission at the time of independence. Restructuring of states on the basis of linguistic and cultural homogeneity was an endorsement of the polyglot nature of the India democratic nation state. Eight major language groups, Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Kashmiri, Malayalam, Telugu and Tamil were given independent Status by 1956. Gujarati and Marathi were given independent Status by 1966 and in 1966 Punjabi acquired specific state recognition. Along with five Hindi Speaking State by 1966 all the fifteen recognized languages except Sanskrit, Urdu and Sindhi, had a State status. Deliberately or inadvertently language became a legitimate mode of re-organisation of States in Independent India.

## 12.2 HISTORY OF LANGUAGE IN INDIA

Anthropologists studying India Tribals concur that most of the indigenous inhabitants are of Austro-Asiatic origin belonging of sub family Munda. Their languages were in affinity with the Mon-Khmer language, particularly Vietnamese that stretch from Chota Nagpur, eastward to Indo-China. Aryans speaking Indo-European languages arrived in 1500 BC from the northwest. By Vedic period (approx. 1500-500 BC) Sanskrit was spoken all over large parts of Northern India. Sanskrit secured as Lingua franca of India prior to Muslim invasion in its various spoken form. The oldest form of Middle Indo-Aryan language varieties known as Prakrits developed in this period. Linguists suggest those Indo-Aryan languages, Sanskrit and its Prakrits were spoken from north India to Deccan, and Dravidian languages were spoken in South India to lower reaches of Deccan plateau. Language historians have often talked about great divide between an Indo-Aryan North India and Dravidian South India (refer to map in Appendix). India's rich linguistic tradition enriched itself as a sequel to its extensive cultural heritage. Recorded evidence suggest that literary excellence in the Tamil, dates to second century B.C., Kanada to the fourth century A.D., Malayalam to tenth century A.D. and the Telugu dates from the seventh century A.D. It is interesting to note here that the written records in English and German date from the fifth century A.D. Caryapada the old Buddhist hymn were composed in Bengali/Assamese/Oriya between A.D. 1000 and 1200. Sanskrit along with other regional languages served as the language of administration till Persian in Islamic India, particularly in northern India replaced its. Even though politically marginalized, India's rich language diversity continued to thrive as an instrument of emotional and individual expression.

### Box 12.01

Those aspiring for higher positions in administration equipped themselves with Persian and its later version Urdu, nationalist in conformance with their nationalistic and patriotic needs produced rich literature in regional dialects and languages. Oral tradition became the most significant tool for protecting rich cultural and linguistic heritage of each ethnic group. Orientalists admit that the literature available in native India languages is far richer than the produce of English Language, which rules the roost in the world today. English made inroads into Indian cultural fabric as a vector for modernization and political empowerment. In the post independence period, it came to be projected as the language for the powerful and rich, it also acquired natural acceptance in the early period of language riots.

## 12.3 LINGUISTIC ETHNICITY: RE-ORGANIZATION OF STATES

Robert D. King, an eminent linguist and expert of Asian studies, is of the opinion that the idea of nations of states corresponding of language boundaries is a recent phenomenon in geo politics and dates back to 19<sup>th</sup> century. Being a monoglot certainly has advantages as communication becomes easier, but that polyglot societies are essentially fissiparous, is not true. Assumption that isomorphic, homogeneous societies have greater political viability and sustainability has been consistently undermined by India's ability to thrive as a democratic political union. However, it has had its teething problems. Linguistic ethnicity and reorganization of states on this principle was one of them. Prior to India's independence, state boundaries were arbitrary. Except the states of Punjab, Bengal and Sind, no other State conformed to the norms of historical organicity based on ethnography, culture, language, and use, religion or any other ingredient of shared ethnicity. Take for example, Madras Presidency - it ranged from Cape. Camorin on the South Eastern decline to Jagannathpuri Temple and touched Bay of Bengal in the east and the Arabian Sea along the Malabar Coast in the West. The major languages spoken in this constituency were Oriya, Malayalam, Telgu, Tamil and Kannada. It is interesting to record here that in 1931, 6.03% of the population of Madras residency spoke a language other than Tamil. Similarly 57.2 percent people residing in Bombay Presidency spoke a language other than Marathi, namely, Gujrati, Sindhi and Kannada. The presidency of Bengal comprised of 70,000,000 people and included present day states of Bihar and Orissa, extending upto river Sutlej in the north-west. Lord Curzen decided to split the Bengal Presidency in two halves, creating a province of eastern Bengal and Assam with a approximate population of 31,000,000. Two important languages spoken in the region were Bengali and Assamese. The other province consisted of Western Bengal, Orissa and Bihar with three languages namely Bengali, Bihari, Hindi and Oriya. Historians have argued that though the reasons for this partition were apparently administrative, they actually aimed at creating a Muslim dominated eastern Bengal and a largely Hindu dominated Western Bengal. In this reorganization religious ethnicity was overplayed and linguistic constituents were underscored. Herbert Risely acclaimed Anthropologist did suggest that this would solve the question of Oriya Language over and for all". The report of the State Reorganization Commission (1955) says.

"The linguistic principle was, however, pressed into service on these occasions only as an measure of administrative convenience and to the extent it fitted into a general pattern which was determined by political exigencies. In actual effect, the partition of Bengal involved a flagrant violation of linguistic affinities. The settlement of 1912 also showed little respect for the linguistic principle, in that it drew clear distinction between the Bengal Muslims and the Bengali Hindus. Both these partitions thus ran counter to the assumption that different linguistic groups constituted distinct units of social feeling with common political and economic interest". (SRC report PP. 10-11).

### 12.3.1 Linguistic Ethnicity and the State

British administrators never saw linguistic ethnicity of political organization of a state. Most of the states in the Pre British period and also during British administration were by and large historical accidents. Inadvertently, reorganization of Bengal was instrumental in promoting the policy of State restructure by India National Congress on the basis of vernacular. It was in the Montagu Chemsford report 1918, that first evidence of vernacular movement in India were recorded. Despite this paradigm shift, the Government of India Act 1919 made no significant move to promote regional languages. In 1920, Mahatma Gandhi favoured formation of linguistic provinces, even though he was apprehensive that favouring formation of linguistic provinces may interfere with his plans to promote Hindustani, as a national language. However, Gandhi's tactical nod and Nehru's grudging approval led to the reorganization of Indian National Congress on linguistic provincial basis. Twenty-one provincial congress committee were created. By 1927, Congress passed a resolution asking for creating of linguistic provinces for Andhra, Utkal (Orissa), Sind and Karnatka.

**Box 12.02**

Ten years later (1937) Nehru accepted the idea of linguistic states. Prior to that in the report of all party conference, language was recognized as corresponding to a special variety of culture, literature, and tradition. It was also suggested that in a linguistic area these factors will, promote general progress of the province. These endorsements mark the beginning of rise of linguistic ethnicity as a social movement in the pre-independence and the early post independence history of India. It was in 1930 that the British started taking note of linguistic stirring and its political implications. Formation of the province of Orissa that had the approval of Joint Parliamentary Committee (Session 1932-33) is often hailed as the success of the first linguistic movement in India. Many historians believe that creation of Orissa was not on linguistic consideration but was created to appease Hindu sentiments, while Sind was carved not for sindhi speaking people but to appease majority Muslim sentiment.

However, congress continued to pursue its policy of linguistic province and demanded two more provinces of Andhra and Karnataka. Kerala followed suit in 1938 demanding an autonomous linguistic province for Malayalam speaking people. Second World War provided a brief interlude to growing demand for linguistic provinces. In 1945-46, once again, in its election manifesto, congress retreated its view that administrative units should be constituted as far as possible on a linguistic and cultural basis. Some British historians in their postcolonial interpretations have talked about hidden and ulterior motives in these demands. According to Robert D. King: "the drive for linguistic states or provinces lay aspirations grounded not so much in language as in caste and communal rivalries, in grappling for privilege": (1997:70).

**12.3.2 Language and Modernization**

India, as a nation state in its nascent phase struggled resolving the paradox of having a common language for administration, without minimizing the importance of individual languages. Hindi was designated as the official language of India by the Constitution of India in 1950. Nevertheless, English remained the working language of the officials, academics and business. In the constitution English was given a lease of fifteen years to co exist along side Hindi as the language for the union for official purposes. English is popularly accepted as a tool for modernization and global participation. This is the primary reason that even the diehard linguistic ethnocentric have accepted the popularity and prevalence of English without prejudice to the linguistic ethnicity. The Dravidian Indian especially Tamil heartland was opposed to Hindi. Indian nation states attempt to define Hindi as a icon of India nationality and patriotism resulted in rebellion. In the Southern states R.N. Srivastva argued that the Dravida Kazhagon (DK) and later the Dravida Munnetra Kazragam (DMK) were merely the extension of intensification of militant and dynamic anti-religious feelings. "Self respect movement of 1925" D.K. Naicker a DK leader promoted DK to organized a Ravan Leela on December 25, 1974 in which effigies of Ram Sita and Laxman were burnt. Anti Brahmanical feelings manifested itself in anti Hindi movement. Prior to this, in 1956 the academy of Telugu convened a language convention in Madras. This convention vehemently protested against the imposition of Hindi on the South. In 1958 again an all India Language Conference was held under the leadership of Rajagopalachari. In this conference, Frank Anthony stated: "The new Hindi today is a symbol of communalism it is a symbol of religion, it is a symbol of language Chauvanism and worst of all, it is a symbol of oppression of the minority languages". Rajagopalachari at this convention declares: " Hindi is as much a foreign language to the non-Hindi speaking people as English to the protagonists of Hindi". Spearheading this movement, DMK organized the Madras State anti-Hindi conference on January 17, 1965. This conference declared January 26, 1965 as a day of mourning. A violent agitation followed. Number of students participated in the protest movement. They later formed a Tamil Nadu students Anti Hindu Agitation Council. More than fifty thousand students of the Madras College took out a procession. These demonstrations took place all over South. Two students immolated themselves. In the prolonged agitation 70 people died. Following this, an official language Amendment Act of 1967 was promulgated. This act encourages bilingualism. States were given the choice to use Hindi or English in official matters. e.g. (a) resolutions, general order rules, notification etc. (b) administrative and other reports and (c) contracts, agreements, licenses, tender form etc. Translations of material supplied in Hindi to English were also made possible under the amendment.



## Activity 1

Why does the language issue create so much passion? Talk to students and friends who have a different mother tongue and note down your findings in your notebook.

## 12.4 DMK MOVEMENT

The north-south divide on the language issue dates back to the days of early western scholars like Roberto di Mobili (1577-1656) Constantius Beschi (1680-1743, Rev. Robert Caldwell (1819-1891). Caldwell was originally responsible for developing the theory that Sanskrit was brought to South India by Aryan Brahman colonists. They also developed a peculiar type of Hinduism, that encouraged idol worship. Tamil was cultivated by the native inhabitants who were addressed as Sudras by the Brahmans. Inherent in this were traces of brahmanical dominance, because the original inhabitants were in fact Chieftains, Soldiers, Cultivators etc. Brahman immigrants failed to conquer these 'Tamilians'. According to the locality, should be substituted. (cf. Eugene Jrschick 1969: 276). Thus, it becomes obvious that the linguistic ethnicity in the South is rooted in caste politics.

Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff, Governor of Madras in 1886, in his address to the graduates of the university of Madras said: "It was these Sanskrit speakers, not Europeans, who lumped up the Southern races as Rakshusas demons. It was they who deliberately grounded all social distinctions on varna, colour". Inferring from these details Barnett concludes, 'The ideological category "non Brahminian"' therefore, was preceded by the development of a sense of a Dravidian cultural history separate, distinct, and perhaps superior to that of the South Indian Brahmins'. It was this cultural history that led to the formation of the South Indian Liberal Federation (Justice Party) in 1916, started as a reactionary movement challenging supremacy of Brahmins in elite occupations, its political discourse remained in English and not in Tamil. From this one may interpret that post-independence linguistic movements were anti-Hindi and pro-English but not necessarily pro-Tamilian.

### Box 12.03

The endorsement of Dravidian identity was central to the movement launched by the Justice party through its English language publication 'Justice'; and Tamil weekly 'Dravidian'. Initial attacks were on Varnasharma Dharma and Gandhi Ji's early endorsement of Varnasharma came under scathing criticism. Pre-ponderance of Brahmins in elite social and political institutions widened the gulf between Brahmins and non-Brahmins in the South.

Earliest reference to importance of Tamil language is found in an article published in *Dravidan* dated September 29, 1920 that expressed satisfaction in the proposal of setting a Tamil university. The decision was taken at the Trichanapoly non-Brahmin conference. The article argued; "Tamil is not properly encouraged in the present universities, and that many *foreign Aryans*, who wielded an influence in the university, brought the language to its present low condition. The article further stressed that the Tamilians will attain progress and acquire political influence only when the Tamil language is approved. (cf. Barnett: 1976, 27).

These anti-Brahmanical sentiments were further strengthened by the formation of Self-Respect League in 1924 by E. V. Ramasami. The movement was an attempt to develop viable cultural alternatives. It did radicalize social and political consciousness among non Brahmins. The importance of self-respect movement declined with the rise of pragmatic congress politics. The non brahmanical wing of the congress party became active in the 1930's and 1940's with the growing realization that congress will be the ruling party in independent India. The leading non-Brahmin Communities of *Kammas* and *Kapooos* was pro-congress. In 1936, Congress won the elections in Madras presidency, under the Government of India act 1935. C. Rajagopalacharia became the premier of Congress government. It is at this point in history that the Dravidian independence movement was born. The agitation was the result of introduction of Hindustani in certain schools as a compulsory subject. *Kudi Arsu Revolt* and *Justice* were opposing Hindi and Hindustani as northern Aryan languages since early 1920's. The language issue thus became a convenient rallying point for the non-congress political parties. The intensive agitation

followed. Political parties in opposition picketed outside 'Premier's' residence. Demonstrations were held outside certain high schools. This was followed by number of meetings and processions. The most provocative slogan used in these demonstrations was, "Down with the Brahmin Raj". A report prepared by the home department in 1939, recorded that 536 persons were arrested during this agitation. The agitation which was pronounced in 1938, dimmed comparatively in 1939. Two significant events of this period were the rise of C.N. Annadurai as a skilled agitationist and the conferment of the title of Periyar to E. V. Ramasami at the Tamil Nadu Women's Conference held in November 1939. Tamil speaking districts of Madras Presidency namely North Arcot, Salem, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, Madurai and Rannad. The demand Dravida Nadu separation day was proclaimed on July 1, 1939. E. V. Ramasami articulated the connection between the need for separation and the language issue. The slogan 'Dravida Nadu for Dravidians' was earned as a response to Brahminical political dominance and penetration of Aryan ideas into Tamilian culture. The anti-Hindustani agitation was interrupted due to second world war. The Congress organized 'Quit India' movement and did not support British war efforts. On the other hand E. V. Ramasami openly came in support of the British and also met Cripps commission and persisted with his demand for a separate Dravida Nadu. He also met Jinnah and Ambedkar with his proposal. Despite vigorous efforts made by Ramasami between 1939-1944; till the formation of the Dravida Kazhagam, he received very little support from the people. Barnett's summation of this period is most emphatic.

#### Activity 2

Do you feel that a separate state on the basis of a separate language is justified? Talk to fellow students and friends and note down your findings.

Radicalization of the Dravidian ideology occurred mainly in the 1930s, but had its roots in activities of E. V. Ramasami, reaching as far back as the 1924 founding of Kudi Arasu. During the 1930s, despite increasing congress popularity as manifested in the 1936 electoral victory and the cleavage between radicals and moderates in the Dravidian movement, "Dravidian" political identity remained salient.

#### 12.4.1 Birth of DMK Movement

The Dravida Kazhagam (DK) was founded at Party's salem conference in 1944. Though Ramasami was elected as the president of the Justice party in 1938, after the anti-Hindustani agitation, while he was in Jail, his ability to generate support was insignificant. When the party re-named itself as DK, Annadurai's influence on the political agenda of the party became distinct, Annadurai realized that old Justice party lacked mass base, as it was perceived to be a party of the rich. He made consistent efforts to promote populist schemes for the uplift of now-growing anti-British feelings among the common people. However, Party President Ramasami and C. Annadurai publicly disagreed on Party's political stand on the day of India's independence, the August 15, 1947 formal split occurred in DK. The DMK emerged as the new party and nearly 75,000 of DK members switched party loyalties. Though the agenda of both the parties remained similar, DMK gained immense political mileage with the publication of Aryan illusion by C. Annadurai, which was banned in 1952 for being inflammatory.

#### 12.4.2 Role of Universal Primary Education

In July 1952, C. Rajagopalachari, Congress government's chief-Minister promoted a programme of universal primary education. According to this programme: children were suppose to spend half-day in school and the other half of the day at their traditional occupations. This was labeled as 'caste based education' by DMK and a massive agitation was launched. Also at the same time, DMK started demanding change in the name of the town *Dalmiapuram* to *Kallakudi* in Trichy district. This was demanded because Dalmia was a north-Indian cement magnate. These were the first post-independence period developments in which the dominance of the north in the Southern states was challenged. The protests were significantly violent. Hundreds of people were injured and at least nine demonstrators died.

**Box 12.04**

This period also recorded the rise of Kamraj faction within the Congress itself. In 1954, Kamraj on the advise of E.V. Ramasami of DK became the chief-Minister of the state. Ramasami called Kamraj "Pukka Tamizhan" (Pure Tamilian) as he came from a backward caste community, had little formal education and did not converse in fluent English like the other well-entrenched leaders. Kamraj ruled the state from 1954 to 1963. It was during this period that DMK built its mass base.

They included many Tamil scholars in their rank and file. Tamil literature and linguistics witnessed a renaissance with the publication of *Mursoli*, *Mam Nadu*, *Dravida Nadu* and *Manram* as party papers and magazines. Drama and other folk medium was used extensively to promote Tamil awareness. Poverty and alienation of Tamils was highlighted through plays like *Parasakti* which was written by Karunanidhi in 1952 and in which Shivajee Ganeshan started. The mass appeal and the mass communication media carried DMK ideology to every household in Madras. It was under these influences that the Tamil language issue assumed violent proportions in 1965.

### 12.4.3 The Language Issue

By now, the language issue became very complex. It no longer restricted itself to DMK's concern for Tamil language and the opposition of Tamil to Hindi, Tamil to Sanskrit, Hindi to English or Tamil to English. But in it were incorporated elements to student politics. (Barnett, 1976: 129). Regional identities assumed proportions of subnationalism. DMK pointed out that 'Hindi speaking' areas constituted only one region of the country. Dominance of a regional language and its compulsory knowledge for recruitment to government jobs created immense insecurity among the student community of the southern states. On January 26, 1969, when protest march was organised, a DMK supporter self-immolated, calling his actions a protest against the imposition of Hindi at the altar of Tamil. Between January 26<sup>th</sup> and February 12<sup>th</sup> four more DMK supporters committed suicide. These self-immolations became highly patriotic events among the students in the state. Even though DMK leader C. Annadurai condemned these politically motivated self-immolation bids, the anti-Hindi 'Martyrs' provided student leadership legitimacy for wider and open political participation. This encouraged the Tamil Nadu students Anti-Hindi Agitation council to take an independent stand with or without DMK support. For the first time Dravid cultural movement found support outside DMK. Both Kamraj of the congress and Annadurai of DMK evoked the central congress leadership to reassure the students in the state, that the assurance given by Pt. Nehru in 1963, about the associate status of English will not be revoked. During this period about 900 arrests were made in Madras city and nearly 200 people arrested in Madurai. In Madras, a ban was imposed on Public meeting till February 15<sup>th</sup>.

Schools and colleges were re-opened on February 8<sup>th</sup>. But students refrained from attending classes on a call given by Tamil Nadu student Anti-Hindi agitation. They demanded a constitutional amendment for retaining English as the language for official communication. Lawyers joined their cause on February 9<sup>th</sup> and refrained from attending courts. Violence followed. A bus was burnt in Trichy. Two post-offices attacked and the appeals made by Annadurai went unheard. From February 10 through 12, what followed was mayhem. Public buildings, Police Stations, Trains, Buses, Post-offices, factories were looted and burnt. According to official estimates 70 people died. This included three children who were killed by Police firing. Ten thousand people were arrested. Property worth ten million rupees was destroyed. The lumpen elements from the slums and streets joined the mob-violence. Two constables in Madurai were beaten to death by the police. DMK's role in these events was not hidden. Though openly they condemned the violence. The violence of 1965 ensured DMK popularity. It also opened vistas for DMK's debacle. DMK now realised that they could no longer sustain a radical agenda which was based on separatist leanings. Hence, they moderated their stance on issues of political autonomy. Also, at the same time necessity of keeping language issue alive, by protecting Tamil interests was not lost sight of; and for this; law abiding citizens like lawyers were roped in for a movement of sustained protest.

It was in the wake of these events, that Lal Bahadur Shastri, then Prime-Minister of India, in a nationwide broadcast on February 11<sup>th</sup> 1963; reaffirmed Nehru's assurance to the student community and made the following statements.

“for an indefinite period..... I would have English as an associates language..... because I do not wish the people of non-Hindi areas to feel that certain doors of advancement are closed to them .....I would have it as an alternative language as long as people require it, and the decision for that I would leave not to the Hindi knowing but non Hindi knowing people.....”.

**12.4.4 Policy on Language Issue**

Policy decisions stated by Shastri in this regard were:

- i) every state can transact its business in the language of its choices or English
- ii) interstate communication could be in English or accompanied by an authentic translation.
- iii) non-Hindi states could correspond with the center in English.
- iv) transaction of business at the central level would be in English
- v) although recruitment exams for central service posts were in English, in 1960, it was decided that Hindi was to be permitted as an alternate. This was followed by a re- assurance given by Shastri to non-Hindi speaking students that their interests would be protected at all expense.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- 1) Write a note on linguistic ethnicity and the reorganization of states. Use between 5 to 10 lines for your answer.

Dotted lines for writing answer 1.

- 2) Write about the DMK Movement concerning the language issue. Use between 5 to 10 lines for your answer.

Dotted lines for writing answer 2.

Shastri's assurances were lauded by the anti-Hindi agitationists and they withdrew their protest on February 22<sup>nd</sup>. This was also followed by numerous regret speeches stating that a peaceful demonstration was taken over by anti-social elements. However, this paved way for DMK to gain political supremacy and in 1967, DMK emerged as the ruling party in the state, it was during DMK regime that on November, 27<sup>th</sup> 1967, an amendment Bill to the official languages act of 1963, section 3 was introduced in the the Lok Sabha. This Bill stipulated that English be used for certain purposes between the central government and the state governments of non-Hindi speaking states. This Bill also enabled Hindi speaking states to dispense states. This Bill also enabled Hindi speaking states to dispense with English altogether, if they so desired. DMK though disturbed decided to support the Bill if it was passed undiluted. That is if it granted statutory sanction for continued use of the English.

## 12.5 PUNJABI SUBA MOVEMENT

The most significant linguistic movement in the north dates back to 1919. Central Sikh League was set up in December, 1919. This was followed by the formation of Shiromani Akali Dal in 1920. Started as an organization for the protection of religious shrine, it soon became a religio - political organization, fighting for the interests of the Sikh community. By the end of 1946, communal pattern of politics was distinctively visible. On August 18<sup>th</sup>, 1947, Punjab was divided on communal lines according to Radcliffe Award. Hindus who constituted only 30% in the united Punjab became a majority recording 70% of the total population. 15% of Sikh population of un-partition Punjab now registered 30% and became the only significant minority in post-partition Punjab. Muslims were reduced to insignificant members. Migrations from newly formed Pakistan resulted in the concentration of Hindus in the south Eastern Districts and Sikhs in the Central District. This resulted in general refugee tension acquiring a communal shade, rural urban cleavages emerged among the Sikh settled and migrant populations. Local Hindu population of region felt that the more advanced people of erstwhile Punjab exploited them.

Migrant Sikhs and majority of local Sikhs were rooted in the soil. They were peasant proprietors whose love for land is legendary. The refugee Sikhs population was the worst victim of partition. Because of easy identification, they suffered heavy losses. Large number of their sacred shrines and cultural centres were left in Punjab. The Hindu population, both refugees and original inhabitants were by and large traders. They were, with some efforts able to re-establish themselves. Their cultural roots were intact. There was a Pan Hindu Culture and they could easily mesh into it. The politics of early partition days was turbulent. The landed peasantry and urban sikhs aligned themselves with Congress. Efforts of the Akali Dal to force a political unity among Sikhs proved futile on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 1948 all the elected MLA's joined the Congress. However, Akali leadership outside the legislature continued a vocal struggle for the protection of Sikh identity. While the constitution of India was taking its shape, Akali Dal demanded constitutional safeguards, and recognition of Punjabi language in Gurmukhi Script.

### Box 12.05

On 15<sup>th</sup> November, 1948 at the behest of Master Tara Singh, Twenty three Akali legislators asserted that if five statutory safeguards in their demands were not accepted, they should be allowed to form a separate province comprising of seven Districts of Ludhiana, Ferozepur, Amritsar, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur. Punjabi Suba was given as an alternative slogan. But in April, 1949, Sikh convention declared Punjabi Suba as its sole objective. The demands for separate electorate and reservation of seats for Sikhs in the legislature were out rightly rejected by the then constituent assembly. For adoption of Punjabi language, Bhim Singh Sacchar, then Chief Minister of Punjab evolved a formula. According to this formula, the province was divided into two zones - the Hindi Zone and the Punjabi Zone.

Punjabi written in Gurmukhi Script was to become the language of the Punjab Zone, and Hindi written in Devnagri Script was to become to language of the Hindi Zone, not to retain the bilingual character of the State, it was imperative that people learnt both languages. This formula ran in trouble. The Arya Samaj Schools refused to subscribe to it. Soon enough, Sacchar lost support. Akali disenchantment with the state widened. As a follow-up of this chain of events; on 10<sup>th</sup> October, 1949, Master Tara Singh stated.

The Sikhs have a culture different from the Hindu language of the Sikhs is different their traditions and histories were different, their heroes were different, their social order was different, their there has no reason, why they should not claim the right of self determination for themselves. (Akali Patrika, 11<sup>th</sup> October, 1949).

### 12.5.1 A Separate Linguistic State

Master Tara Singh, by July, 1950 started demanding a separate linguistic state for people speaking Punjabi and writing in Gurumukhi Script. He also wanted internal autonomy for the province as was granted to Kashmir. Historical evidence as recorded by Harcharan Singh Bajwa, a member of the Akali Dal Working Committee from 1931 to 1960 record that demand for a linguistic state was an outcome of Dr. Ambedkar's advise. Following suggestions are attributed to Dr. Ambedkar by certain Akali leaders:

If you had cast lots with Pakistan, you would have been a minority there. In joint Punjab, you were a minority except in two Tehsils, which too were not contagious. In Eastern Punjab too, you are a minority. If you clamour for a Sikh State, it will be a cry in the wilderness. Why don't you ask for a Punjabi speaking state? Congress is committed to linguistic basis for reorganization of the states. They can defer satisfaction of this demand but they cannot oppose it for long. You can have a Sikh State in the name of "Punjabi Suba".

Bajwa says this suggestion opened the path to have a de-facto Sikh State. The movement further acquired momentum because of opposition from Hindus. This resulted in the 1951 census debacle. Majority of the Punjabi speaking Hindus reported Hindi as their mother tongue. The urban Punjabi Hindu put forward their demand for a Maha Punjab comprising of territories of Punjab, PEPSU, Himachal Pradesh, Delhi and some Districts of Uttar Pradesh, in opposition to demand for "Punjabi Suba". However, Hindus in the South Eastern part of Punjab, now known as Haryana, were not receptive to the idea. They wanted their own separate state.



Anti-Hindi Demonstration in Chennai

Courtesy : Sundaram

The Akali Dal submitted an eighteen page memorandum to the state reorganization commission for the demarcation of Punjabi Suba. They also mobilized support of rural Sikhs. The Sikh religion was evoked as commandment for political participation. The state re-organisaion commission rejected demands of Akali Dal. Instead, a formula was proposed for the integration of Punjab, the PEPSU and Himachal Pradesh into one administrative unit. However, on the personal intervention of Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru, February, 1956, the following regional formula was proposed:

- i) Himachal Pradesh to be kept out of Punjab (contrary to the SRC's recommendation) and PEPSU to be merged with the Punjab.
- ii) The new State of the Punjab was to be demarcated from the Punjabi and Hindi speaking regions. Both Punjabi and Hindi were to be declared the regional languages of the State.
- iii) The Punjab was to remain a bilingual State and Punjabi ( in Gurmukhi Script) and Hindi (in Devnagri Script) were to be the official languages of the State.
- iv) for administrative and development purposes, the two regions would have two regional committees consisting of the elected members of the Assembly (including the ministers from each region). The final decision, however, in each case was to be taken by the State Cabinet. In case of difference in the views of the Regional Committees, the Governor was to take the final decision.

### 12.5.2 The Nehru-Master Pact

This arrangement was followed by Nehru- Master Pact. In accordance with this pact the Akali Dal merged with the Congress, on 30<sup>th</sup> September, 1956, the Working Committee of Akali Dal declared; " Dal would concentrate on the protection and promotion of educational religious, cultural and economic interest of the Panthi". But this arrangement was not satisfactory for Urban Punjabi Hindus. They felt their power was eroded. The Punjabi-Hindus resisted teaching of Punjabi in Gurmukhi Script to Punjabi Hindus. Though 'Save Hindi Agitation' died by December, 1957, Pratap Singh Kairon then Chief Minister of Punjab realised its consequences. Thus he never implemented the Regional formula. On 15<sup>th</sup> September, 1958, Master Tara Singh re-opened the demand for Punjabi Suba. The demand received legitimacy because of bifurcation for Bombay into States of Mahatrashtara and Gujarat.

#### Activity 3

Why was the Nehru-Master Pact not satisfactory? Talk to fellow students and discuss the text above with them. Note down your findings in your notebook.

This left Punjab as the only bilingual state. Encashing this fresh support, the Akali Dal contested Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhanadhak Committee (SGPC) election on the issue of 'Punjabi Suba'. They won 132 out of 139 total seats contested. On 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 1960 a Punjabi Suba convention was held at Amritsar. The demand for a separate Punjabi Speaking State in this convention was also supported by leaders of Swantatra Party, Samykat Socialist Party (SSP), Praja Socialist Party (PSP) and freedom fighters like Saifudin Kitchloo and Pandit Sunder Lal. A formal agitation for a separate Punjabi State was launched in May 1960. After the arrest of Master Tara Singh, Fateh Singh, Vice President of Akali Dal at that time, took over the leadership. He firmly asserted that they wanted only a Punjabi Linguistic State. Whether Hindus constituted a majority of Sikhs was not their priority. Subsequently political realignments took place. Communists now supported Akalis in their demand. Congress strengthened its mass base among the rural Sikhs. Jansangh became popular with urban Hindus and a small section of urban Sikhs.

#### Box 12.06

Political scientists like Paul Brass have suggested that it was the process of the elite formation that gave momentum to Punjab Struggle. This period also witnessed a split in Akali Dal. Master Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh's stand on creating a linguistic state within the territorial boundaries of India nation state was vindicated. Sant Fateh Singh temporarily suspended the movement at the time of Chinese aggression in 1962. The movement resurrected itself after the death of Kairon and Pt. Nehru in 1964. Lal Bahadur Shastri's regime also continued to resist the demand for 'Punjabi Suba'. After the failure of talks with Shastri Government, Sant Fateh Singh announced from Akal Takht on 16<sup>th</sup> August, 1965 that if his demands were not met, he would fast unto death from 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1965. He further emotionalised his demand saying that if he survived the fast for fifteen days, he would immolate himself on the fifteenth day. On 5<sup>th</sup> September, 1965, Indo-Pak War started. During War, Sikhs proved their valour once again.

The centre set-up a three member committee comprising of Y.B. Chawan, Indira Gandhi and Mahavir Tyagi; two days after the cease -fire to look into the demands for a 'Punjabi Suba'. This three member committee was assisted by 22 members parliamentary committee under the Chairmanship of Lok Sabha Speaker Sardar Hukam Singh. After the death of Shastri in January, 1966, Mrs. Gandhi convened a meeting of congress party's working committee on 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1966. This committee passed the resolution requesting the Government to create a Punjabi speaking state. This was followed by parliamentary committee's resolution on the same lines on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1966. A Punjab State's re-organization bill and appointment of Punjab boundary commission under the Chairmanship of Justice J.C. Shah followed these developments, the other two members of the commission were Subinal Datt and M.M. Philip. It was on 1<sup>st</sup> November 1966 that the state was finally divided into Punjab and Haryana. The state of Punjab now comprised of 41% area and 55% of the total population of erstwhile Punjab. Majority of its population was now that of the Sikhs. The central Government kept its control over Chandigarh and Bhakhra and Beas Dam Project. However, most of the objections of Akali leadership were met. The Sikhs constituted a majority in eight of the eleven districts.

Re-organization of Punjab using linguistic ethnicity as its plank has not been without trouble. Many Punjabi speaking areas were left out in the process. Chandigarh sharing of river water that led to post 1980's problems continues to daunt the region. One may state here that linguistic ethnicity in Indian context has been used as a complement to religious, caste and other ethnies. It has never operated as an exclusive principle of re-organization.

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## **12.6 OTHER LINGUISTIC ETHNICITY MOVEMENTS IN INDIA**

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Surendra Gopal argues that by the tenth century, the basic nationalities in India had been formed. He lists these nationalities as the Assamese, Oriyas, Andhras, Punjabis, Gujaratis, Marathas, Bengalis, Kannadigs, Tamils, Malayales, etc. and also asserts the fact that these nationalities settled around the fertile Yamuna Ganga Doab region and its southern neighbour in the territory of central India. These nationalities emerged as strong ethno linguistic groups largely conforming to regional territories. Brij, Awadhi, Bhojpuri, Maithalli, and Chattisgiri developed in the Yamuna Doab region, commonly known as Aryavarth, Aryuratha, politically remained most significant. But it never acquired strong ethno linguistic identity. The language movement remained dormant, as the local languages were denied imperial patronage. It was sufi saint tradition perpetuated by Kabir, Malik Mohammad Jyasi, Vidyapati Tulsi and Surdas that kept the local languages vibrant. Ethno linguistic nationalities perpetuated under the Mughal Emperor Akbar. Akbar directed his empire into the provinces of Ajmer, Lahore, Gujarat, Bihar Bengal etc. the Rajput and jat ethno - linguistic groups asserted themselves in this period. The Maratha identity under Shiva jee was in response to Mughals march to Penninsular India. The Kanada and Telugu identities surfaced at the time of annexation of Bijapur and Golkunda Kingdoms. Powerful ethno-linguistic nationalities crystalized in the Punjab, the Bengal and the Mysore by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It was primarily for this reason that two most important ethno-linguistic movements in British India surfaced in Bengal and Punjab. Both these movements were linked to regional aspirations, they acquired obvious national or 'Swadeshi' over tones to gather larger acceptance and legitimacy. The slogan "Pagri Sambalo Jata" (beckoning Punjabi jats, to fight the Britishers) was symbolic of linguistic solidarity. This linguistic ethnic solidarity absorbed within its fold Hindu, Muslim and Sikh individualities. Punjabi nationality also contributed to the formation of powerful Gaddar Party in America. Demands for a separate Punjabi nation state were also rife during this period for some time. It was at this time that unionist party with the support of British Government captured power in Punjab. The Sikh ethnicity asserted itself under the leadership of Akali Dal Muslim ethnicity was also nurtured by using Urdu as the link language for establishing religious and national identity.

### **12.6.1 Reorganization of States**

The organization of states of independent India on the principle of linguistic affinity, witnessed dismemberment of large regional entities. Madras and Central Provinces provide one example. On a similar pattern small states were integrated. Madhya Bharat, Patiala and East Punjab were integrated. The same process also resulted in linguistic



strife's in different parts of the nascent democracy. Demand for linguistic nationality resulted in the splitting of Bombay into Maharashtra and Gujarat. Maha Punjab was divided into states of Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab.

Regional and linguistic solidarity has also been responsible for the emergence of regional political parties. The rise of DMK, AIADMK, Telugu Desam, Akali Dal, Assam Gana Parishad, Maharashtrawadi Gomantak Dal National Liberation Front, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha etc. are all expressions of political ambitions of provincial ethno-linguistic nationalities. International aspects of linguistic nationality issue constantly assert that India has successfully dealt with its linguistic diversity issues. A detailed examination in a historical perspective suggests that, if these were violent linguistic movements in the past, there are strong under currents in certain pockets even now.

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## 12.7 TRIBAL LINGUISTIC MOVEMENTS

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Out of 1965 mother tongues recorded by the 1961 census, approximately 500 were reported from tribal regions. The Santhali, Gondi and Khasi are major linguistic groups, Tribal linguistic groups in the India are classified as (i) Dravidian (ii) Austric (iii) Tibeto Chinese. The diversity of tribal languages were crushed in the process of re-organization of state structure. A case study of language scenario from Orissa makes it explicit. In the 1961 census state of Orissa recorded only 15 million Oriya Speakers. In 1981 this figure dramatically doubled to 30 million, while the number of Kharia and Bhumiji speaking people declined from 1.4 lac and 91,000 (1961, 1971 census) to 49,000 and 28,208 respectively in the 1981 census. It is surprising that none of the tribal languages are recognised by the eighth schedule of the constitution, even though they are spoken by a large segment of Indian population. Santhali is spoken by 36 lakh, Bhili by 12.5 lakh, Lammi by 12 lacs, yet they find no official recognition. Inadvertent hierarchy of languages created by the eighth schedule of the constitution, and state patronage granted to the official state language under the three language formula has further alienated the original inhabitants of our motherland. With the rising levels of literacy among the tribals, the awareness of their ethnic attributes is also heightened. This has led to some significant linguistic ethnicity movements among them. I am referring to only three of them here placed in the eighth schedule of the constitution.

### 12.7.1 The Santhali Language Movement

Santhali identity assertion movements are recorded since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Kherwar movement. Essentially a social mobility movement, Santhals wanted to register their presence as an important segment of larger Hindu population. They acquired Sanskrit traits and started wearing the sacred thread. The Janadharis Santhals distinguished them from non Janadharis and did not intermarry. But by 1938, Adabasi movement started consolidation itself in the Santhal Paragona region. They started demanding a separate province for the original tribes of Chota Nagpur area, sought representation in the Bihar assembly and demanded introduction of Santhali and other aboriginal languages as medium of instruction in schools. The **Sarna Dhorma Samlet** started by Ragnath Murmu was started as part of the Jharkhand Movement to express tribal solidarity. This organization is perpetuating Santhali original scripts and scriptures. An icon called **Guru Gomke** is created. Guru is the original creator the **Kherwar Bir**, which is an equivalent of Mahabharata. The Santhals who constitute a larger linguistic group than the Sindhis and Kashmiris assert their identity. However there are division with the movement. One segment supports Roman script comprising of converted Christians, another group supporting **Al Chiki Santhali**. The leaders of the Jharkhand movement have tried to minimise this difference in order to consolidate their demand for a separate state. Santhali is now introduced as a medium of instruction at primary school level but has failed to acquire a place in the eighth schedule of the constitution.

### 12.7.2 The Language Movement of the Mishings

The Mishings or Miri, original inhabitants of Siang and Subandshree districts of Arunachal Pradesh are the second largest scheduled tribe of Assam. They number approximately three lakhs. The Mishings have vehemently defended their traditional boundaries and original dialect. In 1968, a group of enlightened Miris formed the "Mishing Agam Kebang" that in Mishing implies language Association and adopted

Roman Script for Mishng language. The Government of Assam initially resisted native Mishings attempts for recognition of Mishi language; but has now given in; under increasing pressure. Efforts are still on to introduce Mishi at primary school level. Government of Assam, has in principle agreed to appoint Mishi language teachers in predominantly Mishi Schools.

**12.7.3 Ethno Linguistic Aspirations of the Jayantia**

Started in 1975, Jayantia language and literary association become active after Khasi (language used by Khasi Tribals) gained recognition as a medium of instruction in schools. Written in Romanscript Jayantia language may remain confined only to a small section of the Jayantia speaking populace. Thus a conscious effort was made to assert their linguistic identity. The Jayantia language and literary association regularly holds literary conferences, encourages debate and essay writing competitions. It also publishes literary work in Jayantia language.

Independent India has witnessed number of tribal resurgence movements. Adibasi interests remained unregistered because tribals did not constitute a pressure group. One may argue that both development and deprivation are equally responsible for giving impetus to ethno-linguistic movements. Literacy, mobility, political participation are some of the factors that have made people aware of their distinct identity. Regional autonomy aspirations are directly related to levels of political awareness. Issues that have emerged in the demand for a separate Gorkaland, Bodoland, Jharkhand are significant pointers in this direction. These agitations are essentially asking for greater autonomy and regional power within the existing federal structure of Indian nation state. Emergence of Mizo Union (1946), Goa National Council (1946), Eastern Tribal Council (1952), APHLC (1960) are interpreted as middle class uprisings. Mizo Freedom Organization (1940), MNF (1961) were politically more vocal in their demands.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) What do we refer to as the Punjabi Suba movement? Write briefly on it in about 5-10 lines.

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- 2) Clarify with an example the tribal linguistic movements. Write your answer in about 5-10 lines.

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### 12.7.4 Language and Culture

In order to achieve their political ambitions, leadership invariably combined the issue of language and culture. Often, these resulted in fostering of group identity. This group identity and solidarity thus authenticated demand for a separate regional entity. The fusion of Gorkhali, Kurmali and Santali languages as workhold and Jharkhand movement is an interesting example of this foundation. Similarly, formation of Khaskura, now recognized as Garkhali language by the G.N.L.F. is a blending of various dialects of Nepali origin. Kurmali and Kuruli that were initially only oral languages acquired script and unite historically under the Jharkhand movement. It is important to note there that regional movements are often portrayed as negative and divisive. The fact that many of these regional linguistic movements have consolidated rich heritage available in the oral tradition remains understood.

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## 12.8 CAUSES OF LANGUAGE MOVEMENT

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Every ethno-linguistic community evolves a security net around itself. It takes upon itself the task of protecting its dwindling heritage. If threatened it resolves to organise it and launch protest movements. Regional language movements as an expression of ethnicity emerge, when they are threatened by:

- i) On adoption of Hindi as an official language, small linguistic communities were apprehensive that this move would restrict Government Jobs for their community members, subsequently their voice in the affairs of the government would become inaudible.
- ii) Middle class power elite was propagating continuation of English for official use. This bilingualism further reduced opportunities for those not conversant with either Hindi or English.
- iii) Consequently a north south divide occurred, since post independence leadership largely identified itself with northern India, primarily due to disproportionate size of the individual state, its affinity with Hindi was overplayed. Anti Hindi Movement that originated in the South interprets a Hindi domination as symbolic of Aryans and Brahmnical cultural domination.
- iv) Despite tall claims and protection given to linguistic minorities and languages under Articles 350, 29.1, 344 (I), 345, 346 and 347, language claim of the minorities are often ignored Article 350(a) of the constitution provides that every state authority should facilitate primary education in the mother tongue. But the common perception at the level of district administration and education empowerment is that such efforts would disintegrated the Indian nation state. They would encourage individuals ethno-linguistic aspirations, and thus isolate him. There is also apprehension that education in local dialects would deprive people from attaining higher and quality education. The inherent ambiguity in the constitution between 350 and 351, the former providing individual languages and the later supporting official use of Hindi, has promoted linguistic conflicts in India.

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## 12.9 LET US SUM UP

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For the past three decades, Indian State has not confronted any serious linguistic conflict. From this one may infer that India's linguistic conflicts have successfully been neutralized. They are no longer a threat to Indian Nation Integration. Post independence era, particularly between 1947 - 1967 witnessed numerous linguistic conflicts. A sizeable chunk of our political energy was spent in resolving these crises. Stray incidences of

violence are still recorded. **Badauan** in Uttar Pradesh was a scene of communal rioting on 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1989, after the decision of Uttar Pradesh Government to introduce Urdu as the second official language of the state. Language and ethnicity have close affinity. Language is perceived as the symbol of ethnic unity. Even though forces of modernization and exigencies of competitive society have reduced the functional importance of individual mother tongues, as community attributes, they are very important. State interference in language issues is now minimal. Policy of accommodation has paid rich dividends. But there is a caution at the end of all this and is summarily stated by Robert D. King – Language problems are almost never what they appear to be; they are very often camouflage to hide agendas that are linked only tenuously to language and linguistics”. It has already been shown that language movements in south were reactions to caste domination and exploitation. Similarly Punjabi Suba movement had its roots in Sikh identity. Tribal linguistic movements are also located in ethnicity, identity and survival debate. Though linguistic ethnicity poses little threat to Indian Nation, its active status for ethnic formation should always be remembered.

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## 12.10 KEY WORDS

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<b>Ethnicity</b>	:	Refers to a category of people who can be distinguished on the basis of the culture, religion, race or language.
<b>Linguistic</b>	:	Concerns the language of a category of people which in turn has ramifications for culture of the area.
<b>Modernization</b>	:	The process by which a culture or society becomes socially and technologically more advanced and a better livelihood is assured for vast sections of society.

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## 12.11 FURTHER READINGS

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## 12.12 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The idea of nation-states corresponding to linguistic boundaries began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In India this principle was not immediately accepted. Prior to India's Independence, state boundaries did not follow a linguistic principle. After Independence the language issue and the reorganization of states was seriously considered. However it must be pointed out that linguistic reorganization of states also involved aspirations for caste and communities, to better their lot. The debate regarding language and the reorganization of states continues to this day and language is a very sensitive issue. However today India has many states that have been organized on the basis of language and use their own language for transacting business within the state itself. Linguistic ethnicity between the North and the South in India is several centuries old, and is rooted in caste politics according to Jrschick. The DMK emerged out of the DK when differences emerged among the leaders over the day of Independence. In due course of time DMK helped align Tamil literatures and published books, party papers, and magazines in Tamil to promote Tamil awareness. DMK ideology was spread all over Madras. By 1965 student politics came

into the language issue Regional identity became very important and self-immolations by students became politically motivated. These were condemned by DMK leaders but student violence on the language issue in 1965. All this led to the formulation of a policy on language and its use in the Centre and the States.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) The Pubjabi Suba refers to the establishment of a Pubjabi speaking state. The antecedents for such a demand date back to 1919 and continued beyond Independence in 1947. The advise for a Punjabi speaking state rather than a Sikh state was given by Ambedkar. Who advised that through a language (Pubjabi) a Sikh State called Pubjabi Suba could be obtained. In 1966 the Punjab State was divided into Pubjab and Haryana.
- 2) As literacy rose among the tribals their awareness of their ethnic attributes also increased. For example the Jayantias asserted their identity since 1975 holding literary conferences and publishing literary work. Literary, mobility and political participation were ways in which a distinct ethnic identity was asserted.



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