

Structure

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25.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit we are going to introduce to you the concept of tribe in the Indian context and discuss some of the most characteristic external features of the social structure of the Indian tribes. After you have studied this, you should be able to

- indicate what is meant by social structure in relation to the tribes in India
- describe important external features of their social structure
- provide suitable examples from Indian tribes illustrating the external features of their social structure.

25.1 INTRODUCTION

Block 6 on Tribes in India aims at familiarising you with various aspects of tribal life in our country. In this unit, we have described external features of social structure of the tribal groups. For this purpose, the unit first discusses in general the concept of social structure and then examines the concept of tribe in the Indian context. Next, the unit classifies tribes in India by their geographic distribution, racial and linguistic affinities and demographic features. It also discusses the issue of isolation from and interaction with other groups. Further it describes economic pursuits followed by various tribal populations. These external features of their social structure act like boundary markers and give the tribals identity. Finally, the unit also describes the socio-economic changes, affecting social structure of these groups.

25.2 SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Social structure is one of those concepts in social sciences, which has been discussed at length and often the views of the different authors differ significantly. The concept is important enough so that it cannot be given up. Whether by social structure we mean actually existing relations among persons, or consistent constant groups in society, or a system of expectation, or a set of ideal rules or a mental construct, we agree that social structure refers to what is persistent and tend to recur in the society. For example, if we meet a stranger on the road and ask for some information, that relationship with the stranger will not be considered a dimension of structure but our relationship with our parents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts will be and so also our rights, duties and obligations arising out of those relationships. If these are infringed, curtailed and violated then there has to be some mechanism to bring things to order.

Without order no social structure can work. In the process of restoring order some changes may occur. For example, among the Khasi, a tribe of Meghalaya, the clan title runs from mother to daughter. It is the youngest daughter who is the custodian of family property and it is the mother's brother who should manage the property and look after his nieces and nephews. But now the social context in which the Khasi life has changed. The Khasi people come in contact with many other people with different customs and practices and are exposed to modern communication media, knowledge and institutions. Thus the Khasi men like other **patrilineal** groups would also like to have property and manage their own family rather than that of their sisters. The result is that the Khasi **matrilineal** system is changing.

In other words, although a person is born into a given social structure, it is not static. In order that a social structure is able to maintain itself, its members should be replenished, old will die, young should take their places. There should be some mechanism through which knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, customs and practices of the community are transmitted to the young ones. As we have seen in the case of the Khasi, there is internal dynamics but there is also a pressure of external factors on their social structure. Although geographical, racial and linguistic factors are external they continuously interact with the internal factors of the social structure in complex ways and so also is the case with the size of the population and the way people earn their living. How far a people are isolated from others and what

is the nature of their interaction with others are equally important factors. The factors, both those, which are within and without, are continuously in interaction with one another in a variety of ways. Such is the dynamic concept of social structure. Let us now turn to the concept of tribe in the Indian context.

25.3 TRIBES IN INDIA

In India, 427 groups had been recognised as scheduled tribes in the year 1981. They formed approximately 8.08 per cent of the total Indian population. In absolute numbers, according to 1981 census, their population was 51,628,638. By 1991 their number reached 67,758,000, around 8.10 percent of the total population. Their decadal growth during 1981-1991 was 31.64 percent, which was higher than the national growth (23.51 percent) (Census of India 1991, Final Population Totals). In the year 2003, there are 533 tribes as per notified schedule under Article 342, with largest of them being in Orissa (62) (Annual Report, Ministry of Rural Development). Who are these people?

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

25.3.1 In Ancient and Medieval Periods

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

25.3.2 During the British Rule

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

many places the indigenous populations resented new regulations, new levies and new settlers in their areas and they rebelled.

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

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

25.3.3 In Independent India

Following Independence, the policy of protection and development for the population identified as tribe has been made into a constitutional obligation. A list of tribes was adopted for this purpose. In 1950, this list contained 212 names, which was modified by successive presidential orders. In 2003, the list contained 533 names. The Constitution, however, does not provide a definition of a tribe. The people who have been listed in the Constitution and mentioned in successive presidential orders are called scheduled tribes. This is the administrative concept of a tribe. In February 2004, the Government of India circulated a Draft National Policy on Tribes. It has now become a subject of debate among scholars.

About the geographical distribution, racial and linguistic features and demographic characteristics of tribes we will discuss in sections 25.4, 25.5 and 25.6. Here, we will now turn to the views of scholars who have studied tribal populations in India.

Activity 1

What is the word for 'tribe' in your language? Write at least five names of Indian leaders who belong to tribal groups. Give reasons for their fame.

25.3.4 Understanding of the Concept of Tribe by Some Scholars

Academics too have been making their efforts to define tribe. Tribes have been defined as a group of indigenous people with shallow history, having common name, language and territory, tied by strong kinship bonds, practising endogamy, having distinct customs, rituals and beliefs, simple social rank and political organisation, common ownership of resources and technology. Such definitions are not very helpful because when the situation of tribes is examined carefully not

only do we find a lot of variations in their life styles but also many of these features are shared by the caste people. This raises the problem as to how to distinguish them from castes.

There have been other conceptual attempts to define tribes. They have been considered as a stage in the social and cultural evolution. Some others have considered that the production and consumption among the tribes are household based and unlike peasants they are not part of a wider economic, political and social network. Bailey (1960) has suggested that the only solution to the problem of definition of tribes in India is to conceive of a **continuum** of which at one end are tribes and at the other are castes. The tribes have **segmentary, egalitarian** system and are not mutually inter-dependent, as are castes in a system of organic solidarity. They have direct access to land and no intermediary is involved between them and land.

Sinha (1965) too thinks of tribe and caste in terms of a continuum but his ideas are more elaborate and he brings in the concept of civilisation. For him, the tribe is ideally defined in terms of its isolation from the networks of social relations and cultural communications of the centres of civilisation. In their isolation the tribal societies are sustained by relatively primitive subsistence technology such as shifting cultivation and hunting and gathering, and maintain an egalitarian segmentary social system guided entirely by non-literate ethnic tradition (Sinha 1982: 4).

It has been suggested that wherever civilisations exist, tribes can be described, defined and analysed only in contrast to that civilisation which it may fight, serve, mimic or adopt but cannot ignore. In India, there are numerous examples of tribes transforming themselves into the larger entity of the caste system; others have become Christian or Muslim. They also join the ranks of peasantry and in modern times become wage-labourers in plantations, mining and other industries. Thus, in our concept of tribe we should not overlook these changing aspects.

Having briefly discussed the various issues involved in defining tribes, for our purpose, we will take here those people as tribes who have been termed as scheduled tribes.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Write, in one line, the modern terms for tribes in Indian languages.

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ii) Write, in five lines, how the idea of scheduled tribes emerged in India?

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iii) Discuss, in ten lines, how different scholars have defined the term tribe?

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25.4 GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION

Considering the widespread distribution of tribes all over the country it is necessary to group them into broad geographical regions. On the basis of ecology, it is possible to group them into five distinct regions namely, Himalayan region (with tribes like the Gaddi, the Jaunsari, the Naga etc.), Middle India (with tribes like the Munda, the Santal etc.), Western India (with tribes like the Bhil, the Grasia), South Indian Region (with tribes like the Toda, the Chenchu etc.) and the Islands Region (with tribes like the Onge in Bay of Bengal, the Minicoyans in Arabian Sea). The following map (figure 25.1) shows the location of some of the tribal groups in India.

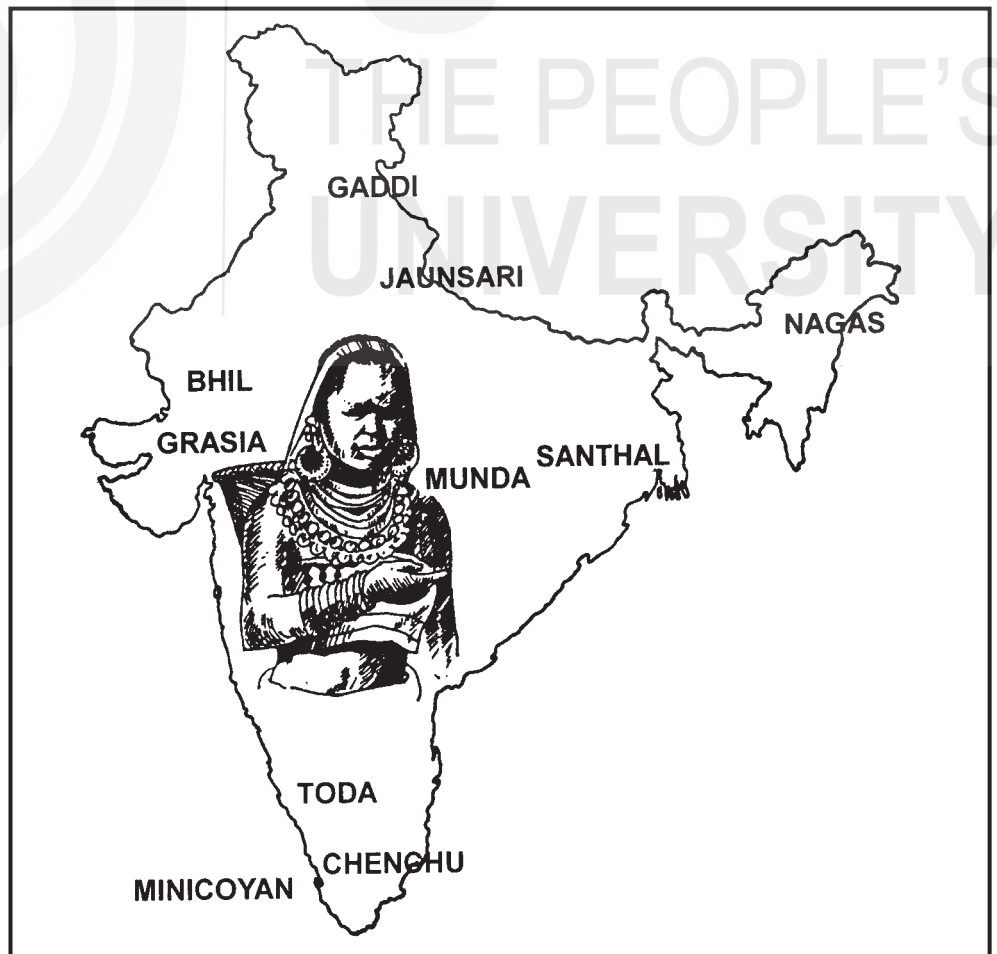


Fig. 25.1: Location of some tribal groups in India

25.5 RACIAL AND LINGUISTIC AFFINITIES

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

25.5.1 Three Main Racial Divisions

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

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

a) **The Proto-Australoids**

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

b) **The Mongoloids**

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

c) **The Negrito**

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

25.5.2 Linguistic Affiliations

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

- 1) **Austro-Asiatic family:** There are two branches of this family, namely, Mon-Khmer branch and Munda branch. Languages of the first branch are spoken by Khasi and Nicobari tribals. Languages of Munda branch are Santhali, Gondi, Kharia etc.
- 2) **Tibeto-Chinese family:** There are two sub-families of this type, namely Siamese-Chinese sub-family and Tibeto-Burman sub-family. In extreme North-Eastern frontier of India Khamti is one specimen of the Siamese-Chinese sub-family. The Tibeto-Burman sub-family is further sub-divided into

several branches. Tribals of Nagaland and Lepcha of Darjeeling speak variants of Tibeto-Burman languages.

- 3) **Indo-European family:** Tribal languages such as Hajong and Bhili are included in this group.
- 4) **Dravidian family:** Languages of Dravidian family are, for example, spoken by Yeruva of Mysore, Oraon of Chotanagpur.

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

Let us now turn to the population-size of tribes in India. But before discussing demographic features, complete Activity 2.

Activity 2

- a) Identify the racial division to which you belong. Are people in the area of your domicile from the same or different racial group? If different, describe their physical features.
- b) Identify the stock of language to which your language belongs. Do people in the Area of your domicile speak the same or different language? If different, name the stock of language to which their languages belong.

25.6 DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Social structure is closely related with the size of the group. An optimum size is absolutely necessary for a group to replicate itself socially and biologically. A group must produce enough number of people to replace its members of either sex and of different age groups. This would ensure physical continuity of the group but it also needs human beings for maintaining its social structure. The human beings have knowledge and skill for production, values, beliefs, and the ability to relate to the nature as well as to human beings; norms and customs to lead an organised life and many other concerns. All this can be maintained, replenished and transmitted if there are enough human beings but it must also have adequate balance between sexes and age groups. At one time, the Toda of the Nilgiri were facing biological and social crisis because their number had fallen to a mere 475 and there were not enough females in reproductive age. Biologically it was facing extinction, socially it could not maintain its various institutions. It is like in a football game a team not having enough players to man the different positions. The game cannot go on. In the same predicament are the Great Andamanese in Andaman Islands. Their total population is just in two digits.

On the other side, there are tribes like the *Gond* of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh, the Bhil of Rajasthan, Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh and the Santal of Bihar, Orissa, and West Bengal whose population runs into lakhs. There are a very large number of groups which fall in the intermediate category like the Dubla in Gujarat, the Chenchu, the Irula in South, the Boro-Kachari in the North-

East. Then there are small tribes like the Toda and the Kota in the Nilgiris, the Birhor in Bihar, etc. The larger tribal groups are spread over into a number of states and, therefore, the same group is subjected to different policies and programmes, which ultimately influence their social structure. For example, the Kurumba, a small tribe in south are distributed in Kerala, Tamilnadu and Karnataka states. Not only are they called by different names in different states but also are exposed to different development programmes. In each state they are given education in the official language of the State. In Kurumba's case it is Malayalam, Tamil and Kannada in respective states. Their own language has become less important. This has far reaching consequences for their society. Besides many other changes, they have become endogamous, that is, they marry within the Kurumba group of the State of their habitation. Clearly the factors of isolation and interaction are quite crucial in describing social structures of tribal populations.

25.7 ISOLATION FROM AND INTERACTION WITH OTHER GROUPS

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

Some examples of Interaction

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

Ghurye (1943) calls the tribal populations of India as imperfectly integrated segment of the Hindus. Bose (1971) discusses how the Hindus absorbed the tribal population in their fold. There are tribes, which are fully integrated with the wider social, economic, political and religious framework, and others are so integrated in varying degrees. Then, there are tribes playing the role of bridge and buffer to their neighbours. Let us see what this means.

The Role of Bridge and Buffer

In North-East India, the tribes played the role of bridge and buffer to their neighbours. That is some tribes allowed two powerful neighbours to interact through

them, that was the role of a bridge. In some other cases they kept the two powerful groups separated, that was the role of buffer.

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

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

Thus, if we take a long view of the history we find that the tribal populations have been interacting within their regions in a variety of ways. They also developed regional patterns of interaction. In the process of interaction they contributed to the development of Indian civilisation.

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

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Give geographical distribution of Indian tribes. Illustrate each zone with suitable examples. Use six lines for your answer.

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- ii) Classify Indian tribes in terms of their physical features and languages spoken by them. Use seven lines for your answer.

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- iii) Why demographic factor is important in considering social structure of a population? Use ten lines for your answer.

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iv) Give two examples of relatively isolated tribes, which are part of a wider network of economic relations. Use ten lines for your answer.

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25.8 ECONOMIC PURSUITS

How a group satisfies its material needs has far reaching consequences in almost all aspects of life. Some scholars would say that it has determining qualities. In order to satisfy material wants, resources have to be located and means to exploit them have to be designed. For this appropriate technology and organisation are required so that with minimum efforts maximum products can be obtained on a continued basis. Also the product so obtained has to be appropriately controlled and distributed. People develop rights and claims over the resources and products; these eventually provide basis for social and political power. However, there are always constraints on resources and ecology, which technology tries to resolve. For example, those who live entirely on food gathering require larger land base to support themselves than those who live on coast. The sea offers immense store of food. Similarly those who live on higher altitude cannot practice settled agriculture. They have to be nomadic because of the severity of the climate and have to be traders like the Bhotiya or pastoralists like the Gujjar. Such groups cannot also sustain large populations. In comparison to them, the settled agriculturists have the

capacity to produce more than they require. The surplus they produce can be exchanged for various other goods and services and may lead to specialisation in various activities. These may eventually develop into elaborate rules for exchange.

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

25.8.1 Food Gatherers and Hunters

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

25.8.2 Shifting Cultivators

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

25.8.3 Settled Agriculture

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

25.8.4 Artisans

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

25.8.5 The Pastoralists and Cattle Herders

The classical examples of the pastoralist tribe are the Toda in the Nilgiris and the Gujjar, the Bakarwal and Gaddi in Himachal Pradesh. Although the Toda have a

fixed abode, in certain season they move their buffaloes for pasture. The buffaloes are individually owned but certain tasks related to the buffaloes and their dairies are collectively done. Like artisans they too exchange the dairy products for other items of their use particularly agriculture products. In the past, the Toda had exchange relations with the Badaga.

25.8.6 The Folk Artists

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

Activity 3

Describe various economic pursuits of the people in your district. Take help of section 25.8 in grouping these activities in appropriate categories.

25.8.7 Wage Labourers

At the turn of the present century large chunks of tribal territories came under plantations. Mining and industrial development also increased in tribal areas. Many of the tribal people had to leave their traditional occupations and seek employment in these enterprises as wage labourers. The tribals of Chotanagpur were taken to North-East India to work on tea plantations. The Santhal have been employed in coal mines of Bihar. This was indeed a major change. From a subsistence economy they were pushed into cash-oriented industrial economy which had its impact on their society.

25.8.8 Recent Economic Changes

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

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

- v) Development measures are designed to promote settled agriculture and intensive cultivation.

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

Check Your Progress 3

- i) How would you classify Indian tribes on the basis of their economy? Use five lines for your answer.

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- ii) Write, in three lines, the major steps in shifting cultivation.

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- iii) Give, in one line, an example of a pastoralist tribe in India.

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- iv) What is the resource base on which the Pradhan, the folk genealogists, depend? Use two lines for your answer.

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25.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the following five points:

- i) The concept of social structure has been variously defined but it is a useful concept and is dynamic. In order that a social structure is able to function, its members should be continuously replenished. These members carry and transmit the essential knowledge of the society to others. The social structure does not operate in isolation. It has its internal and external factors, which interact in a complex manner to give it a shape.
- ii) ‘Who are the tribals in India?’ has been an interesting and vexing question. None of the Indian languages have appropriate term for tribe. The concept of tribe emerged in India with the coming of the British. The problems for the British were how best to protect the tribal areas for the ‘time being’ and how

to distinguish them from castes. Gradually the concept of reservation emerged and through that emerged the idea of scheduled tribe in independent India.

- iii) Scholars have tried to define the term tribe by enumerating their characteristic features, by considering them as a stage in the evolutionary framework, by distinguishing them from castes and by considering them as a part of Indian civilisation.
- iv) Tribes in India can be classified by their geographic distribution, racial and linguistic affinities, demographic features, isolation from and interaction with other groups and their economic pursuits. These features act like boundary markers and give them identity. They are also elements in giving shape to their social structure.
- v) The tribal scene has been changing. They have lost control over their resources such as forest and land. There has been change in their economy. All round development efforts too have made their impact on their social structure.

This unit has given you an idea of the concept of social structure and tribe. Then, it has discussed the external features of social structures of tribal population in India.

25.10 KEYWORDS

Continuum	Anything that is continuous and does not show sharp distinction of content except by reference to something else.
Egalitarian	A system in which all sections of the people have equal rights and privileges.
Matrilineal	It is a system in which descent is traced through the mother.
Patrilineal	It is a system in which descent is traced through the father.
Segmentary	It is a system in which a tribe or a section of tribe is considered to be complete in itself. The opposite of it is organic in which a group may be tied up with other group in various kinds of relations.

25.11 FURTHER READING

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Sinha, Surjit 1982. *Tribes and Indian Civilisation Structure and Transformation*. N.K. Bose Memorial Foundation: Varanasi.

Vidyarthi L.P. and B.K. Rai, 1977. *The Tribal Culture of India*. Concept Publishing Company: New Delhi.

25.12 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) *Vanyajati, Vanvasi, Pahari, Adimjati, Adivasi, Anusuchit jati, etc.*
- ii) To provide resources for their industries, the British administration began to reach different parts of Indian territory. In the process they faced rebellious protests on the part of tribal populations. In order to protect such groups, in 1833, they declared certain areas outside the limits of normal rules and regulations. In 1874, the British passed Scheduled Area Regulation to administer such areas. By 1919, people of these areas began to be recognised as different from the Hindu, the Muslim and other religious groups. The Act of 1935 provided a policy of reservation for the people notified as Scheduled Tribes. The Constitution of Independent India also maintains a list of Scheduled Tribes.
- iii) The scholars have tried to define the term 'tribe' by describing their characteristics. Such definitions do not take care of variations in tribal lifestyles. They do not also explain the differences, which the tribals have from the caste people. Some scholars consider tribes as a stage in the process of social and cultural evolution of mankind. Some others consider household based production and consumption as a main feature of tribal life. Bailey suggested that tribes should be conceived as one end of a continuum, which has castes at its other end. For Bailey, tribes have segmentary and egalitarian social system and they are not mutually inter-dependent as are castes. Also, they have direct access to land without an intermediary between them and land. Sinha described tribes as systems isolated from the networks of social relations and cultural communications of the centres of civilisation. Such systems are maintained by primitive subsistence technology and these egalitarian, segmentary systems are guided by non-literate ethnic traditions.

Check Your Progress 2

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

Languages spoken by Indian tribes can be classified into four major families of language, namely, Austro-Asiatic family, Tibeto Chinese family, Indo European family and Dravidian. Examples of the speakers of the first type are the Khasi, Santal and Nicobari, of the second type are Khampti, Bhotiya, Kachari, Dimasa, Angami and Singpho. The examples of the third type are Hajong and Bhili and of the fourth type are Yeruva, Toda, and Oraon.

- iii) The size of the group or the demographic factor is important in the context of social structure of a population because it provides an essential external basis for the very existence of a group. An optimum size is absolutely necessary for a group's physical continuity. Secondly any group to survive has to continue socially also. For maintaining a group socially, it needs human beings with knowledge and skill for production, values, beliefs, norms and customs. With adequate balance between sexes and age groups, people can carry on the business of maintaining, replenishing and transmitting social life of a group. So we can see how in order to examine its social structure, it is important to take into account the demographic factor of a group.
- iv) One example of a relatively isolated tribe using wider economic network can be that of the Jenu-Kuruba of Karnataka. This is a food-gathering tribe, which also specialises in the art of catching and training elephants. This tribe supplied elephants to temples and armies of different states. It also supplied other forest products and in return received the foods of their necessity. A second example of this kind can be that of the Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh. This tribe practised highly specialised terraced cultivation and made swords, knives and woven cloth. It had economic relations with the neighbouring tribe, the Dafla who gave pigs, dogs, fowls, tobacco and cotton in exchange of rice, swords, knives and textile from the Apa Tani.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) On the basis of economic pursuits, Indian tribes can be classified into the following groups: (a) Food gatherers and hunters, (b) shifting cultivators, (c) settled agriculturists, (d) artisans, (e) the pastoralists and cattle herders, (f) the folk-artists and (g) wage labourers.
- ii) Steps in shifting cultivation are
 - a) a plot of forest land is selected
 - b) trees and plants on it are cut and allowed to dry
 - c) dried plant trees are burnt down and
 - d) seeds are sown in the plot
 - e) after cultivating a plot for a few years, it is abandoned
 - f) the cultivator may select the same plot after several years for repeating the above process.
- iii) The Gaddi in Himachal Pradesh is an example of a pastoralist tribe in India.
- iv) The Pradhan, the folk genealogists, depend on the Gond tribe of Madhya Pradesh. The Pradhan men make genealogies of the families of their Gond patrons and the Pradhan women act as midwives to the Gond and tattoo Gond girls. Thus, the Pradhan men and women derive their economic well being from their dependence upon the Gond.

UNTT 26 TRIBES SOCIAL STRUCTURE - II

Structure

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- 26.7 Let Us Sum Up
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- 26.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

26.0 OBJECTIVES

After studying this unit you should be able to

- discuss the composition of a group
- discuss how a tribe is divided into groups and further into smaller units like clan, family

- outline status and roles that different kin have at different times in the development of the domestic group
- discuss the major changes in recent times.

26.1 INTRODUCTION

In unit 25, we indicated the general features of social structure of tribes in India. Now we give our specific observations on the social structure of selected tribes.

In this unit we are going to discuss the internal features of the social structure of the Indian tribes. This we will discuss under the following headings: Habitat, Groupings, Family, Marriage, Kinship, Political and Ritual Authority. Finally, we will also briefly deal with recent changes. Since economy is an important factor, which enables people to meet their material needs and form some organisation to facilitate production, distribution, we will select a tribe from each group representing a major economic category. We select one tribe each from food gatherers and hunters, shifting cultivators, pastoralists and settled agriculturists. The groups we have selected are the Cholanaicken, the Khasi, the Toda, and the Mullukurumba. By discussing social structure of these tribes, we hope that you will get an idea of the internal features of tribal social life in India.

26.2 INTERNAL FEATURES OF SOCIAL STRUCTURE

All human groups have a tendency to demarcate themselves from others, as if making an imaginary boundary around them. This establishes their identity. In this the name of the group, the place/region it acquires for its habitation, its racial and linguistic features, customs and beliefs are important. The groups of these units acquire their identities, and in the process of growing up acquire statuses, roles, rights and obligations.

The family is the basic unit in all human societies, its nature may be different. Marriage is the starting point of redistribution of productive resources (who will own land, cattle and other wealth). Similarly, rules of reproduction (the persons with whom marriage is possible and with whom it is strictly tabooed) bring about changes in jural status of the spouses. A woman after marriage may move to her husband's house whereas her husband may acquire unrestricted rights over her sexual and economic services. This phase of the family begins with marriage and will expand when the children are born to them. The dispersal of the family begins with the marriage of the eldest and will complete with the marriage of the youngest child. The final phase begins when the heir in the family takes over the family responsibility and it ends when both parents die. This cycle of the family augmentation and depletion repeats over generations and is an ongoing phenomenon.

In this process of transformation the members of the group generate forces and values. The younger generation in the process of growing up may rebel and may like to change the arrangement. So there may be frictions among the people belonging to different generations. This friction may bring change in the social structure. This is the dynamic concept of social structure.

Formation of the family also indicates which relatives get what status, and what sorts of roles are given to them and what generally is expected of them. For example, in many societies, the responsibilities given to father's brother are different from mother's brother. Generally, most societies make a distinction between consanguineous (established through blood) and **affinal** (established through marriage) relatives.

Further, distinctions are based on sex, age and generation. Some relatives are put into such category with whom no sex relations can be established. Transgressing this rule would be considered incestuous. There may be some relatives with whom marriage is prescribed or preferred. There are some relatives with whom contact, oral communication or even sight has to be avoided. This is a relationship of avoidance. In many communities the relationship between father-in-law and daughter-in-law is of this type. There are some relatives with whom one has joking relationship or of easy familiarity. The relationship between a man and his elder brother's wife in many communities is of this type.

The economic, political, ritual rights are also associated with the development of family. Every generation when it reaches maturity must gain possession of the right to use and dispose of the reproductive resources. Thus, there is a built-in tension within the family and it intensifies as the members start coming of age. The force that it generates is channelised, controlled, and diffused in a variety of ways by different communities. The essential feature is that this force rises and diminishes with the augmentation and depletion of the family cycle. We will now discuss these aspects of social structure in relation to each of the selected tribes. We begin with the Cholanaicken of Kerala.

26.3 FOOD GATHERERS AND HUNTERS: THE CHOLANAICKEN

There are very few communities in the world today who subsist by food gathering and hunting alone. Such people do not have any knowledge of agriculture, do not domesticate any animal and generally do not import food by barter, trade or service. In order that such people are able to survive and lead their own way of life, they must inhabit a generous natural environment. The Cholanaicken of Nilambur valley, Ernad taluk, Malapuram district, Kerala (see Map) is one such group. In 2001 its total population was 205.

26.3.1 Habitat

The valley inhabited by the Cholanaicken is at an altitude of 400 feet above sea level. The rainfall is heavy ranging from 200 cm to 406 cm. The valley is covered by evergreen well preserved forest. The valley is dotted with streams and rivers.

The Cholanaicken usually live either on the banks of these rivers or in the caves. During rainy season they move away from the riverbanks. The rivers provide them water and fish. They protect them from wild animals and are used for demarcating their territories in relation to other Cholanaicken. Figure 26.1 shows the location of Cholanaicken habitat.



Fig. 26.1: Kerala: Location of the Cholanaicken Habitat

26.3.2 Groupings

The Cholanaicken inhabiting the valley are divided into ten bands. Each band is identified with the territory in which it moves for its subsistence. The territory of the Cholanaicken is known as *tсенman*. The limits of *tсенman* are marked by hills, rivers, trees, rocks, etc. A Cholanaicken does not encroach into the territory of another for collection of any sort of forest produce. If this rule is transgressed knowingly or unknowingly, they think the spirits that guard their territories will give appropriate punishment to the culprit. However, the Cholanaicken have the right

to visit the territory of their neighbours as a guest on reciprocal basis. On such visits a guest is allowed to collect food and hunt and is also given food by each family in the territory he is visiting. He is also given gifts in the form of food when he departs. Such visits and gifts not only reinforce the mutual ties and ensure cohesion but also are very much helpful when the resources in one territory get depleted or a person is disabled. A *tсенman* may have two or more families in it related to each other. Territorial rights are inherited by sons from their fathers. Women move to the territory of their husbands. Thus a territory consists of people who are related to each other from father's side. The members of *tсенman* share many things in common like the resources of territory, the caves etc., and stresses and strains of living in an environment which may be bountiful but difficult. Each *tсенman* has a leader called *tсенmakkaran*.

The Cholanaicken bands move from one place to another in their territories for gathering food, hunting, fishing and collection of other minor forest produce. They also move to seek shelter in more secure caves and to protect themselves from wild animals and for social intercourse with other Cholanaicken of their territory and members of other territories. The food gathering activity is carried on round the year but their movement varies from season to season.

26.3.3 Marriage and Family

Pre-marital sex is allowed in the community but prohibited within the same territory. Apparently there is no formal marriage ritual but when the couple has sex and lives together and there is no objection from the community then such a union is recognised as that of husband and wife. They form family and raise their children. Generally such unions are formed between the members of neighbouring territories but care is taken to avoid such relatives with whom sex relations are prohibited. Although the men among the

Cholanaicken enjoy higher status, the consent of the woman is necessary to form a union. If she is willing, she indicates by accepting gifts from the man trying to woo her and elopes with him and eventually moves into the territory of her man. The approval of the community of the union is deemed to have been obtained when they are allowed to return to the camp and live along with others, and exchange food and gifts with other members. If there is any objection to this union the kinsmen of the girl bring the girl back to their territory. If for some reason she is dissatisfied with the man, she returns things that she had received from the man as gifts and the union is considered as broken. Such men and women are free to seek their partners afresh. **Monogamy** is the general rule among the Cholanaicken. The Cholanaicken prefer marriage with mother's brother's daughter. The Cholanaicken encourage widows to remarry.

Activity 1

Name another tribal group, which does not observe formal marriage ritual. Take help of video programmes for the first elective course of B.A. (sociology) at IGNOU for identifying such a group. Describe the procedure for marriage in this group.

A separate hearth emerges in the camp and a new family is formed when a couple starts living together in a camp with others. This unit like others is a unit for procreation, recreation and socialisation of children when born. This unit like others has to maintain itself by gathering tubers, roots, hunting, fishing and collection of

minor forest produce, which they have to share with other members of the camp. The division of the work in the family is clear. Collection of food articles and minor forest produce is done by men and women. But fetching water, collection of firewood, and cooking food and taking care of infants are the jobs of women. Hunting, making of baskets and instruments are the jobs of men. Also all exchanges and religious performances are done by men.

26.3.4 Sharing

Mutual sharing of food articles among the Cholanaicken is an important mechanism by which the cohesiveness of the members of a camp is demonstrated and relations across the group are reinforced. This way the whole community of the Cholanaicken gets connected.

A portion of the material, which a Cholanaicken family gathers and hunts, is given to each of the family in the camp. When the food is cooked in the evening after they return from their collection, equal portion of the food is given to each family in the camp. Thus, there is a multiple give and take of raw and cooked food among the families of a camp. This is a daily routine and followed methodically. This reciprocal exchange of raw and cooked food works alright as long as the number of families in a camp does not exceed four or five. If it does, a new camp is formed. The daughter's husband has the right to collect food from the territory of his father-in-law.

26.3.5 Authority

The eldest male member of the family is the head. He organises the gathering and collection of minor forest produce and is responsible for all exchanges. He plans for fishing and hunting. He commands respect from the other members of the family and has the authority to allocate work.

Each territory has a chieftain. His decisions are carried out by the members of the territory. It is believed that the chieftain has supernatural powers. He is the sole custodian of the idols of the deities of the group. The deities represent the spirit of the ancestors. He also acts as diviner. The Cholanaicken believe that diseases are caused either by such acts, which violate their customary norms, or if someone has invoked evil spirits. Only the diviner can give the cause and also the remedy for the problem. The chieftain, through this belief system, is able to maintain social control among the members of his territory and also between the members of the territories.

26.3.6 Recent Changes

Other groups and the contractors in search of minor forest produce are increasingly infringing the Cholanaicken area. Increasingly the Cholanaicken work more for collection of minor forest produce they exchange for food items. This has reduced their leisure time and is also responsible for increasing friction among them. The authority of the chieftains has decreased. The Cholanaicken women have been increasingly enticed by outsiders particularly by the members of a neighbouring tribe. As a result of these changes the existence of the Cholanaicken itself is threatened.

Check Your Progress I

i) Distinguish, in six lines, between joking and avoidance relationship.

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ii) Write, in seven lines, how the groups among the Cholanaicken are formed.

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iii) Give reasons, in four lines, why the Cholanaicken move from one place to another.

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iv) Write, in six lines, how people get married among the Cholanaicken.

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v) What is the social significance of sharing of raw and cooked food among the Cholanaicken? Use four lines for your answer.

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vi) What is the authority of chieftain among the Cholanaicken? Use five lines for your answer.

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26.4 THE SHIFTING CULTIVATORS AND MATRILINEAL: THE KHASI

The Khasi are a Mongoloid population inhabiting the east and west Khasi hill districts of the State of Meghalaya in North-East India. They are well known as they practice the **matrilineal** system. Though all the Khasi share fundamentally the same language and social structure there are some sharp differences regarding their culture, dialect, economy etc., between the Khasi of different regions. Here, the discussion is limited to the Khasi inhabiting the plateau of the west Khasi hill district of Meghalaya.

26.4.1 History and Habitat

The Khasi Hills generally remained outside the influence of Assam and Bengal. They were governed by a number of petty native chiefs; there were 25 chiefs ruling the Khasi Hills when the British administration took over. Since then significant changes have taken place in the area. It was opened up for military, trade and commercial activities. The missionary activities too were intensified. Churches, schools and hospitals were opened up. The majority of the Khasi were converted to Christianity. The Khasi got their separate state, Meghalaya, in 1972. Their population is above 4 lakhs. Introduction to potato cultivation in 1830, brought many changes in the Khasi area. Potato cultivation to some extent replaced shifting cultivation. But is still practised in the Khasi region as well as other parts of Meghalaya.

The Khasi habitats are located on hilly tracts, slopes and valleys. The rainfall is heavy to very heavy. The region is rich in fauna and flora. The houses in Khasi villages form agglomeration. These agglomerations of houses develop as a result of the social custom. The elder sisters of the family are hived out of the ancestral homes. In the past they made their houses near about their ancestral homes but now in other villages also. The Khasi also practice village endogamy as a result of which most of one's **agnatic** and affinal kin are found in the village itself.

Activity 2

In a map of India, show the location of the state of Meghalaya and indicate the area of the Khasi hills in this state.

26.4.2 Grouping

The Khasi population consists of a number of *kur*, matrilineal clans whose members consider themselves to be descendants from a common ancestress. The members of the same *kur* have a common *mawbah* (grave stone) in which the bones of all the dead members belonging to the *kur* are buried. When a *mawbah* becomes full or some of its members move away to a considerable distance, a branch *mawbah* is found, creating a new *kur*. Thus, in course of time every *kur* throws up branches. Each branch has a *kur* name but can be grouped with a major *kur*. Members of a *kur* do not marry among themselves and also in the branch *kur*. The members of a *kur* are distributed over a wide area cutting across territories of different regions. Consequently, a village may be composed of people belonging to several *kur*. The Khasi have another unit called *kpoh*; its members are descendants of one great grandmother. Such a group of matrilineal kin is generally confined to one domestic family or a group of families linked by direct extension to the main family.

26.4.3 Family, Marriage and Kinship

The Khasi kinship organisation makes a clear distinction between matrilineal kin called *kur*, and non-matrilineal kin called *kha*. The Khasi have numerous prohibitions on marriages between kin on both paternal as well as maternal sides. The first and second parallel cousins are avoided. There is no preference for marriage with cross cousin (e.g. mother's brother's daughter) but such marriages are allowed.

The most important functional descent unit is called *iing*. It is the lowest unit of clan segmentation. It is smaller than *kpoh*. An *iing* may have people of two to four generations, sometimes it may have only mother and child. It is the *iing*, which arranges marriages. Husbands are excluded from wife's *iing* though they share a common household. The members of an *iing* consist of a set of strictly matrilineal descendants, who have a common right over the ancestral property, are subject to a common authority and practice some joint rituals.

The *iing* membership is through mother. The custodian of the property is the mother and her right is inherited by the youngest daughter while authority to manage property and to maintain the tradition is in the hands of mother's brother. His right is inherited by his sister's son. Thus the Khasi clearly separate the right to own property from the right to authority. A man continues to be a member of the same *iing* all his life. A woman if she is not heiress will branch off after her marriage and though she herself will continue as a member of her mother's *iing*, the third generation from her will form an independent *iing*.

The marriage may be arranged by the elders but generally the young men and women select their partners. The marriage is solemnised provided they do not belong to prohibited alliances.

26.4.4 Residence Pattern

Traditionally a man after his marriage stays in the mother's house and visits his wife's house at night. That is for a man there is two residences one of his sister and other of his wife. Thus, a domestic unit generally is composed of a woman, her children, woman's unmarried sisters and brothers including widows or divorcees. This form of residence, in course of time, may change. A husband may move into

the house of his wife. If he becomes a widower he may move into his sister's house again. These are the different stages in the development cycle of the domestic unit of the Khasi. If the marriage is with non-heiress that is, not with the youngest daughter, the couple may stay in the wife's house till the first child is born. Thereafter they may form a household of their own.

26.4.5 Authority: Political and Ritual

Traditional political structure of the Khasi is elaborate. It functions at four levels namely clan, village, *raid* (a group of villages) and state. Each level has a head and a council where issues are discussed before a decision is taken. The responsibility at lower level is to allocate clan lands for cultivation and to settle disputes.

Several *raid* together form a state. The head of the state is called *Syiem*. *Syiem* is elected by an electoral college consisting of the functionaries of clan *durbar*, village *durbar*, and *raid durbar*. *Syiem* is expected to protect his people as a mother would protect her children. The British had curtailed the power of the various traditional bodies. In independent India the region under Meghalaya comes under sixth schedule of Indian constitution which provides several provisions and safeguards for the region as well as traditional institutions.

26.4.6 Recent Changes

The Khasi area has been increasingly opened up for trade, commerce and industry. The economy too is changing. The literacy is high both among men and women. The most important change that is taking place is conversion of the public land into private. This has many far-reaching consequences. Family structure too is changing. More and more people are trying to form their own nuclear families. The authority of maternal uncle has become weak. Men are more busy with their own families rather than their sister's. Though the women still hold on to their rights, they are facing challenges and getting influenced by the patrilineal system of their neighbours. The Indian Constitution has strengthened the autonomy of the region as well as of the tribe.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Explain, in six lines, the terms kur, kpoh and iing.

- ii) Who has the right to property among the Khasi? Use one line for your answer.

- iii) Describe, in six lines, the traditional political units among the Khasi.

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26.5 THE PASTORALIST AND POLYANDROUS: THE TODA

The Toda have attracted worldwide attention. In the literature they are known as one who practice adelphic **polyandry**. Under this system a woman on her marriage automatically becomes the wife of all the brothers of her husband. Physically the Toda look different from other neighbouring population. Toda men and women have their own distinctive hairstyles. Both men and women drape themselves in colourful embroidered cloaks. They are perhaps the only tribe who claims to be vegetarians. Their subsistence is dependent on their buffaloes. It has been established that they are an ancient population and belong to the region of their habitation.

Activity 3

Describe the practice of adelphic polyandry and give examples of its practice in India on the basis of your knowledge of Indian myths, tribal groups and literature.

26.5.1 Brief History, Habitat and Relations with Other Populations

The Toda inhabit the higher altitudes of the Nilgiris of South India. For centuries the Toda, the herdsmen of the buffalo, have shared the mountains with the Kota, who are cultivators, leather workers, smiths and potters and the Kurumba and the Irula, the forest dwellers who practice hunting, gathering and shifting cultivation. While the Toda and the Kota inhabit the higher regions, the Irula and the Kurumba live on the lower slopes. Sometimes before the beginning of 17th century, these four indigenous people were joined by Kannada speaking people called the Badaga. They came to the Nilgiris in several waves from the plains of Mysore region. They were agriculturists. These five Nilgiri peoples, the Toda, the Kota, the Kurumba, the Irula and the Badaga had ritual, economic and social relationships among themselves and developed a certain degree of mutual dependence. Though they exchanged goods and services among themselves, a certain amount of hostility too had developed there among them, on account of their different interests.

After the British entered into the Nilgiris in early nineteenth century, economic, demographic and social situation there changed rapidly. They started plantations there. They brought many more people to the Nilgiris from the plains. The market forces too entered. All these had far reaching impact on the indigenous people of the Nilgiris. The traditional ties between them also broke down.

The traditional Toda settlements look unique with half barrel shaped houses and dairy buildings. Their dairies are in fact their temples. The Toda life revolves around

the care and milking of buffaloes. Their dairy and buffaloes are considered sacred. The most important feature of their social structure is separation between pure and impure. There are different degrees of sacredness of their buffaloes, dairies and priests. The Toda try to maintain appropriate correspondence between them. In their settlement too, the underlying principle of separation of pure from impure is reflected. The domestic portion of the settlement is clearly separated from their dairies and buffalo pen. According to the Toda tradition no woman can be around their dairy or buffalo pen; and no Toda man who has not been properly ordained can enter into their dairy. The principal requirements for a Toda settlement are good pastures, a forest in the neighbourhood and water streams nearby.

The traditional Toda houses are built of mud, stone and cane. The half barrel shaped houses have a very low entrance. Inside the house, front and rear portions are clearly demarcated. The front portion is considered pure and rear as impure. Only in the front part of the hut churning of the milk to produce butter and buttermilk can be done. Since churning of milk is exclusively men's work, the front part is associated with men. The rear portion where the hearth is located is the women's area. The women are principal sources of impurity in the Toda society.

26.5.2 Grouping

The Toda are divided into two endogamous sub-groups called *Tartharol* and *Teivaliol*. The most striking contrast between the two Toda sub-groups is that the *Tartharol* people alone can own the most sacred dairy temples but only *Teivaliol* men can be the priests of those temples. However, *Tartharol* claim superiority over *Teivaliol* people. No *Teivaliol* women can visit a *Tartharol* settlement but no such restriction is imposed on *Tartharol* women. Each Toda sub-group is divided into a number of exogamous clans called *mod*. At present there are ten such clans among the *Tartharol* and five among the *Teivaliol*. These clans too are stratified.

Women on marriage are incorporated into their husbands' clans. Since infant marriage is the ritual requirement of the society, the incorporation of the girl in her husband's clan takes place in infancy. Young girls continue to live with their parents until their maturity but they are the members of their husbands clan. If she dies her funeral rites will be performed by her husband's family and not by her father.

26.5.3 Family, Kinship and Marriage

The lowest unit of their social structure is the family. The people who usually occupy a single dwelling hut are husband, wife and unmarried children. It may also include the widowed parent of the husband and sometimes the family of a married son who has not yet been able to build his own house. In the past, the Toda domestic unit was a polyandrous family; two or more brothers married to the same woman lived together with their children. Although their polyandrous system is fading away, a married man or woman is allowed a sexual partner in opposite sub-group. Such partners have some ritual role to play particularly on the death of the partner.

In the Toda society biological paternity has no importance. Paternity for social purpose is recognised when a man performs bow and arrow ceremony in the seventh month of the pregnancy of his wife. Thereafter, all the children born of that woman would be considered his unit until someone, usually his brother would perform another bow and arrow ceremony. The children born after that would be considered his brother's.

Siblings of parents belonging to same sex, that is father's brothers and mother's sisters, too are considered as parents. The behaviour towards parents is of respect and humility. When a woman meets her father or mother, actual or classificatory, she bows to them. In sharp contrast are the parent's **siblings** of opposite sex that is mother's brother and father's sister. The behaviour towards them is not that of restraint. The term used for them is the same as one would use for one's father-in-law and mother-in-law. Cross cousin marriage is preferred among the Toda.

The procedure for establishing a marriage begins with the boy's parents looking for a suitable girl. Their first preference will be the daughter of a mother's brother or a father's sister. Once the choice has been made on an appointed day, parents of the boy bring gifts for the girl before an assembly of the Toda men and women. After some discussions a person may announce that the proposal has been agreed upon by the concerned parties. The marriage rituals are initiated in infancy and completed at maturity when husband takes his wife from her parental home to his own parents.

Funeral rites of the Toda are elaborate and bring into focus the complex interpersonal, inter group relations and also the organisations of their dairies. All his relatives must assemble when a Toda man is near death. After the death, the corpse is washed and is draped in a new cloak. A day of the funeral is fixed for the funeral. During this period it is the duty of all relatives to pay their respect to the deceased. On the day before the funeral, men of the opposite sub-group bring wood for the pyre. *Bier* must also be prepared by the men of the opposite sub-group.

The animals sacrificed on funeral are female. If the funeral is for a man, both temple and domestic buffaloes will be sacrificed but for a woman only domestic ones. Custom not only decides what kind of buffaloes are to be sacrificed but also who is to give them. One buffalo must come from son-in-law of the deceased. The principle is that this buffalo must come from a man who has taken his wife from the clan of the deceased. The other buffalo is of the deceased. But now there are restrictions on the number of buffaloes that can be sacrificed.

At intervals, before the funeral the men of the opposite sub-group dance and sing in honour of the deceased. Finally, it is the members of the opposite sub-group who catch the sacrificial buffalo and bring it for sacrifice. The dairy buffalo is sacrificed by the principal dairyman, the other buffaloes by the appropriate category of people.

26.5.4 Authority: Political and Ritual

The Toda society does not have a headman except at the level of the household where the eldest male member has the authority. The Toda have a strong council, which ensures that norms of the society are observed, disputes are settled and actions taken against those found guilty. The Toda council meets frequently. Fines and punishments are imposed and quickly realised too. If the issue is not decided in one *noyam* (the Toda council) it will be in another *noyam* but it gradually emerges. Leaders are generally older and influential people. The issues nonetheless are thoroughly discussed. A man of the sub-group opposite to that of the guilty party announces the judgment of the *noyam*.

26.5.5 Recent Changes

In spite of significant changes in the economy, demography and ecology of the Nilgiri region, the Toda have remained consistent. They continue to remain dependent upon their buffaloes. Though some of them have acquired land, they do not practice agriculture themselves. They lease out their lands to other agriculturists. Their traditional relationship with other tribal groups of the region has almost broken down. Their internal division has remained the same but the endogamous character of the 'sub-group' is coming under challenge by young reformist group of the Toda.

They have also tried to stop the buffalo sacrifice, as well as child marriage as part of reform but so far the efforts have not been successful.

Their *noyam* continues to be a powerful body upholding the traditions of the community and punishing the deviants.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Describe, in four lines, the most characteristic features of the Toda.

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ii) Explain, in five lines, how paternity is decided among the Toda.

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iii) Write, in four lines, on the institution of noyam among the Toda.

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26.6 THE SETTLED AGRICULTURISTS: THE MULLUKURUMBA

The Mullukurumba are one of those tribes who have known settled cultivation for a long time. They have been successfully combining cultivation of paddy with other means of food procurement. Like many other food producing communities they have to share a part of surplus production to meet their other needs. The

Mullukurumba interact with the groups inhabiting their region and continue to live on the edge of the forest. With other groups in the past their relationship was hierarchical, based on the notion of 'purity'. They also got some services from a few functionary castes of the region.

26.6.1 Brief History and Habitat

One of the theories is that modern day Kurumba are the descendants of the ancient Pallava, who were once powerful throughout southern India. Recent researches suggest that the indigenous population of the Wynad participated in rebellions against the British.

The Mullukurumba inhabit the hilly tracts of Wynad in Kerala and Gudalur *taluk* of the Nilgiris in Tamilnadu. The Mullukurumba settlements are known as *veedu*, no other tribe or caste live in their settlements. The Mullukurumba settlements have a striking appearance by which they are easily identifiable.

For centuries the Mullukurumba share their region with the Chetty, the Uralikurumba, the Katu Naicken and the Paniya. Each one of these groups lives in exclusive settlements. Of these, the Uralikurumba, besides practising agriculture were expert basket makers, potters and blacksmiths. These groups exchanged services and goods among themselves and were tied in a hierarchical relationship. The Chetty were at the top, followed by the Mullukurumba. At the bottom of this hierarchy were the Paniya. This hierarchy is clearly reflected in their day to day relationship and also on ritual occasions.

In the past the Mullukurumba were mostly dependent on agriculture, fishing and hunting. Now hunting has been totally stopped. Those who have been successful in retaining their land, practice intensive cultivation of paddy, cash crops like pepper, tea and coffee. A good number of the Mullukurumba now work as wage labourers on the fields of others and on plantations.

26.6.2 Grouping

The Mullukurumba population is distributed in an area of about 20 miles in radius. According to the Mullukurumba, their population is distributed into four regions. The boundaries of these regions for them are well demarcated. The function of this territorial division is now notional.

The Mullukurumba are strictly endogamous. They have four exogamous matri clans. The clan title is inherited through mother. Now these clans have only ritual importance. They also have patrilineal clans. For a marriage one must avoid patri clan as well as matri clan. The property is inherited from father to son.

26.6.3 Family, Kinship and Marriage

The domestic unit or the family of the Mullukurumba generally consists of husband, wife and their children. But this unit in course of time grows and it may also have married sons. In such cases, often the married sons have a separate house to sleep in. The girl on marriage moves to the house of her husband, which always is in another village because the Mullukurumba observe village exogamy. The growing domestic unit breaks into nuclear units when there is more than one married son in the unit or when the grandparents die. Thus, the Mullukurumba domestic unit goes through the process of augmentation and depletion by natural events like birth and death, and social events like marriage and partition. The breakaway domestic unit

among the Mullukurumba is formed in the same village. Another house structure comes up in the village. There is very little out migration of the Mullukurumba males from their respective villages. In the family the eldest male member has the authority. He makes most of the decisions. The eldest son gets more importance than others in the unit. The daughters-in-law of the unit are given complete charge of the work of the house such as washing, sweeping, bringing water, husking grains, cooking etc. They also work in the field or may go for wage earning. The Mullukurumba girls of different ages in a village from approximately seven years onwards sleep in their age-grade dormitories. Generally, there are separate dormitories for girls of the age group seven to eleven, twelve to sixteen and seventeen and above.

Avoidance and Joking Relationship

The relationship between the daughter-in-law and her real or classificatory father-in-law or husband's real or classificatory elder brother is that of avoidance. But her relationship with her husband's younger brother is friendly. They can cut jokes with each other. A woman has relationship of avoidance with her younger sister's husband. While a man avoids talking to his younger brother's wife, he has joking relationship with his wife's younger sisters. People who stand in avoidance relationship to each other are said to belong to *theenda kulam* (untouchable clan).

Father's brothers are given status and respect, almost equal to that given to father. If one's father is not alive, he has to take guidance from his father's brother. The term used for them is *peyappan* or *eayappan*, meaning elder father or younger father. Similarly mother's sisters too are treated with respect as one would treat one's mother. The terms used for them are *peyamme* and *eayamme* meaning elder mother and younger mother. Interestingly their husbands are called by the same terms as for one's father's brothers. *Chetan*, *eniar*, *eattathi* and *eniathi* are terms used for a large number of classificatory kin. *Chetan* means elder brother, *eniar* younger brother, *eattathi* elder sister and *eniathi* younger sister. These terms are used for one's brother and sister as well as one's cousins, parallel or cross. The cousins have equal status; difference is made on the basis of age.

Marriage

The Mullukurumba maintain endogamy. They observe clan and village exogamy. Kin are also avoided in choice of marriage. Earlier marriage by elopement and marriage by force were more popular among them. In the marriage by elopement, the consent of both the boy and girl was there whereas in the other i.e. marriage by force, the boy kidnapped the girl from the pond or riverside when she was bathing or washing clothes. The former type is called *odi koodal* (run and join) and the latter, *atru kadavu* (transporting from the riverside). The arranged marriages are referred to as *veetu kadavu* (through the house). *Atru kadavu* is so much popular among them that they have introduced a mock flight in arranged marriages too. In this mock flight the groom's party pulls one hand of the bride, uttering the words "Come to our *veedu*, we have a big river there for fishing and bathing. Leave this place". The bride's party resists them by pulling the bride to their side holding her other hand.

There is another form of marriage prevalent among the Mullukurumba. It is locally called *mukka vazhi* (three-fourth of the way) in which a bride, who is a widow or a divorcee is met by groom's party not in her house but somewhere half way between her house and the groom's house and taken to groom's house.

The Mullukurumba have a system of taking bride price and this amount has been increasing. Divorces are not frequent in their society. Remarriages of widows and widowers are allowed.

Activity 4

Like the Mullukurumba have different terms for various forms of marriage in their society, look for similar terms for different forms of marriage in your society. Make their list and describe each form in one line.

26.6.4 Authority: Political and Ritual

The Mullukurumba have an elaborate structure of the council of elders. The chief of this council used to be a Nair but that office has become defunct. But the structure below him headed by the Mullukurumba is intact. A group of the Mullukurumba villages are under a Mullukurumba chief called *moopan*. There are 13 such chiefs who form the council of elders. The offices are hereditary but the chief of the council of elders is the eldest person. The functions of the council are to settle disputes between the Mullukurumba and to see that the traditional rights are maintained. The chief has a variety of roles in social and religious functions of their respective villages. Authority of the elders is recognised by the Mullukurumba at every level-household, village and inter-village.

The Mullukurumba observe various life cycle rituals of which birth, puberty, marriage and death are most important. In these rituals various kin, the chief of the village, and people of other castes and tribes have roles. In birth, puberty and death, they have rituals to remove pollution. On such occasions they have to collect *ennai* (ritual oil) from a Nair barber. On childbirth and attainment of puberty of a girl, they have to collect *mathu* (ash and water) from a Nair washerman to remove the pollution.

These rituals promote social solidarity among the Mullukurumba and show internal division of privileges and responsibilities and their relations with other groups.

26.6.5 Recent Changes

The Mullukurumba continue to remain a closely-knit group but on account of various economic, social, political changes, there has been some dispersal in their population. The authority of the *moopan* is now basically confined to religious spheres.

The hierarchical relations with neighbouring groups have broken down. The Nair barbers and the Nair washermen do not provide the ritual services any more.

Check Your Progress 4

i) Name, in two lines, the groups living in the neighbourhood of the Mullukurumba.

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ii) Write, in six lines, on joking and avoidance relationship among the Mullukurumba.

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iii) Explain, in six lines, the different ways by which a person may marry among the Mullukurumba.

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iv) Describe, in six lines, the structure of the council of elders among the Mullukurumba.

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26.7 LET US SUM UP

At whatever level the human groups may be, they tend to establish their identity by having a name, inhabiting a particular territory and by observing certain customs and practices. Such defined groups internally are further divided into sub-groups. Basis of this division may vary from group to group but one of the important functions such divisions perform is to regulate marriages within the group. Marriage is the most important event in the family. It ensures reproduction of human beings in an ordered manner and thereby continuation of the group. Developmental cycle of the family shows that it goes through the process of augmentation and depletion by natural events like birth and death and social events like marriage, separation, etc.

Family members have certain statuses and roles, which are passed on from one generation to the other. This process of transformation generates force and may cause friction among different categories of people. A group may have a formal or

informal authority, which may regulate the affairs of the group and exercise social control.

These various structural issues have been examined by taking the example of a hunting and food gathering group, a shifting cultivator and matrilineal group, a pastoralist and polyandrous group, and settled agriculturist group.

The Cholanaicken, do not produce any food. They depend upon forest for their subsistence. Territory is the basis of the division among their society. Though they do recognise close blood relatives among whom marriage is tabooed, concept of clans has not emerged among them. Division of labour is based on sex. The status of women is lower than men. Sharing of resources and food is the most important principal of their society. It ensures survival of the group and brings cohesiveness among the Cholanaicken. The Chief among them has the power of divination and derives his authority from supernatural sources. His son inherits his authority.

The Khasi produce their own food. They are matrilineal and have a well-developed concept of clan in which the immediate descendants are distinguished from the distant to make the concept functional. They have clearly divided the roles among the kin. The youngest female in the family has the power, the maternal uncle has the authority. Women have a higher status. They allow cross cousin marriage but village endogamy is preferred. The Khasi have elaborate authority structure from village to the state level. Progressively the secular and sacred roles of the authority are separated from one level to the other.

Though the Toda do not produce their own food they have been a part of the regional network in which goods and services with others are exchanged. They are divided into two endogamous groups. These groups remain within the fold of the Toda society as they have many reciprocal roles to perform. The clan organisation is well developed. Their notion of hierarchy is based on the concept of purity and pollution. Based on this concept they grade their dairies, buffaloes and other activities. The status of women is lower than men though they practice polyandry. In kinship structure like many other groups they make clear distinction between the siblings of the parents of the same sex and siblings of the parents of the opposite sex. The Toda do not have an institution of chief but their council is powerful.

The Mullukurumba produce their own food. Like other food producers they have been a part of a regional network in which goods and services are exchanged. They have territorial and also well developed clan divisions. The former has become notional. Their relationships with other people and within the community are guided by the concept of purity and pollution. They maintain village exogamy. They do not allow marriage between cousins, parallel or cross. They do not make distinction as the Toda do between the siblings of the parents of same or opposite sex. The authority of the male as the head of the family is clearly established. They too have the system of chiefs, which is well developed, but their authority is much eroded in the present context.

This presentation clearly brings out the distinction in social structure between the food procurers and food producers. However, each case has its own unique features. It is clear that both the Toda and the Mullukurumba are nearer to caste people.

26.8 KEYWORDS

Affinal	Those who are related through marriage, like husband and wife, one's wife's or husband's relatives
Consanguinous/agnatic	Those who are related through blood like parents and their children, brothers and sisters etc
Matriliny	A system in which the descent is traced through female line
Monogamy	A marriage in which a husband has one wife only
Polyandry	A marriage, in which a woman has more than one husband, they may be related to each other as brothers or may not be. If they are related it is called adelphic polyandry
Siblings	Children of the same parents

26.9 FURTHER READING

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26.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) When contact, oral communication or even sight are forbidden between some relatives, we say that there exists the relationship of avoidance between them. In some societies, the relationship between father-in-law and daughter-in-law is of this type. With some relatives, one has, on the other hand, relationship of easy familiarity. This is called joking relationship. In many communities the relationship between a man and his elder brother's wife is of this type.

- ii) Group formation among the Cholanaicken is based on territory. They are divided into ten bands. Each band is identified with a territory in which it moves for its subsistence. Such a territory is known as *tseman*. Each *tseman* may have two or more families in it related to each other. As territorial rights are inherited by sons from their fathers, a territory consists of people related to each other from father's side.
- iii) The Cholanaicken move from one place to another for (a) gathering food and other minor forest produce, hunting and fishing (b) seeking shelter to protect themselves from wild animals (c) establishing social intercourse with other Cholanaicken of their territory and members of other territories.
- iv) There is no formal marriage ritual among the cholanaicken. A woman accepts the gifts from the man trying to woo her and elopes with him. She eventually moves to his territory. The man and the woman live and exchange food and gifts with other members of the group. They are then considered married.
- v) Sharing of raw and cooked food among the cholanaicken demonstrates cohesiveness of the members of a camp. Exchange of food articles across the groups reinforces the connectedness of the whole community of the cholanaicken.
- vi) Chieftain of a territory has the authority to take decisions, which are carried out by the members of the territory. He acts as a diviner to give cause and remedy of diseases. He maintains social control among the members of his territory and between members of the territories.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) A matrilineal clan whose members consider themselves to be descended from a common ancestress is called *kur*. Descendents of one great grandmother are grouped in a unit called *kpoh*. Such a matrilineal kin group is generally confined to one domestic family or a group of families linked by direct extension to the main family. The lowest unit of the clan segmentation is called *iing*. It is the most important functional unit. It may have people of two to four generations, sometimes, it may have only mother and child. Marriages are arranged by *iing*, members of which consist of a set of strictly matrilineal descendents, who have a common right over the ancestral property, are subject to a common authority and practice some joint rituals.
- ii) Right to property is inherited by the youngest daughter from her mother.
- iii) Political units among the Khasi are clan, village, *raid* (a group of villages) and state. Each of the four units has a head and a council where issues are discussed and a decision is taken. At clan level the clan lands are allocated and disputes are settled. Several clans form a village and several villages form a *raid*. A state is a cluster of many *raid*. The head of the state is called *Syiem* who is elected by the functionaries of clan *durbar*, village *durbar* and *raid durbar*. *Syiem* protects his people as a mother protects her children.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Main characteristic features of the Toda are:
 - a) adelphic polyandry, b) their own distinctive hairstyles and colourful embroidered cloaks, (c) vegetarianism, (d) buffalo dependent subsistence.

- ii) The Toda do not recognise the principle of biological paternity. For social purposes paternity is recognised when a man performs a bow and arrow ceremony in the seventh month of the pregnancy of his wife. After one ceremony all the children born of that woman are considered his children, until another man (usually a brother) would perform a bow and arrow ceremony. The children born after that would be reckoned as the other man's children.
- iii) The Toda have a strong institution of *noyam*, which is a council to ensure that norms of the society are observed. This council also settles disputes and takes action to punish those found guilty. Leaders of the *noyam* are generally older and influential people.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) The groups living in the neighbourhood of the Mullukurumba are the Chetty, the Uralikurumba, and the Katu Naicken.
- ii) Avoidance relationship among the Mullukurumba exists between the daughter-in-law and her real or classificatory father-in-law or husband's real or classificatory elder brother. People who stand in such a relationship to each other are said to belong to *theenda kulam* or untouchable clan. Joking relationship among the Mullukurumba exists between a woman and her husband's younger brothers. Similarly, it also exists between a man and his wife's younger sisters.
- iii) Earlier, marriage by elopement and marriage by force were common among the Mullukurumba. The former type is called *odi koodal* (run and join) and the latter, *atru kadavu* (transporting from the river side). The arranged marriages among the Mullukurumba are called *veetu kadavu* (through the house). The marriage of a widow/divorcee is called *mukka vazhi* (three fourth of the way).
- iv) The Mullukurumba have an elaborate structure of the council of elders. Its chief used to be a Nair. But now this office has become defunct. But the composition of the council below this office remains intact. A group of Mullukurumba villages organise under a Mullukurumba chief, called *moopan*. Thirteen such chiefs form the council of elders. The office of the chief is hereditary while the office of the chief of the council is according to seniority in age.

UNIT 27 RELIGION IN TRIBAL SOCIETIES

Structure

- 27.0 Objectives
- 27.1 Introduction
- 27.2 Chief Characteristic of Tribal Societies: Simple Form of Religion
- 27.3 Tribal Lifestyle
- 27.4 Tribal Ritual Complex
 - 27.4.1 Ritual Space
 - 27.4.2 Ritual Time
 - 27.4.3 Ritual Language
- 27.5 Tribal World View
 - 27.5.1 Simple Belief of the Tribals and the Upanishadic Complex Thought
 - 27.5.2 Some Ethnographic Examples
 - 27.5.3 Anthropological Studies of Primitive (Tribal) Religion
- 27.6 Impact of Other Religious Belief Systems
 - 27.6.1 Hinduism and Tribal Religions
 - 27.6.2 Christianity and Tribal Religions
- 27.7 Socio-religious Movements
 - 27.7.1 Tana Bhagat Movement
 - 27.7.2 Birsa Munda Movement
- 27.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 27.9 Keywords
- 27.10 Further Reading
- 27.11 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

27.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to

- discuss that tribal societies are characterised by simple forms of religion
- show that understanding of religious notions is vital to the understanding of tribal lifestyle
- describe that tribal worldview recognises no differentiation or opposition of the sacred and the secular
- discuss the impact of other religious faiths on tribal religions
- describe the occurrence of socio-religious movements among the tribal groups.

27.1 INTRODUCTION

In units 25 and 26 we discussed broad patterns of social structure in the tribal societies of India. In this unit we will try to understand how **faith** in supernatural is structured in tribal society.

If we go by the 1961 census of India, it would appear that about 89 per cent of the tribals claimed to profess Hinduism and 5 per cent had converted to Christianity. About 4 per cent were enumerated as following tribal religions, which number 52 (Mitra 1966). Vidyarthi and Rai (1976: 238) hold that the tribals in India are mainly Hindu. They quote many scholars who also hold a similar view. Here we have not gone into the details of these opinions. Let us for a minute assume that most of the tribals in India follow some or the other form of Hinduism. It is obvious that this is due to the contacts the tribals had with their Hindu neighbours. So also is the case with regard to Christianity, which was introduced among the tribal groups during the British rule. Therefore we will discuss in the last part of this unit both Hinduism and Christianity as aspects of the impact of other faiths on tribal religions. The first part of the unit will deal with the nature of tribal **religion**, the main theme of this unit.

We will here discuss main features of the **ritual** complex of tribal people. Next we will show how tribal **worldview** recognises no differentiation of the **sacred** and the secular. We also show that tribal simple beliefs are in agreement with the highly sophisticated worldview of the **theologically** self-conscious society. Then we take up the issues of the impact of other religious belief systems on tribal religions. In the end we discuss the occurrence of socio-religious movements in the tribal societies of India. In many parts of the world, such movements have been reported to occur among the aboriginal populations, and the tribal groups in India share with them belief in millenarianism.

27.2 CHIEF CHARACTERISTIC OF TRIBAL SOCIETIES: SIMPLE FORM OF RELIGION

Every religious system consists of a set of three essential elements: (a) belief in the existence of a superhuman world; (b) human's relationship to it; and (c) practice of ritual as an instrument of establishing relationship.

Here (a) refers to the belief system, (b) to the value system, and (c) to the action system. The form and meaning of these elements, i.e., religious belief, religious value and religious action, may differ from one order to another.

Religion of a **tribe** is simple insofar as it is expressed in everyday language and experienced in everyday life. It is descriptive, demonstrative and readily discernible. Among the tribes religious **myth**, belief, religious value and religious action are not treated as something apart from other kinds of belief and behaviour, as followed in social, economic and political contexts. Yet, the meaning of beliefs and behaviour of the tribals appears mysterious to the outsiders. This is precisely because theirs is a religion without explanation. However, tribal religion is no less complete than the highly developed form of complex religion to the extent that its implicit philosophy recognises the same universal truth.

Let us now explain to you all these features of tribal religion, its implicit philosophy and the worldview. This we will do by discussing tribal lifestyle, tribal ritual complex and tribal worldview.

27.3 TRIBAL LIFESTYLE

Religion pervades all aspects of tribal life that is why for understanding the tribal lifestyle we need to first understand the tribe's religious notions. To explain this, we will take an example of the pastoral Toda of the Nilgiri in South India (see Walker 1986).

By their own account, the Toda and their long horned buffaloes were created on the high massif of the Nilgiri Hills by the great goddess Teikirzi. Their settlement is marked by the unique barrel-vaulted houses and dairy buildings. The dairy buildings are temples. The following illustration (figure 27.1) shows the entrance of a dairy building and in the foreground is a Toda male pacifying a buffalo with butter.

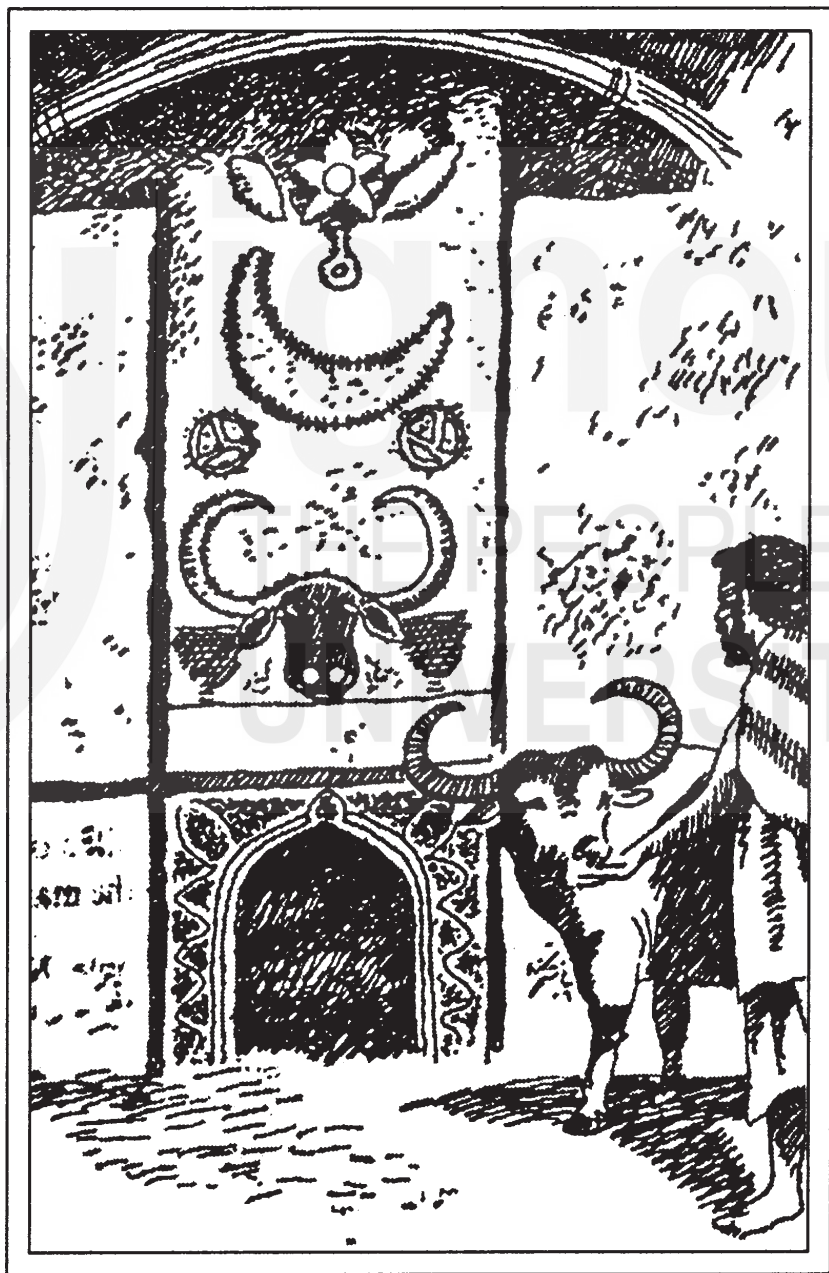


Fig. 27.1: Entrance of a Dairy Building and a toda male pacifying a buffalo

The Toda are socially organised into two endogamous sections, named *Tarthoral* and *Teivaliol*. The division is based on ritual specialisation. The *Tarthar* people

alone can own the most sacred dairy temples with their associated herds; the *Teivaliol* men, called 'the servants of the gods' fulfil the highest priestly tasks associated with them. Their economic and social lives are centred on the buffaloes. The greater part of their religious observance is also focused on this animal. The buffaloes are ritually guarded. Every task of the dairyman, every object and place associated with the herds has received the impress of ritual. The Toda observe a number of special ceremonies related to the dairies, the buffaloes and the pastures. There are rites by which they honour the dairy, purify it when it has been defiled, and make offerings to it. There are rites associated with rebuilding and rethatching. Next are the rites for naming a buffalo, milking a temple buffalo for the first time, giving salt to the herds and moving them to the new pastures. There is also the rite of lighting the gods' fire to ensure the fertility of the pastures.

Life's major events are highly ritualised among the Toda. The first pregnancy of a Toda woman is seen as ritually contaminating and hence in approximately fifth month she spends a complete lunar month in a temporary 'pollution hut' outside her hamlet. In her seventh month of pregnancy, the husband ritually gives her a bow-and-arrow to establish the social paternity of the unborn child. If a child were born to a woman who had not been given a bow, it would be a bastard with no **patrician** affiliation. In former days when **polyandry** was the norm, the several husbands of a woman took turns to assume the paternity of her children.

Childbirth is a polluting event. It is not only the mother and her child who are ritually defiled, but also all other people and things which come in close contact with them. Purificatory rite is performed on or just before the day of the new moon after birth. The 'face-uncovering' ceremony is performed some time between one and three months after the birth of a child. It is only then the Toda child is recognised as a social being.

The name-giving ceremony follows it. Marriage is initiated in childhood and completed at maturity. Meanwhile the ear-piercing ceremony is performed for all boys. For a girl there are two distinct rites supposed to precede her entry into womanhood. The two rites essentially are symbolic and an actual defloration is performed before a girl's first menstruation. When the partners in a marriage alliance reach maturity, arrangements are made for their cohabitation and for the subsequent payment of dowry. On this occasion the girl's father performs 'the girl-sending' ceremony. The passage of a Toda man or woman into middle or old age is not marked by ritual. As death approaches, the elders can look forward to an afterlife not radically different from their present one. As the goddess Teikirzi rules over the living Toda and their buffaloes, so does her brother, On, who reigns over the dead. Death generates the greatest profusion of ritual. The corpse of the deceased is cremated at the end of the first funeral ceremony during which buffaloes are sacrificed so that they may accompany the **spirit** to the afterworld. A second ceremony is held, usually months after the first, in which a relic of the deceased (a lock of hair and a skull fragment) is cremated.

What comes through this description of the Toda passage through life cycle, as also the organisation of their territory, society and economy, is the great importance of religion. You have seen how the complex web of ritual is woven around the comparatively simple tasks of the husbandryman. One might, therefore, conclude that tribal life and society cannot be fully understood without understanding their religion. However, as Winter (1978) has pointed out, in some societies religion plays a much more important role in group structure than it does in others. This

has been illustrated with reference to African tribes. The social structure of the Iroquois cannot be described without taking religion into account; that of the Amaba can be described in such a manner.

Activity 1

Identify some areas of your lifestyle, which require an understanding of your religious notions. Write a note of 200 words on this aspect of your lifestyle. Compare, if possible, your note with those of other students in your Study Centre.

27.4 TRIBAL RITUAL COMPLEX

For a religious human, the superhuman world is the real world, which is ritually replicated in space and time. The believer communicates with this world through a symbolic code which Saraswati (1982) calls the **ritual language**, consisting of (a) esoteric word, *mantra*, (b) gesture, *mudra*, (c) sound, *dhvani*, (d) everyday language of interaction, *vyavahariki*.

The tribal ritual complex may be described along this line. Here we will first speak of ritual space and then of ritual time. Next, we will discuss ritual language in terms of *mantra*, *mudra*, *dhvani*, and *vyavahariki*.

27.4.1 Ritual Space

In the tribal perception the space is filled with spiritual beings. There are two classes of space: cosmic space and physical, or object space. The Santal believe that the creator *Thakur Jiu* dwells up in the sky; the *Sin Bonga* or the Sun God also occupies the cosmic space. There is also the *Hanapuri*, or the land of the dead. The spirits occupy concrete objects in and around their settlement. Such spaces are named after the spirits associated with them. For instance, the spirit of the region, the spirit of the village boundary, the house spirit, the spring spirit, the mountain spirit, the forest spirit, the spirit of the rice field, the spirit of the threshing floor, cremation ground, etc.

The ritual space is different from the ordinary space inasmuch as it is sacred-effective. But any ordinary space can become a ritual space, depending on its association with the spirit. Generally, it is allowed to retain its natural form. For instance, the *Jaher*, or the sacred grove of the Santal consists of a clump of *sal* tree with one *mahua* standing near. Three trees in a line are dedicated to *Mama Buru*, the spirit who dwelt with the first Santal, *Jaher Era*, the spirit of the sacred grove, and to *More ko Turuc ko*, the spirit called Five-Six. Another *sal* tree is dedicated to *Pargana Bonga*, the spirit of the region, while *Mahua* tree is reserved for *Gosae Era*, the spirit of the sacred house. At the base of each of these trees, a stone is embedded and all five are known as *Bonga* trees. A simple construction may also mark the sacred space. The Santal *Manjhithan* consists of smoothly cemented plinth of mud with two stories to represent the founder of the village, *Manjhi* and his wife, a centre pillar of *sal* wood, a second and smaller pillar supporting a pot of water and finally a roof of thatch or tiles.

Tribes, by and large, entertain no notion of hierarchy of the sacred spaces. But, as Walker (1986) has reported, the Toda dairy temples are graded into a complex

hierarchy according to relative sanctity. The higher they are, the more elaborate is the ritual associated with the daily tasks of the dairyman, and the higher must be the purity in which the dairy, its appurtenances, and the dairyman himself are maintained.

27.4.2 Ritual Time

The tribes order their ritual time on the Nature's signal, i.e., on the blossoming plants and trees, on the position of stars and moon, the biological time, and, if the circumstances so demand, by direct **divination**. The principal festival of the Oraon is called *Sarhul*, the Feast of the *Sal* Blossoms, also known as the Marriage of the Earth. Another festival known as *Kadlota*, is celebrated when rice grains have formed in the rice plants. The Toda perform their rituals according to the position of stars and new moon. The star called ket (Tamil *kettai*, Sanskrit *jyestha*), the 18th *naksatra* or lunar mansion, is considered to have a malignant influence. Most rituals are performed on or about the new moon. The moon-time is followed rather strictly. As you have seen, the Toda regard childbirth pollution particularly dangerous to the ritual condition of the sacred dairies of the hamlet. Thus they insist that a new mother and her child should be taken, as soon as the woman could move, out of her hamlet to the pollution hut. The length of the time mother and child were compelled to remain in this hut depended upon whether or not the child was her first. In the case of the second or subsequent child, the period of seclusion would last until the new moon following the birth, possibly just a few days. But for the first born it had to be a complete lunar month following the new moon after the delivery. Thus, if a woman had given birth to her first child just after a new moon, she would have to endure almost two months of seclusion. On the third day of the new moon the newly delivered mother receives butter and buttermilk from the dairy, which event marks the end of the restriction on her drinking milk and consuming milk products from the dairy. The 'social paternity rite' or 'bow-and-arrow ceremony' is performed on the day of the new moon. The first funeral rite is also held on the day of the new moon. Most tribes consider biological time as an occasion to perform ritual, such as the first menstruation, childbirth, and death.

27.4.3 Ritual Language

Forms of ritual may vary from one tribe to another, but the basic ritual code of *mantra*, *mudra*, *dhvani*, and *vyavahariki* is applicable to all cultures.

- a) **Mantra**. In the complex form of religion, such as in the *Vedic* and *Tantric* traditions, the conception of mantra is fully developed. The *Vedic* mantra is considered as the **primordial** word of which neither human nor **God** is the author. It is not even the message of the God; it is the God itself. Briefly, a *mantra* is that letter or combination of letters, which evokes the deity. The *mantra* used by the tribes in the performance of a ritual are simple words of everyday language. For instance, the Kharia tribal priest recites the following mantra to the village spirits:

O ye Khunt and Baghia spirits!

Today I am offering sacrifices

Today in your name I am offering to you

Mahua, Ber, fig-all these fruits,

I am worshipping you.

Do ye protect (our) bullocks, buffaloes,
goats, men, etc., in jungle and brushwood,
from tigers and bears.

This *mantra* may appear as **prayer**. For, the Kharia priest offers a sacrifice to the spirit, which in return is asked to reciprocate. But, on closer inspection you will find that in this there is both a command for boons and the hope of reciprocity. Some scholars (for instance, Woodroffe 1955) are of the opinion that *mantra* is not the same thing as prayer. A *mantra* intoned in the proper way becomes effective by the very structure of its soundbody; a prayer, on the other hand, is a mere individual thinking expressed without determined sounds.

- b) **Mudra.** There are various kinds of hand gestures and bodily positions representing specific feelings and esoteric actions. In tribal dance the movement of steps, interlocking of hands and other hand gestures have both aesthetic and ritualistic significance. The most common forms of the tribal dance *mudra* are interlocked arms at the waist level in front and back; swinging of one leg while holding all the weight on the other foot; open movements of arms above shoulder level; outstretched hands held diagonally—one above the level of the head and the other at the level of the knee; taking such tiny steps that the lifting of the feet from the ground is hardly perceptible, the arms held down to the sides and the eyes downcast; fast movement of foot back and forth; swinging; rolling; rotating; hanging head down; and so on and so forth. There are also gestures of ceremonial greetings, such as *Johar* of the Santal.
- c) **Dhvani.** Sound is the third component of ritual language. The sound of musical instrument guides the dance *mudra*. Certain forms of sound have special significance. The Santal produce peculiar sound at the annual hunt. They shout “Der der, Deper deper” during the *Bitalaha* dance. The Toda shout “0 haw how” during the thatching of their sacred dairy temples. The tribes of North-East India also produce a wide variety of sounds, sometime giving expressions to their virility. The sound of flute, the sound of the drum, whistle, and cries are associated with a number of ritual performances. Certain forms of sound are considered inauspicious. According to the Birhor, if a jackal of the Fekar kind (which emits a peculiarly hoarse sound) is heard calling near the settlement, it is apprehended that some one in the community will fall sick or die. The croaking of a raven near the Birhor’s hut is believed to indicate that the news of the death of some near relative is about to come. Ceremonial weeping at the time of death may also be included in the category of ritualistic sound.
- d) **Vyavahariki.** In course of the performance of a ritual what follows in the form of prescriptions or instructions, thoughts, methods and behaviour is the *vyavahariki* code. The following description (Walker 1986) of making offerings to a Toda dairy will be a good illustration: All Toda dairies must be kept in a state of high ritual purity. Dairies are participants in the divinity of the gods of the sacred places believed to be able to grant boons and punish wrong doers. The manner in which the Toda go about requesting a boon from a dairy is strictly prescribed. It involves presenting to the dairy certain

gifts: a buffalo or a dairyman's black loincloth, silver coins, or a silver ring. If the presentation is to be a buffalo, the ceremony lasts two months; if it involves no more than a silver, the whole affair can be completed in a couple of days. But in any case, it involves all the male adults of the patrician and the ritual interaction of the two clan divisions known as *kwir* horns. On the day before the new moon following the announcement of the act of offering a buffalo, all female members of the chief settlement must leave the hamlet, as must all males of the buffalo-giver's *kwir*. On the Sunday following the new mon, the buffalo will be presented to the dairy. The man who wishes to propitiate the dairy must provide a female calf, between one and two years old, unblemished, with clear eyes and no parts of its ears or tails cut. On the morning of the ceremony, members of the gift-giving *kwir* must bathe from head to foot and abstain from food. When they are ready, they assemble at the outskirts of the chief hamlet from where they approach the settlement in a group with the calf; each man bares his right arm (a ritual sign of respect) and carries a green stick. When the members of the resident *kwir* see these people approaching, they shout, "Give the buffalo! Come here".

The gift-giving *kwir* enters the hamlet and the two divisions face each other. The dairyman addresses a ritual three times with the question "Shall I give the buffalo!", to which the reply each time is "Give the buffalo!" Then all the men drive the calf past the buffalo-giving stone, by which act it becomes the property of the resident *kwir*. The whole assembly now bows toward the dairy entrance as they recite a short prayer, which differs from clan to clan. After the prayer, All approach the dairy and bow, one by one, at the threshold, after which every one partakes of a feast prepared by the receiving *kwir*. The food on this occasion is a Toda delicacy, large balls of puffed millet and jaggery, served with generous helpings of honey and ghee. After eating, the gift-giving *kwir* must again leave the chief settlement and stay away for another lunar month. Members of the gift-receiving *kwir* may come and go as they please, except the resident dairyman. Two or three days after the new moon, everybody (including the womenfolk) may return and the whole community is invited to participate in a celebratory feast. Dancing is an integral part of the festivities. Life in the chief hamlet now returns to normal, having been disrupted for two months.

The underlying structure of the tribal ritual complex, as you must have realised, is not a mere reflection of and association with the superhuman world, but a strong reinforcement of the human world itself. Both social and aesthetic aspects of life are enriched. The social implications of primitive religion have been highlighted by Durkheim and Weber and many other sociologists of religion. The integrative function of religion in tribal society is demonstrated in their common goal (superhuman world) and common means (ritual). Unlike the salvation-seeking complex religions, tribal religion is concerned with the maintenance of social and cosmic harmony and with attaining this worldly goods-rain, harvest, children, health, victory, and so on.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) "Tribal life and society cannot be properly understood without understanding tribal religion". Illustrate. Use eight lines for your answer.

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ii) What is ritual language? Use five lines for your answer.

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iii) How do the tribes determine their ritual time? Use three lines for your answer.

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27.5 TRIBAL WORLDVIEW

Evolutionary anthropologists of the last century held that the primitive man’s mental equipment is very different from that of the civilised man. Since then several statements have been made supporting the view that the civilised mind is logical, rational, supremely abstract and scientific, while the savage mind is prelogical, irrational, supremely concrete and superstitious. We may (must) not take this difference seriously.

The primitive lack of differentiation in their worldview does not necessarily prove that they are intellectually incapable to reasoning and interpretation. As we shall see in a while (subsection 27.5.1) the principle of undifferentiated reality has found a place of pride in the highly intellectualised Vedantic philosophical system.

Secondly, as Geertz (1978) has said, nor is it necessary to be theologically self-conscious to be religiously sophisticated.

Thirdly, the development of religious systems cannot be established by finding correlations between social and psychological needs and the degree of religious articulation.

Lastly, the so-called primitive societies make no difference between the technical order and the spiritual order, and hence in their case the consideration of social and psychological factors influencing the religious life is totally irrelevant.

27.5.1 Simple Belief of the Tribals and the Upanishadic Complex Thought

Saraswati's (1986) exploration and analysis of the tribal myths of North-East India has led him to say that in the archaic vision, human, cosmos and the supernatural are not separate realities but are related and closely communicable to the extent that the Land of the Dead is the archetype of the Land of the Living. In support of his argument he quotes the Apa Tani's **eschatological** beliefs, as recorded by Furer-Haimendorf (1953): "The Apa Tani believe that the souls, *Yalo*, of all those who die a natural death go to *Neli*, the place of the dead, which looks like an Apa Tani village with long rows of houses. As an Apa Tani lived on this earth so will he live in *Neli*; a rich man will find the cattle he has sacrificed during his lifetime. Every woman returns to her first husband, but those who died unmarried may there marry and beget children. Life in *Neli* is similar to life on earth: people cultivate and work, and ultimately they die once more and go to another Land of the Dead". In the *Katha* Upanishad, Yama, the god of death, had told Nachiketa:

"Whatever is here, that is there,
What is there, that again is here,
He who sees any difference here,
Goes from death to death".

Comparing the Upanishadic complex thought with the tribal Apa Tani's simple belief, we find that both comprehend the essential oneness to the same degree of sophistication. The Apa Tani's description of the land of the dead is an apt illustration of the Upanishadic *Rishi's* conceptualisation of the fundamental unity of all experience and the intrinsic harmony of all existence.

27.5.2 Some Ethnographic Examples

Furer-Haimendorf (1962) describing the event of an earthquake in a Konyak Naga village addresses himself to the problem of tribal mind: "What is the Konyak's idea of the natural phenomena that sometimes threaten his life and his property?" The answer given by Furer-Haimendorf is that the Konyak Naga man is not a primitive, living in mortal fear of the unknown. In fact, his worldview is rather clear and simple. A Konyak Naga's ideas on-nature are derived from logical deduction.

Mawrie's (1981) self-interpretation of Khasi religion points to the same intuitive rationality. According to Mawrie, a Khasi family facing affliction or distress or financial problems believes that all such events have a cause. The cause may be an offense, displeasing the spirits. The family generally finds out the cause by resorting to divine consultation. After discovering the cause they perform sacrifice to atone the shortcomings so that the affliction may disappear.

Tribal traditions make no real distinction between man, animal and god (spirit). A woman give birth to twins, of whom one is human and the other tiger; animals talk, and also behave, like man; of two brothers, one is the father of mankind, and the other the father of the spirit (see Elwin 1968). This notion makes the interpersonal communication between man, animal and god theoretically conceivable and ritually possible.

Ritual actualises the man-god interaction in concrete observable contexts. Here is an example from an account of the Kharia by Roy and Roy (1937). He writes that the spirit doctor (Deonara) is called to diagnose when anyone suffers from a serious illness. In the manner of a medical practitioner, he feels the pulse of the patient and examines his body. Then he finds out if some spirit (Dubo) is the cause of the malady. Identification of the offended spirit (Dubo) is carried out by the spirit doctor when he gets into a state of spirit possession. He may also find this out by reading the nature of the way a wick flickers. If the flame is whitish and weak, a minor spirit is declared to be the cause of the malady, if the flame is red, an ancestral spirit or family deity is indicated. If the flame is strong and flickers only a little, a particularly malevolent spirit is indicated. After confirming the identity of the spirit, the spirit doctor prescribes appropriate sacrifices, which are offered by the head of the family.

Activity 2

Ask someone either in your family or neighbourhood to tell you the story of Nachiketa or try to read it from literary sources and write it in your words.

OR

Write a note on how you would explain when your family falls into affliction or distress or financial deterioration.

Compare your story/note with those written by other students of your Study Centre.

27.5.3 Anthropological Studies of Primitive (Tribal) Religion

The early **evolutionary** study of religious phenomena in Tylorian, Morganian and Frazerian style was replaced by the structure-functionalist approach initiated by Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown. In more recent years, social anthropologists, such as, Evans-Pritchard, Lienhardt and Worsley, have developed the study of primitive religions further. During the last few years there has been greater sophistication in understanding the structure and meaning of the primitive belief systems, largely in terms of their symbolic significance, owing much to Claude Levi-Strauss and Clifford Geertz. But most anthropological analyses of primitive religion, in some form or the other are still geared to the evolutionary problems and preoccupations. Religions of the so-called primitive and the so-called civilised are marked off on the recognition of the notion of historical progress from simple to complex and the nature of primitive and of modern society. If progress means differentiation, then primitive means undifferentiated and modern means differentiated. It has been observed that the contemporary primitives live technically, socially, economically, and politically in the most simple and undifferentiated conditions, and so also in their personal worldview. But this does not prove that a society tend to be so differentiated in its worldview. You have seen how the simple Apa Tani residing in the undifferentiated social conditions and the Upanishadic *Rishi* of a highly differentiated society share the same thought of the essential oneness.

i) Is it necessary to be theologically self-conscious to be religiously sophisticated?

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ii) What is the tribal perception of man, animal and god?

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iii) How do the evolutionary anthropologists differentiate between the so-called primitive and the so-called civilised thought worlds?

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27.6 IMPACT OF OTHER RELIGIOUS BELIEF SYSTEMS

As mentioned in the introduction of this unit, many tribal religions have blended with other faiths of non-tribal groups. Of these Hinduism and Christianity are the major religious systems which have affected the tribal communities. Let us first consider the impact of Hinduism on tribal religious beliefs and practices.

27.6.1 Hinduism and Tribal Religions

Ethnographic studies of different tribal groups show that the contact of the tribals with their neighbours varied from part-isolation to complete assimilation. The Tharu (Srivastava 1958) and the Khasa (Majumdar 1962), the two central Himalayan tribes in North India are a good example of completely assimilated or Hinduised tribes. By adopting Hindu caste names, wearing the sacred thread, establishing social links with the local Rajput and Brahmin groups, these tribals have incorporated their identity with high caste Hindus. Similarly, the Kshatriya model (Srinivas 1966) of Hinduism has been adopted in middle India by the Chero, Kharwar, Pahariya of Bihar and the Bhumij of Madhya Pradesh. The Bhumij Kshatriya Association, founded in 1935, showed wider implications of Hinduisation of the tribals. The concept of tribal Rajput continuum (Sinha 1961) was evolved in the course of historical studies of the Bhumij Raj of Birbhum.

In Eastern India the Bauri of West Bengal (see Shasmal 1967) accepted to observe the prescribed number of days of pollution for mourning, wear the sacred thread,

go to pilgrimage and follow Vaishnavism. They now claim to belong to the Brahmin caste.

Adhering to beliefs in the Hindu concepts of Karma, pollution, merit (*punya*) and observing Hindu life cycle rituals, the Mahali of West Bengal (Sengupta 1966) have adopted and assimilated the elements of local belief and practices of the Hindus. Similarly, in many of the Oraon villages of Chotanagpur, Hindu gods and goddesses are worshipped; Hindu priests are employed to carry out ritual performances during life-cycle ceremonies (Sahay 1962 and Sachchidanand 1964).

In Western India also, we find that many of the Hindu deities are worshipped by the tribals. For example, Mahadev is the main deity of the Bhil tribe. Shah (1964) has shown that in Gujarat the Dubla, Naika, Gamit and Dhanaka are quite Hinduised and employ a Brahmin to perform the rituals.

Looking at the situation in South India, we find that beliefs and practices of the neighbouring Hindu castes have been adopted by the Chenchu, Kadar and Muthuvan. Hindu gods and goddesses like Aiyappan, Maruti and Kali are worshipped by the Kadar. Presiding deities of Madurai temple, Palaniandi and Kadavallu are treated as their chief deities by the Muthuvan.

Here we would like to also mention that contacts between the tribals and their Hindu neighbours have not only resulted in the impact of Hinduism on tribal beliefs and practices, "We find also the impact of tribal religions on the practices of certain Hindu groups living in tribal villages. For example, the process of tribalisation in the Bastar region of Madhya Pradesh reflected in acceptance by high caste Hindus of tribal morals, rituals and belief (see Kalia 1959: 32). Majumdar mentions the concept of transculturation among the Ho of Singhbhum, signifying reciprocal impact of tribal culture on local Hindu castes. Hutton (1931) observed that Hinduism and tribal religions share a common base, while Bose (1971: 6) is of the opinion that the tribal population of India has contributed to the making of Hinduism.

It is not out of place here to mention that the tribal groups have also been affected by their neighbours. Such as the Buddhists and the Muslims. In upper Lahaul and the Ladakh region, the Bhot tribals are mainly Buddhists. Similarly, the Gujar of the North-Western Himalayan region and the Bhil of Rajasthan have close contacts with Muslim groups and are affected by their beliefs and practices.

In this section, we have simply mentioned about the neighbouring groups' impact on the tribal groups. We have not discussed the process of these changes. This point will be examined in the next unit on *Tribes and Modernisation in India*. Let us now look at Christianity, which has affected many of the tribal groups in India.

27.6.2 Christianity and Tribal Religions

Beginning with the conversion of the Khasi of Assam in 1813, of the Oraon of Chotanagpur in 1850 and of the Bhil of Madhya Pradesh in 1880 (Sahay 1963, 1967) by Christian missionaries, Christianity has brought about many changes in the cultural life of the tribals in India. The missionaries attempted to convert numerically major tribes. As a result, minor tribes remained untouched by the new religion while mass conversion of major tribes gave the impression of the hold of Christianity on tribal India.

Of the total population of Christians in India at least one sixth belong to tribal groups. Most of the tribal Christians are found in the North-East Himalayan zone. Elwin (1961) estimated that ranging from half to almost the entire population of the Mizo, Garo and Naga tribes professed Christianity.

In middle India, two-thirds of the Khasi, one-fourth of the Munda and one fourth of the Oraon follow Christianity. In the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, we find small pockets of Christian tribals. The tribes like the Chero, Kharwar, Pahariya, Birhor, Baiga, Balhudi, Bedia, Karmali, do not have a single Christian convert.

In South India, Hill Pulaya, Malayarayan and Palliar tribals of Kerala have been **proselytised** and nearly two-third of their population has accepted Christianity.

Conversion to Christianity gave the tribals a model of westernisation. We will discuss this point in unit 28. Here it will suffice to say that the Church organisation, western education, values and morals reached the tribals through Christianity. Their introduction implied a demand to give up tribal belief and practices. In some cases, traditional festivals were reinterpreted in terms Christianised myths. For example, origin of the festival Sarhul of the Munda was, after conversion, associated by them to the fight between Alexander and King Porus in 400 B.C. Sahay (1963) has concluded that the Oraon of Chainpur in Ranchi district (formerly part of Bihar state and now the capital of the newly formed state of Jharkhand that was carved out of Bihar on 15th November 2000) of Jharkhand gave up their faith in traditional Sarna religion and adopted Christian faith. This resulted in considerable changes in celebration of festivals, village organisation, economic life and other aspects of their culture. Thus, some scholars have viewed Christianity as a source of disintegration of tribal religion.

We can also mention the element of fusion with Christianity introduced among the tribal groups. Under the rubric of one denomination of Christianity some of the previously separated tribal groups came together and even accepted marital relations across tribal boundaries. Under the Church organisational network, many tribal groups scattered over a wider area came together and built contacts not only with the provincial and national but also international Church bodies. Sahay (1963) has studied the process of Christianisation of the Oraon tribals and identified a set of five processes, signifying different forms of interaction between the tribal Christian norms and values. Under the patronage of British rule, conversion to Christianity had found a favourable environment while in independent India, many revivalist movements among the tribal groups have led the tribals to go back to their traditional religious beliefs and practices. In the next section, we will discuss some of these movements and evaluate their significance for tribal India.

Activity 3

Give an example of the impact of one religious system on another religious system. Elaborate, in 200 words, on the nature of this impact. Compare if possible, your note with notes of other students at your Study Centre

27.7 SOCIO-RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS

All over the world, socio-religious movements have evolved in almost all religions. These range from **cargo cults** (Lawrence 1964) to millenarian movements (Burridge

1969). The word millenarian means, literally, a thousands years and refers to the belief that the world order is soon going to end, giving way to a new and perfect society. Ethnographic material is well researched and documented to explain the emergence of such movements. Here we will examine the emergence of some of the socio-religious movements among the tribal groups as products of change within the group, of contact with the out-group, and of reinterpretation of the sacred realm. As the sacred realm bears direct relationship with society, reinterpretation of the 'sacred' forms an important feature of such movements. By focusing on these movements among the tribal groups, we do not mean to say that such movements do not occur among other groups.

In fact, many such movements have been recorded among the untouchable and middle castes in India. Examples of such movements among the tribals are the Munda Rebellion, Jatra Bhagat Movement and Kharwar Movement. All these examples show that the tribals (among whom the movements emerged) were never totally isolated from the main currents of Indian society. Secondly, the exploitative forces (against whom the movements were addressed) were not only colonisers, but also the non-tribal upper castes. Thirdly, the influencing contact with the out-group did not come only from Christian missionaries but also from Hindus and Muslims.

We may have to ask ourselves the question as to why it is that no socio-religious movement had emerged in the North-Eastern Frontier Agency while many did among the tribals of Chotanagpur. If we go by the theory of deprivation as one of the causes of emergence of such movements, it may appear that perhaps the tribals of Chotanagpur were deprived to the worst extent and hence among them a multiplicity of such movements arose.

We may also look at the question of duration of contacts between different cultures. We may ask, at what stage of contact, does a socio-religious movement arise? Due to varying intensity of crises, various durations may be necessary in particular groups for the movements to crystallise. Also, a movement may emerge, become active and then lie dormant (see Lawrence 1964). Again, a socio-religious movement may come at the initial stage of contact or it may come after the completion of acculturation.

When one culture meets the other, one social order is affected by the other. In section 27.6 of this unit we talked about the impact of other religious groups on tribal religions. Here, while reemphasising the same, it can be said that most of the time meeting of cultures has been prompted by colonisation. The colonisers (be they foreigners or other cultural groups within the country) integrate their colonies into wider markets by introducing different forms of economy, by exporting the local products and raw materials. As a result rapid changes take place and the existing social order breaks down. In the case of tribal India, large scale changes were introduced by the missionaries. These changes, in turn, produced disturbance in the way society was previously organised among the tribals. The disturbances caused many a dilemma for the people, leading to both psychological social deprivations. These are the situations, which triggered the path to socio-religious movements.

With this background of their emergence, let us now take two examples of socio-religious movements, namely, the Tana Bhagat Movement among the Oraon of Bihar (Jharkhand) and the Birsa Munda movement of the Munda in and around

the districts of Ranchi and Singhbhum in Chotanagpur Division of present day Jharkhand. Both these movements are essentially religious in nature. Here, Jatra Bhagat and Birsa Munda, the tribal leaders of the respective movements were essentially fighting the foreign exploiters, like the landlords and contractors. The tribals, feeling deprived and isolated, found through these movements a sense of unity and a common identity. Yet, the two movements also differed from each other. Let us consider each of them separately.

27.7.1 Tana Bhagat Movement

In Tana Bhagat Movement, as in other Bhagat movements, an attempt is made to emulate the way of life of the Hindu higher castes. Tana Bhagat movement is one kind of the Bhagat movement that emerged among the Oraon of Chotanagpur, Jharkhand. There were other Bhagat movements like Nemha Bhagat and Bachidan Bhagat. The term Bhagat has been employed in many parts of Bihar and Jharkhand to refer to sorcerers and magicians. Among the Oraon it is however applied to a distinct section of the tribe which subscribes to the cult of Bhakti. The entire Bhagat movement, attempting as it did to raise the status of its members in the eyes of the surrounding Hindu society, is characterised by large scale incorporation of Hindu belief-practices into its ideology.

The leader of Tana Bhagat movement was called Jatra Oraon who lived in village Beparinwatoli in Bishanpur Thana of Gumla sub-division of Ranchi district. In 1914, this person announced in the month of April that Dharmesh, the high god of the Oraon, had revealed to him that the people would have to give up the worship of **ghosts** and spirits and the practice of exorcism. He told his people that they would have to refrain from animal sacrifice, meat eating, liquor drinking etc. Even cultivation by plough with the use of animal power was rejected. It was believed that god had given to Jatra certain songs or spells by which fever, sties, and other ailments could be cured.

The leaders of this movement believed that the tribal spirits and deities whom they had been worshipping were of no use to them since it did not help them alleviate the socio-economic ills of their community. They also tried to prove that in fact it was these deities who were responsible for their present state of misery and degradation. By asserting that these tribal deities were of Munda origin, the founders of Tana Bhagat movement embarked on a programme of proselytisation and agitation for the exorcism of the foreign spirits and deities. The cult emphasised a return to the original Oraon religion.

Its earliest manifestation was in the expulsion of evil spirits imported from the Munda and in the active rebellion against unfair landlords who exploited them. Even when their leader Jatra Bhagat was imprisoned, some of the cult members refused to pay rents to their landlords and ceased to cultivate their lands. Such and other rebellious activities like ghost-hunting drive and holding meetings by the followers of the Tana Bhagat movement were regarded with suspicion and branded as 'disloyal and illegal' gatherings.

This movement broke up into several smaller cults after sometime. Some of these cults are extremist and orthodox like Sibuhagat. The rest are mixtures of tribal and Hindu religious beliefs and practices.

27.7.2 Birsa Munda Movement

During the second half of the nineteenth century the whole of Chotanagpur underwent a tremendous change. The old Munda system of *khuntkatti* tenure gave way to a new and alien system of exploitation by the landlords known as *Jagirdar* and *Thikadar*. Under their greed and cruelty the tribal population was squeezed out of their land and other possessions. Suffering economically and politically, the Munda were assigned low social status. Later the Christian missionaries tried to give the Munda back their rights on their land. But this too had a price, which was conversion to Christianity. A large number of the Munda did convert to Christianity. But in due course they realised that this was not the solution. The missionaries had failed to redeem them from abject poverty and oppression.

At this time when the Munda community was seething with discontent, in 1895, Birsa Munda of Chalked started a movement. In him the Munda found the embodiment of their aspirations. He gave them leadership, a religion and a code of life. He held before them the prospect of Munda Raj in place of a foreign rule.

Under the influence of a learned Satnami Pandit, Birsa Munda became a vegetarian and the religion that he preached had elements of both Hinduism and Christianity. His religion promised to end the misery of his community and so it was a means to an end.

His religion had the element of charisma. Birsa came to be regarded as an embodiment of god '*Birsa Bhagwan*'; his people believed that Birsa could bring the dead back to life. Whenever there was epidemic he visited his people and cured them. He had the magic touch and proclaimed himself to be the prophet of Sing-Bonga, the one and only God. So far Birsa was seen as a provider of new and better life for his people,

But later his movement assumed quasi-political and militaristic shape. As he organised a force to fight oppressive landlords, Christian missionaries and British officials, he was imprisoned. Since his people believed in Birsa's magical power, they did not ask for his release, rather they wanted to go to jail with him. They believed that within three days he will himself come out of jail. He was released only after two years.

Out of jail, Birsa asked his people to ready their arms to fight injustice. He trained his army and became the politician leading his people to their goal of self-rule. He was however arrested again and died in jail. Yet the seeds of unrest were sown among his people and they continued to fight against injustice. The erstwhile, 'Jharkhanda Movement', which ultimately culminated in the formation of the Jharkhand State(see unit 28) has its roots in this movement (Singh 1983).

Our description of both the Tana Bhagat movement and Birsa Munda movement underlines the importance of a 'prophet-like' figure, who is the guiding spirit of the movement. He draws his legitimacy from the divine revelation. His prophecy appeals to the crisis situation. He becomes the epicentre of the collective expectations of his people. He suggests rejection of certain activities, rituals and customs. He incorporates new elements and adapts certain components of out-group culture to suit the needs of collective expectations. He reinterprets the myth, reformulates the ritual and prepares his people for collective action. In section 27.2 of this unit, we say that cult myths are dynamic aspects of tribal religion as they express the

hopes of the people. We can conclude here that by discussing some of the socio-religious movements among the tribals we have gained an added understanding of tribal religions.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Are socio-religious movements a product of change within the group or of contact with the out-group? Use one line for your answer.

.....

ii) Who does the term Bhagat refer to? Use one line for your answer.

.....

iv) Did Birsa Munda ever organise an army to fight injustice? Use one line for your answer.

.....

27.8 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have made the following observations:

- a) Religion of a tribe is simple. Religious beliefs and behaviour are not treated as something apart from other kinds of beliefs and behaviour. Religion pervades all aspects of their life. Tribal life and society cannot be fully understood without understanding their religion.
- b) Tribal ritual complex is not a mere reflection and association with the superhuman world but a strong reinforcement of the human world itself. The integrative function of religion in tribal society is demonstrated in their common goal (superhuman world) and common means (ritual).
- c) Most anthropological analyses of primitive religion are still geared to the evolutionary problems and preoccupations. It has been observed that the contemporary primitives live technically, socially, economically, and politically in the most undifferentiated conditions, and so also in their personal worldview. This does not prove that a society characterised by a high degree of social differentiation will tend to be differentiated in its worldview. The simple tribal eschatological belief is in agreement with the highly sophisticated worldview of the theologically self-conscious society.
- d) Due to culture contact, tribal religions were affected by the religious beliefs and practices of other groups. We have also mentioned that some of the non-tribal groups were affected by tribal customs and practices.
- e) Lastly, we discussed the emergence of socio-religious movements among the tribals. These movements were primarily religious in content and reflected the articulation of collective hopes of the tribals.

27.9 KEYWORDS

Cargo cults	of Melanesia are considered a form of millenarian movement, which refers to a belief in a miraculous arrival of bountiful goods.
Divination	means discovering the spiritual means.
Eschatology	means doctrine of death and afterlife.
Evolution	is a scientific paradigm taken to mean the change of one form into another, following the biological laws of variation, selection, survival, adaptation and progress.
Faith	is a constitutive human dimension by which human beings understand their ontological relation to God or whatever name one may give to the foundation of being.
Ghost	is an apparition of dead person etc.
God	is the transcendent being worshipped as divine power of creation, preservation and destruction.
Myth	is that unquestioned which is taken for granted and purifies thought so that the unthought may emerge and the intermediary may disappear.
Patrician	is the largest group of agnates between whom marriage is forbidden and sexual intercourse regarded as incestuous.
Polyandry	means polygamy in which one woman has more than one husband.
Prayer	is the act in which and by which man enters into contact with the core of the real.
Primitive	in a pejorative sense characterises an evolutionary stage of prelogical human mind oriented to undifferentiated conditions.
Primordial	is the first age of world.
Proselytism	is practice of conversion to another faith.
Religion	is a system of faith, which relates man to the ultimate conditions of his existence.
Ritual	is a transcendental phenomena from which has arisen all creative impulses and vitality and which leads ultimately to that distant and secret destination which mankind has been exploring from the beginning of his existence.
Ritual Language	is a symbolic ritual code consisting of esoteric word (<i>mantra</i>), gesture (<i>mudra</i>), sound (<i>dhvani</i>), and everyday language of interaction (<i>vyavahariki</i>).
Sacred	is a category sui generis, i.e., it differs in nature and quality from all that is human, secular or profane.

Spirit	is disembodied person or incorporeal being.
Theology	is the philosophical treatise of a religious order.
Tribe	is a social group usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural, homogeneity and unifying social organisation, ideally characterised by lack of interaction and absence of any hierarchical system, and isolated from other ethnic groups in ecology, demography, economy, politics and other social relations.
Witchcraft	is the use of black-magical practices dealing with devil or evil spirits.
Worldview	is the view of the world based on a particular ideology that defines the world.

27.10 FURTHER READING

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27.11 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Here we take an example of the Toda tribal. The Toda are pastoral people. They and their buffaloes are believed to be a divine creation. Their dairies are the temples. Ceremonies are associated with the dairies, the buffaloes and the pastures. Life's major events are highly ritualised. Even the social

paternity of a child is determined not biologically but ritually. The Toda economy and society revolve round the complex web of ritual. No aspect of Toda life can be described without taking ritual into account.

- ii) Ritual language is a symbolic code, which points beyond what cannot be expressed in human language. In its essential form it is a fourfold code, consisting of (a) esoteric word, (b) gesture, (c) sound, (d) everyday language of interaction in the form of prescriptions or instructions, thoughts, methods and behaviour.
- iii) Tribes order their ritual time on the Nature's signal, i.e., the blossoming plants and trees, on the position of stars and moon; the biological time, and by direct divination.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) No. Comparing the theologically self-conscious Upanishadic views with those of the theologically unaware Apa Tani tribals on the fundamental unity of all experience and intrinsic harmony of all existence, we find that both comprehend the essential oneness to the same degree of sophistication.
- ii) Tribals make no real distinction between man, animal, and god (spirit). A woman gives birth to twins, of whom one is human and the other tiger; animals talk and also behave, like man; of two brothers one is the father of mankind, and the other the father of spirit. This notion makes the interpersonal communication between man, animal and god theoretically conceivable and ritually possible.
- iii) The evolutionary anthropologists consider that the primitive man's mental equipment is very different from that of the civilised man. The civilised mind is logical, rational, supremely abstract and scientific, while the primitive mind is prelogical, irrational, supremely concrete and superstitious. The primitive people lack differentiation in their thoughtworld; the civilised means differentiated.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Socio-religious movements may emerge as a result of changes within a group but mostly they are a product of contact with the out-group.
- ii) In Bihar the term Bhagat refers to magicians and sorcerers.
- iii) In 1897, after a spell of two years in jail, Birsa Munda asked his people to take their bows and arrows to fight injustice.

UNIT 28 TRIBES AND MODERNISATION IN INDIA

Structure

- 28.0 Objectives
- 28.1 Introduction
- 28.2 Scheduled Tribes in India
 - 28.2.1 Contacts of the Tribal Societies with Other Tribal and Non-tribal Social Groups
 - 28.2.2 The Tribals and the British Policy
- 28.3 Case-studies to Examine the Impact of Modernisation
 - 28.3.1 The Baiga Tribe of Madhya Pradesh
 - 28.3.2 Apa Tani and Other Tribes of the North-East
 - 28.3.3 Rabari
 - 28.3.4 Toda
 - 28.3.5 Santal Tribe in Transition
- 28.4 Different Aspects of Modernisation in Relation to the Tribal Societies
 - 28.4.1 Industrialisation
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 - 28.4.3 Adverse Effects of Modernity
 - 28.4.4 Tribal Movements
- 28.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 28.6 Keywords
- 28.7 Further Reading
- 28.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

28.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the contacts of the tribal populations with non-tribal social groups
- describe the nature of the British Policy towards the tribals
- give examples of specific tribal groups for showing different levels of modernisation among them
- identify some aspects of modernisation in relation to the tribal societies in India.

28.1 INTRODUCTION

After discussing social structure and religion of the tribal societies in India, we now examine the impact of the process of modernisation on them. Before proceeding to discuss the tribal societies of India in relation to modernisation process

a point of caution needs to be inserted here. Tribes in India are characterised by extreme heterogeneity, being placed at different levels of social and economic development. Each one has reacted differently to the forces of modernisation. Some have become devastated as they came into contact with highly developed societies. In contrast, there are some who have richly benefited from the gains of modernisation. Because of differential impact the tribals have received, it is hazardous to generalise, although some of the basic trends of modernisation and change may be conveniently outlined. To give an idea of differing impacts of modernisation, we shall first describe the heterogeneous character of the tribal societies and see how in anthropology a tribe is conceptualised in relation to its contacts with other tribal and non-tribal groups. Secondly, we will give some case studies to show the nature of modernisation in the tribal groups from different parts of India. Then we will discuss different aspects of modernisation in relation to the tribal societies.

28.2 SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIA

Scheduled Tribes in India constitute, according to 1981 Census, 8 per cent of the total population, divided into 427 communities, and inhabiting almost all the regions and parts of India. By 1991 they were 8.10 per cent of the total population (Census of India, 1991) with 533 communities of which 75 were said to be primitive tribes. They widely differ in their demographic and cultural characteristics. The Great Andamanese number only in two digits the Toda are in three digits; Hill Miri (Arunachal Pradesh) are in four digits; there are Chenchu in five digits; Saora constitute a population of six digits; the Gond are more than 4 million, and so are the Santal and Bhil. Santal, Gond, Bhil and Munda are plough-cultivators; Rabari (Gujarat) are pastoralists; Chenchu are hunters and food-gatherers; Maler (Rajmahal Hills) are shifting cultivators like some of the tribes of the North-East. The large, plough-cultivating tribes are not different from the peasants (Beteille 1974: 58-74). They are politically conscious, aware of their rights, and their level of modernisation and development is relatively high. They have come to be known as *haldar* (owner of the plough), *Kisan* (peasant), *Kashtkar* (tiller of the land) in different areas. They have also responded to modern education. In independent India, they have started taking advantage of the policy of reservation. Similarly, the tribes of the North-East have modernised by seeking advantages of the educational institutions.

But such is not the situation with a large number of other tribes especially what are called 'minor' ones. Some of them, especially the tribes of Andaman Islands (Jarawa, Onge, Great Andamanese, Shompen, and Sentinel) and Toda, are facing the problem of declining numbers and extinction. During the Fifth Five-Year Plan, it was felt that the benefits of state-sponsored modernisation and development activities were being chiefly monopolised by the big tribes, thus the gulf between them and the other smaller tribes was widening. The need was to have special schemes for them. From the list of Scheduled Tribes, the communities which were educationally and socially backward and nearly isolated, surviving at a pre-agricultural level, and had a declining or near-constant population, were separately placed in a list of Primitive Tribes. There were 72 such communities in India in 1981. In the year 2003, 75 communities were termed as primitive. The degree of modernisation amongst them is low. As their number has been less, with people

living in dispersed villages, most of these tribes have not been able to form 'associations' that could exercise pressure on the state or central government. Some of them have 'associations' but they are concerned with social reforms rather than acting as effective pressure groups.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Give examples of the Indian Tribes, which follow the following types of occupation; a) Hunting and food gathering, (b) Cattle rearing, (c) Shifting cultivation, and (d) Plough cultivation. Use two lines for your answer.

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.....

ii) Name, in two lines, at least six of the tribes called minor.

.....
.....

iii) How many 'Primitive Tribes' are there in India in 2003? Use one line for your answer.

.....

28.2.1 Contacts of the Tribal Societies with Other Tribal and Non-tribal Social Groups

In anthropology, a tribe was conceptualised as a relatively isolated or semi-isolated community. Such a community had its own cultural system being defined by self-sufficiency, political autonomy, a well-demarcated territory, a common dialect, folklore and deities. It had a sense of belongingness to the same group. The geographic and cultural isolation of a tribe, thus defined, had implications for methodology. A tribe could be studied in itself without necessarily referring to other exterior social units. If a tribe was 'whole society' the peasant constituted 'part-society' with 'part-culture'. Such a neat formulation of 'tribe' as juxtaposed to 'peasant' was an ideal representation, far from both historical and contemporary reality.

A large number of examples were offered to show that a tribe was never completely isolated. It entered into a set of relationship with its neighbouring communities, tribals as well as non-tribals (Bose 1971: 4; Dube 1977: 2). The relationship in some cases was of intense hostility, punctuated with cases of periodic raids (as was the case with the tribes of Naga Hills). Or some economic exchanges obtained between independent tribes, a classical example of which was described by Mandelbaum (1955: 223-254; 1972: 600-1) from the tribes of Nilgiri Hills. Notwithstanding these relations between independent tribes, each one of them was a cultural whole, if not a cultural isolate.

And moreover, the inter-tribal relations did not contribute to vast magnitudes of acculturative changes. In spite of sharing the same geographic and ecological zones, each tribe maintained its own identity and cultural patterns. For example, in several tribal villages of Ranchi, Oraon and Munda live together. They may have faith in the local holy men. For instance, the holy man (Baba) of Kamre village (Ranchi district) was 'worshipped' by both Oraon and Munda. But the historic facts of

living together and several cross-cutting ties did not mitigate the inter-tribal cultural and linguistic differences: Oraon speak Kurukh which is Dravidian while Munda belong to the Austro-Asiatic branch of linguistic groups in India.

Besides the inter-tribal relations, the tribal settlements close to caste Hindu villages had exchange relations on the pattern of *jajmani* with other patron and occupational castes (Dumont 1962: 120-2; Sinha 1965: 57-83). As a result, some of the tribal communities came to call themselves *Adivasi jati*. Once they entered into service relations with other jati, they also started incorporating certain Hindu deities and the elements of Hindu **cosmology**. Gradually, the little tradition of the tribals became a part of the great tradition of the Hindus. But such an absorption of the tribals in the caste system, as Bose (1971) has described it, did not signal the beginning of their modernisation, which actually began when they came in contact with the wider world? the world that had already undergone qualitative changes because of the colonial rule.

28.2.2 The Tribals and the British Policy

The British policy towards the tribals had two major elements. Firstly, it favoured isolation of the tribal areas from the mainstream (Bhowmick 1980; Chaudhuri 1982). Thus was given the concept of 'excluded' and/or 'partially excluded areas'. Because the British tribal policy was political and colonial, the British administrators feared, that if these tribals (bow-and-arrow armed tribals were often labelled as militant, unruly and *junglee*) were to have contact with the mainstream of Indian society, the freedom movements would gain further strength. In this background it seemed logical to them to isolate, administratively and politically, the regions that had predominantly tribal populations.

Secondly, at the level of reform, the British administration was interested in 'civilising' these people. In an **ethno-centric** assessment, the tribals were viewed at par with stage of bestiality. The classical theory of evolution, which had gripped academic attention in late nineties and early twenties, had treated the 'contemporary primitives' as the remnants or survivals of the early stages of humanity, savagery and barbarism. In the words of Sir E.B. Tylor, these people inhabiting the hilly or forested terrain with sparse population and difficult communication were 'social **fossils**'; a study of whom would illuminate the prehistoric phases of human existence.

The intellectual climate about the historical and evolutionary place of these 'primitives' considerably influenced the political action. Missionaries were sent to some of the difficult areas inhabited by these people. Animism, as the tribal religion was often characterised, was replaced by one or the other denomination of Christianity. Schools were opened up, and obviously English was opted as the main language of instruction. Along with came the Western medical system, which slowly started exorcising the traditional practices of cure. Styles of life and ways of behaviour began changing. And they became very conspicuous in dress patterns, especially of men.

The Westernisation of tribals had begun. Here, two things need to be mentioned. Not all tribes were subjected to the efforts of modernisation. There were many which continued to survive in their traditional modes till India's Independence. Secondly, the decision of the Administration to admit missionaries in some areas to open schools there was conditioned by strategic factors. Chotanagpur plateau and the North-Eastern India were the main candidates for the mission activities

and concomitant modernisation. In these cases, as well as in others, Christianity was the sole vehicle of modernisation. The neo-converts not only became a part of the Great Tradition of Christianity, but were also linked to the Great Tradition of the Western culture, English language, Western dress, mannerism and medicines, being ineluctable components of the rulers, culture, flourished as far superior and 'advanced' to the local culture. The fate of traditional material culture and styles of living was decided: they were to be 'preserved' as museum specimens.

And this evaluation – the tribal culture must be 'museumified' lest it disappear with the onslaught of modernity – promoted the classical ethnographic studies. In them, the way they were changing was not attended to. The attempt was to record as meticulously as possible the tradition, or better the dying tradition of the people.

These studies served another purpose. They provided the administrators with the cultural background of the people they were going to rule. Detailed accounts of the local customary laws were written so that the administration of people and arbitration of their inter-personal conflicts could be done very much in terms of their laws and rules of conflict settlement. Along with this, attempts were made to synthesise the customary and the modern laws. In all these efforts, the focus was on modernising the tribals. But the colonial experience elsewhere had taught the protagonists that were the people to be detached from their tradition almost completely, there would be a backlash of modernisation and breakdown of its agencies. In the next section we discuss actual cases of the impact of modernisation on selected tribal groups of India.

Check Your Progress 2

i) Is it possible, in your view, for a tribe to be completely isolated? Give your answer in three lines.

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.....
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ii) Do inter tribal relations affect cultural and linguistic identities of the tribes? Use three lines for your answer

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iii) Do the contacts of a tribe with its Hindu neighbours signal the beginning of its modernisation? Use two lines for your answer.

.....
.....

iv) Give, in two lines, the two elements of British policy towards the tribal populations

.....
.....

v) Which were the two main areas for the Christian mission activities and corresponding modernisation? Use one line for your answer

.....

vi) What is the main approach of classical ethnographic studies of Indian tribes? Use two lines for your answer

.....

.....

28.3 CASE-STUDIES TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF MODERNISATION

Modernisation is a process of spreading the values, institutions and technical aspects of ‘modern society’. To highlight different responses to the forces of modernisation we give you five case studies of the tribal groups from different parts of India.

28.3.1 The Baiga Tribe of Madhya Pradesh

The Baiga tribe of Madhya Pradesh is famous in anthropological literature because it was in its context that Elwin (1938: 511-521) suggested one of the first, most controversial approaches to the tribal problem. According to him, since the genesis of tribal problem lay in their contact with the non-tribal exploiters, the tribes (and in this case, the Baiga) should be isolated in a ‘tribal reserve area’, where the entry of non-tribals, missionaries, landlords and other exploiting elements should be completely prohibited. Though Elwin later withdrew his advice of isolating the tribals, the positive consequences of isolation, fostered by geographical factors and strongly supported by the Administration, have been noticed in some hill tribes, the most outstanding being the Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh, a case we shall discuss after that of the Baiga. Having a population of 1,76,934 individuals (according to Census 1971), the Baiga, one of the six Primitive Tribes of Madhya Pradesh, are mainly concentrated in the districts of Mandla, Shahdol, Sidhi, Balaghat, Bilaspur and Surguja. According to a Tribal Research Institute (Bhopal) Report (1986: 5) they are ‘one of the most backward tribes of the state’, with the percentage of literacy among them being 4.51.

The Baiga used to practice shifting cultivation (*bewar*) till quite recently. They have now been advised (or ‘forced’) to give it up. Only inside the Baiga-Chak reservation, which has fifty-two villages, in Mandla district, that they are permitted to pursue *bewar*-cultivation in a restricted manner. Though mentally adjusting to the new requirements of plough cultivation now, they are nostalgic about their past when they used to grow twelve varieties of grain through *bewar*. The Baiga term *Bewar* refers to tilling of the land by the axe.

Their cultural system has not undergone any perceptible changes. Traditionally, the males used to keep tangled hair, almost resembling a bun, on the **occiput** region of their head. Now, except for a couple of educated people, this cultural trait is still valued. Similarly, the women were tattooed on every part of the body, including forehead. Even now this custom prevails. The Baiga had been famous as **shaman** (*gunia*). The shamanistic lore has not weakened over time. Marriage rules are strictly adhered to. The inter-personal conflicts are resolved in the village

by the intervention of their council. As a matter of fact, the details of their culture as documented by Elwin in his field work from 1932 till 1939 are not very different from the facts collected by a contemporary ethnographer.

The headquarters of Baiga Chak is called *Charha*. There is a dispensary having a resident doctor, a pharmacist and a nurse. Only a negligible number of the Baiga attend the dispensary when they are ill. Their faith in shamanistic healing (*gunia*) is unshakable.

It has primary, middle and secondary schools. But there are very few Baiga children attending the schools as compared to the Gond. As one moves to higher classes, the number of the Baiga further declines. Drop-out rate amongst them is much higher than among other communities. There are only two Baiga teachers in the whole region. The following photograph, taken by Dr. Surinder Nath, is from Baiga Chak, Mandla District, Madhya Pradesh. Here two Baiga teachers, in shirt and trousers, are convincing an illiterate Baiga about the importance of modern education inspiring him to send his children to the school.

A couple of changes may be noticed in their economic life. As said earlier, the plough-hating Baiga (for them, ploughing amounted to 'tearing the mother earth's breasts') have taken up settled cultivation. Some of them work as agricultural labourers with the Gond. They also work on the jobs provided by the forest department like, wage labourers for making the forest wall, working in the rope-making factory, in jobs of plantation, etc. In spite of all this, they have maintained aloofness in behaviour, mixing less with the Gond and other communities. Even today, it is not uncommon to see the Baiga running away to seek shelter in dense forests when they encounter non-tribal cosmopolitan people coming to their hamlets.

28.3.2 Apa Tani and Other Tribes of the North-East

Apa Tani, numbering about 15000, live in the high lands of Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. For a very long time, they maintained a self-contained social order, which was uninfluenced by outside power. Though they had developed an efficient system of rice cultivation, they did not have the knowledge of plough and wheel, and their cattle were not used for traction, carriage, or milking (Furer-Haimendorf 1947; 1980). They used to produce a surplus of grain for barter with neighbouring tribes. Their economy was non-monetised. Besides speaking their own language and a few languages of their neighbours, they did not know any other national language or any other language of wider communication. Knowledge of Assamese could have helped them in communicating with the wider world.

In view of the Apa Tani's geographical and cultural isolation, it may be assumed that they would have greater obstacles in the path of their development and modernisation compared to the tribes of Central India, like the Gond, who have been in touch with advanced and modern societies (Furer-Haimendorf 1948; 1982; 1983: 1-25). But this has not been so.

Apa Tani have made tremendous progress in the direction of modernisation. Despite the literacy rate of 14.04 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh (Census 1981), they have done extremely well in seeking modern education. By the beginning of 1980, there were forty-five Apa Tani with university degrees. Many of them were studying in the universities of Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Shillong and even Delhi. Most of these University graduates had entered government employment, out of which in 1978, there were no less than fifteen serving in gazetted and 342 in non-gazetted posts.

Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 296-297), who had been studying these people from 1944, in his field work in the early 1980s, found some fully qualified doctors and a pilot officer in the Indian Air Force amongst them.

The gains of this development are cumulative? over generations even more Apa Tani will take advantage of modern education, entering bureaucratic jobs. With these changes, however, the Apa Tani have been able to keep their cultural identity intact. There have been negligible changes in their religious and ritual life. Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 299) says that in traditional ritual practices, "even the most educated participate with undiminished dedication". Similarly, their marriage rules and family life have undergone fewer changes.

For Furer-Haimendorf, this has been a case of rapid modernisation in material, technological and social life, without the loss of distinct ethnic identity. In their modernisation, geographic isolation protected by the governmental measures of not allowing the outsiders to take advantages of the local resources and opportunities, has been the crucial factor. Furer-Haimendorf writes, "One of the causes of the rapid economic and educational development of the Apa Tani is their freedom from oppression and exploitation by more advanced communities."

The North-East India, beyond the present-day Assam, was always protected from the entry of the outsiders by the Inner Line Policy. Even today, Indians from other states have to seek Inner Line permit to enter certain states of the North-East like Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh etc. The outsiders are not permitted to establish their own business enterprises. In the model of indigenous development, only the locals are eligible for obtaining contracts of developmental works and business. Thus, the North-East was saved from the uneven, even devastating, influences of cultural contact as in Central India, where the outsiders played havoc with the local resources. They usurped the land of the tribals, the proud owners who were reduced to the state of serfdom (Furer-Haimendorf 1983: 5-7).

In addition to the Inner Line Policy, Christian missions played a responsible role in modernising the people, especially in Nagaland and Mizo hills, Khasi and Jaintia hills, and NEFA (Sema 1986). Modern educational institutions were introduced. English became the language of instruction. Western dress and culture came along (Furer Haimendorf 1976).

But these missions did not uproot the people from their traditional moorings. The local tribal languages were not replaced by English. They were treated with respect. Each one came to have its own script, with Roman alphabet along with accent marks. For facilitating an **exogenous** religion, Christianity in this context, to reach grass-root levels, the religious scriptures and holy books, regulating the daily life of the people, were translated (and subsequently published) in local languages. Dictionaries of the local languages were compiled (for example, the English-Khasi Dictionary by V. Nissor Singh was published in 1906). Gradually, the local people were trained to take up the role of religious functionaries. With this, the effects of modernisation were visible in all aspects of the society.

We saw in the case of the Apa Tani that in spite of developments and modernisation, they have been able to retain their distinct cultural identity. And such can be said about other tribes of the North-East. The Naga, for example, are one of the modernised tribes of India. But this exterior facade of modern values, dress and mannerism has not mitigated their sentiments of belonging to the same society, the

Naga (Horam 1977: 94-108). In these cases, one may notice continuity in change; modernisation has not diluted the traditional bonds of social cohesion.

Check Your Progress 3

i) Name, in one line, the districts of Madhya Pradesh, where the Baiga tribe is mainly found.

.....

ii) Has the cultural system of the Baiga undergone visible changes? Use three lines for your answer.

.....

.....

.....

iii) Has geographical and cultural isolation of the Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh posed any obstacle in the path of its modernisation? Use two lines for your answer.

.....

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iv) Did the Christian missions in the North-East try to uproot the tribal groups from their traditional culture?

.....

.....

28.3.3 Rabari

The Rabari are a lesser studied community, spreading from Western Rajasthan to the Kutch region of Gujarat. Their settlements (locally called *dhani*) are also found in some villages of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Numbering more than 400,000 members, these people have been differently designated in the states of their predominance for the grant of preferential treatment, in Gujarat, they are one of the Scheduled Tribes while in Rajasthan they are included in the lists of other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Semi-nomadic Tribes. Some confusion also entails from their nomenclature: in Gujarat, they call themselves Rabari (or Rahbari) while in Rajasthan, the term used is Raika. The Rabari are pastoralists. They domesticate camels, sheep, cows, buffaloes and goats. As the grazing areas have drastically reduced, and the areas they have been traditionally inhabiting have a harsh climate with a meagre rainfall, these people are constrained to migrate with their flocks to other regions rich in fodder (Saizman 1986: 49-61). They have permanent villages, which for the most part of the year are inhabited by the women, old, and infirm people, as the men are away with their cattle.

At one time, the Rabari of Western Rajasthan were patronised by the princely lineages. They looked after the imperial camels, took them out for grazing, looked after their diseases, trained them for various tasks, and more important, these camel-riding Rabari were entrusted with the job of carrying confidential mail from one part to the other. Once these imperial lineages declined, and the importance of camel reduced, there was a subsequent decline in the position of the Rabari.

Actually, the term Raika used for the Rabari was an occupational one: it designated a 'camel riding messenger' (Westphal-Hellbusch 1975:126).

Living in hamlets which were outside the main boundary of the village and leading an isolated existence, the Rabari were less affected by the development plans (Srivastava 1987: 317-334). Only in recent years, they have started taking advantage of modern education. Some of the Rabari have taken up teaching profession. The other educated people are working in government offices, police, camel and sheep breeding farms, and private and public sector. And the Raika teachers and other professionals are making every effort to inspire the new generation to take education as an important source of mobility.

The Rabari of Gujarat have changed much more than their counterparts in Rajasthan. In Gujarat, they identified themselves with the dominant pastoral caste, the Bharwad, and were able to enter milk-cooperatives as dairymen, thus their economic status improved (Salzman 1987: 44-50). There was a Rajya Sabha M.P. from the Rabari of Gujarat. For taking up the issues of their community, the Rabari have founded an Association, and it publishes some periodicals titled *Gopalbandhu* (from Gujarat) and *Raika Jagriti* (from Haryana). They provide a forum where the problems of their community are identified and the efforts to modernise it are discussed.

28.3.4 Toda

The Toda are well known in anthropological literature for having been pastoralists with a 'sacred complex of buffalos'; for practising fraternal polyandry where the fatherhood of a child was established through a ritual ceremony called 'bow-and-arrow'; and for participating in a complex network of economic, social and ritual relationships with three other groups of Nilgiri Hills, Kota, Badaga and Kurumba (Mandelbaum 1970). Though the Toda society is still rooted in tradition, it "at the same time is branching out into modernity" (Walker 1986: 286).

The **sympiotic** relations between the Toda and other Nilgiri communities were initially based on an exchange of services. Now each economy has replaced barter exchanges. The network of relations among the Toda has become open. They now have social and business relations with other immigrants from surrounding plains and beyond. Their contacts with a great many government agencies like Nilgiri Collectorate, Agricultural Department, Veterinary, Health and Medical Offices, Police Department etc, have increased. Further the Toda hamlets-especially those close to Ootacamund-attract tourists and travellers from various parts of the world. These contacts along with a number of others that the Toda have with other communities and immigrants have influenced the spread of modernity among them.

One of the changes that modernisation has brought in small communities, which at one time were relatively isolated, pertains to the domain of religion. Once their isolation was broken, they developed contact with communities that preserved the great tradition of a religion. The Toda, as an example of this process of change, have become oriented to South Indian Hinduism. In the markets of Ootacamund, which they frequent quite regularly, they hear of the religious merit of pilgrimages to the Hindu shrines in the Nilgiris and far beyond. Pictorial representations of Hindu gods and goddesses have found an honourable place in many Toda households. This fact of their drawing closer to popular Hinduism has not shown

a decline in their indigenous rituals. The modern Toda, Walker (1986: 288) writes, has accepted the “efficacy of two parallel ritual systems: his own and that of popular South Indian Hinduism”.

Education has been, as is the case with other tribal societies, another factor of change. But compared to market and temple, the schools took longer time to bring about desired effects. In the Indian context, modernisation, has reinforced both English and the regional language. In Kohima district, for example, both English and Angami are equally strong; in Meghalaya, both English and Khasi have been developed, similarly among the Toda, Tamil and English have been equally accepted. Having been educated in Tamil and English, some of the Toda have taken up white-collar occupation, unheard of by their ancestors.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) Name, in one line, the animals the Rabari tribals domesticate.
.....
- ii) Indicate how education has become a source of mobility for the Rabari. Use two lines for your answer.
.....
.....
- iii) Name in two lines the agencies, which have spread modernity among the Toda.
.....
.....
- iv) Has coming closer to South Indian Hinduism meant a decline in the practice of Toda rituals? Use two lines for your answer.
.....
.....

28.3.5 Santal Tribe in Transition

Through the Santal case, we would try to explicitly show various steps in the process of modernisation of a tribe. A summary of this case may be presented at the outset.

- i) The first exposure of the Santal to exogenously introduced changes was when the outsiders? money lenders, *zamindars*, missionaries? started encroaching upon their area. Their land was forcibly annexed by some of them, and the Santal were subjugated to the state of serfdom.
- ii) Against such an exploitative and oppressive state, the Santal Uprising (also called Santal Rebellion) 1855-1857 took place, and was brutally crushed.
- iii) The building of steel mill and company city at Jamshedpur had an important bearing on the Santal, where both the educated and illiterate could find suitable work.

- iv) Having close interaction with caste Hindus, the Santal, especially of upper classes, imbibed Hindu religion, caste practices, and claimed the status of Kshatriya.
- v) As a result of the revival movement, mainly to save the Santal from a steady loss of land, exploitative and oppressive interests of the outsiders, the Santal leaders rejected the Hindu model.
- vi) With Jharkhanda Party, the Santal acquired an important political organ for mobilising their interests.
- vii) Industrialisation especially in Jamshedpur had important consequences: the Santal became aware of new sources of upward mobility; importance of education was realised, and the political path of raising one's status became clear to them. In other words, industrialisation and education were crucial to the modernisation of the Santal.

Here we will examine under the following six sub-headings various changes in the life of the Santal tribals.

i) **Rejection of Hinduism and the Reference Groups of Upper Castes**

All this is rooted in the revivalistic movement, which began in mid-nineteenth century. Despite little political cohesion among the Santal. There is considerable cultural similarity, thanks to the revivalistic movement, and a strong feeling that the Santal are different from the Hindus. The Sanskritic values emulated by the Santal, when they were attracted to Kshatriya or Brahmin model, are being given up under the tremendous impact of the cultural identity movement. Jharkhanda movement's role has been crucial in this regard. Martin Orans' (1965: 108) observation is worth quoting here: "Once I saw a young party activist who had grown up in the Jharkhanda movement persuading an older Santal with a few years of education that he must take up beef-eating again if he wished to preserve the Santal caste". The rejection of Hinduism or Hindu identity and the most sacred Hindu element (sacredness of cow being one) is not only for returning to the chaste Santal identity, it is also because their exploiters? money lenders, land lords, etc. who were all Hindus.

ii) **Santal Uprising: 1855-1857**

The first event to take the Santal on the inroads of a conscious cultural identity was their uprising of 1855-1857. On 30th June 1855, a massive rally of Santal, over ten thousand, protested against their exploitation and oppression. The rally, led by Sidho and Kano, took an oath to end the oppressive rule of the British, *Zamindars*, and money lenders, and it decided to set up an independent *Santali Raj*. The money lenders and *zamindars* had flocked into the Santali areas, the legal procedures and financial institutions they imposed were patronised by the colonial government. The crops of the Santal were forcibly seized, the interest charged on loans varied from fifty to five hundred per cent. Once the complaints of people fell on deaf ear, they decided to rise in arms. It is estimated that fifteen to twenty-five thousand Santal were killed in this uprising. The courage of the Santal against the oppressive rule is still commemorated in the local folk songs and traditions.

There have also been other revolts in which the cultural identity of the Santal was reasserted. In 1917, the Santal of Mayurbhanj revolted against their recruitment to serve in Egypt during the First World War (Mahapatra 1986: 16).

iii) Influence of Christianity

For a very long time, the Santal had been living with the non-tribals. The latter became prosperous by fleecing the Santal of their land and property. Those of the upper classes took over to Sanskritic practices? like worship of Hindu deities, abstaining from eating beef, offering liquor on festive occasion, observance of the norms of purity and pollution? so that they could be identified with higher *varna* categories. But the Hindu model was essentially traditionalistic. Sanskritisation offered ritual mobility in the caste system. It did not provide them an opportunity to modernise.

Christianity was a prime mover initiating modern changes among the Santal. In their area, Scandinavian and American Missions made efforts to convert the local people. These missionaries as elsewhere in India opened educational institutions preparing people to enter new occupations. Christianity gave the people a ready-made great tradition. The institutions like hospital and school that came with the missions introduced them to the wider world, beyond the interaction they had within themselves and with other non-tribals. Notwithstanding the introduction of the Santal to modernity through the missions their identity was eroded because of Christianity. If their immediate exploiters were Hindus, those who patronised these cases of exploitation were Christians. Thus, any movement for a reassertion of the cultural identity required a rejection of both Hindu and Christian models of change.

iv) Impact of Industrialisation

The installation of industries in Santal dominated areas was another very important factor of change and modernisation. These industries provided jobs to both educated and illiterate and offered a new source of mobility.

Moreover, these industries were free from one or another religious domination. They promoted caste-free and class-free occupation. A large number of Santal found jobs in them. These industries, having recruited local tribals, provided an opportunity to the people to further cement their traditional linkages: in fact, these industries were the 'world of kinsmen'. Santal identity was further strengthened by the tribal-workers.

v) Cultural Identity Movement

The educated Santal played a central role in the cultural identity movement. As said earlier, for launching any kind of political pressure, the cultural identity needs to be revitalised and preserved. The educated Santal worked in this direction. Protest was launched against the enumeration of Santal as Hindu in pre-1951 census. A cult was founded, in which the traditional concept of sarna was given a pivotal place. It was called *Sarna Dharm Samelet*, Sacred Grove Religious Organisation. Santali script (*Ol Chiki*) was devised. A long epic heroic play was written, having maxims and precepts for the Santal.

The new ritual complex emphasised worship of traditional tribal deities in the sacred grove, with the offerings of liquor, sacrifice of cow, and dancing was promoted on all religious occasions. The underlying theme in all of them was rejection of Hinduism, and also to show that the Santal were not pre-literate as were made out to be.

They had their own script, epic, a whole set of rituals, and cosmology, which were lost somewhere, and needed to be discovered. Mahapatra (1986: 24) writes, “The Santal identity is thus part of the process of Santalisation, a cultural phenomenon which is demonstrated through marriage, ritual, food habit, occupation and belief, value-system and ideals”.

vi) **Cultural Identity and Political Action**

The articulation of cultural identity into political term was facilitated once the Jharkhanda Party was founded. This Party demanded creation of a tribal state. For the Santal in the industrial belt, most of the traditional customs and practices have been weakened, but the tribal identity is reinforced through Jharkhanda movement remains primary. The Santal in the city are akin to other city dwellers. They too have individualism and aspirations of social mobility. The ethnic ties as expressed politically continue to exist. With modernisation, they are not weakening. Every Santal feels attached to *Ol Chiki*, the *Sarna Dharm*, the parables of mythological origin, and to Jharkhanda Party. At the same time, he aspires to take up modern education, a good job which opens avenues for upward mobility.

Having discussed the Santal tribe in transition, let us now also review, in general, different aspects of modernisation in relation to the tribal societies in India.

Activity 1

Read sub-section 28.3.5 once more and write a short note of 300 words on changes in Santal social life.

28.4 DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MODERNISATION IN RELATION TO THE TRIBAL SOCIETIES

The cases, discussed in section 28.3, are chosen from different parts of India. They amply demonstrate that modernisation in the tribes can be traced back to their contact with the agencies spreading the values of modernity like open-networks, achievement, competition, equality, caste-and class-free occupations, etc. The entry of missionaries in some areas (as in the North-East) initiated modernisation. Incorporation of a community into milk-cooperatives (as in Gujarat) created situations bringing the local people in contact with developed sections of the society. Encroachment of commercial frontiers and modern markets has contributed a lot to the modernisation of tribals. In some parts of India, especially, the central, installation of heavy industries and creation of urban centres were instrumental in spreading modernity. Let us examine the two factors of change, namely, industrialisation and education.

28.4.1 Industrialisation

During the last four decades and particularly during the Plan periods, there has been an acceleration of mining and manufacturing industries. Forest resources have been gradually exploited, leading eventually to deforestation, in the hilly and forested belts of tribal India. Most of these industries came to be established in or around tribal areas because they were rich in mineral and other resources. Close to these industries grew small towns housing mainly the industrial workers.

As the exploitation of mineral and forest resources was chiefly confined to Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, there was a rapid increase of urban population in these states. Demographer Bose (1962: 26) writes that with a concentration of industries in these states, there was a relative shift of urban population from Indo-Gangetic plain to the hilly and plateau areas which offered new industrial and natural resources.

It was not only industrialisation that was responsible for the migration ? promoted by 'pull', 'push', or 'forced' factors ? of tribals from their homesteads but also other economic institutions. In certain states like Assam and of South India, tea, coffee and rubber estates were formed. The tribals were dispossessed of their land, and were made to work as plantation labourers (Jain 1988). Out-migration from Chotanagpur plateau and other neighbouring regions occurred phenomenally to these estates. The tribes were forcibly migrated to other countries, like the Kol who were sent to Mauritius as labourers. Kondha of Orissa were taken to Mesopotamia to serve in World War I. A large number of Bhil were recruited for military service (Pathy 1986: 74).

Industrialisation in the tribal areas offered new jobs. But the tribals, unskilled in initial stages, could only get the jobs at the lower rungs. At one time owners of land were now depressed into the class of industrial proletariat. This happened because of a number of factors. Firstly, their land had been usurped by the non-tribal *Zamindars* in many areas, and they were looking for some alternatives. Secondly, installation of big industrial and developmental projects in tribal zones required the displacement of the native population, often to unknown areas (Vidyarthi 1968: 13-29, Fernandes 1998). In these cases of uprooting local tribals and non-tribals were equally affected, but as the tribals outnumbered the non-tribals in these areas, they suffered the maximum. Finally, as a result of over-exploitation of forest resources by the outsiders, the tribal economics, which is to a large extent were forest-based, dwindled. Thus, a combination of local impoverishment and availability of new opportunities sent these tribals to seek jobs in heavy industries, tea plantations, construction sites, etc.

These tribals now-turned labourers have changed a lot. The traditional dresses have been replaced by those that came with modernity. Their occupational structure has changed, and it has important implications. A sense of mobility is gradually instilled in the community. Mobility becomes inter-generational as the children of tribal workers aspire to do better in life than their parents, by taking hold of opportunities offered by modernity.

In this process, some of the traditional institutions weaken. For example, in his study of tribals working in Bokaro Steel Plant, Vidyarthi (1968: 21), says that their village institutions like the '*jajmani* system', the cycle of festivals and rituals, the caste-affiliations etc., have completely been disintegrated, and all round depression and despair seems to have affected the life of the uprooted villages. This, however, does not mean that there is also a subsequent decline in the feeling of oneness amongst the tribals in a new set-up. Industrialisation has fostered a new sense of solidarity between the co-workers. Once there already exist ethnic and social ties between the tribals, the relations in the industry cement them further. Trade unions on the lines of tribal-workers crystallise (Bhowmik 1982: 461-473). The feeling of ethnicity becomes strong and they begin exerting pressure on the state and the centre.

28.4.2 Education

Having been exposed to industrialisation for almost four decades, having migrated to various industrial towns, and having imbibed the spirit of upward mobility, the tribals have realised the importance of modern education.

The missionaries have played an outstanding role in spreading Western education. The Government is also committed to the idea that one of the avenues to speedy development is education. For diversifying the tribals to different occupations, they must be educationally equipped to face the challenges. Besides the fact that education promotes social mobility and enhances the ability of the people to think about their amelioration, it can save them from being exploited by money lenders who have been taking advantage of the illiterate tribals by forging and tempering with the promissory notes.

According to Census 1981, literacy rate in India was 36.23 per cent; among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it was 21.38 and 16.33 per cent respectively. The North-Eastern states had done exceptionally well: the highest literacy is in Mizoram (59.63 per cent), followed by Nagaland (40.31 per cent), Manipur (39.74 per cent), and Meghalaya (31.55 per cent). The literacy rates in India in 1991 and 2001 were 52.21 and 63.38 percent respectively. As per the 1991 Census the literacy rates of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were 37.41 and 29.60 percent respectively. The literacy rate of the tribals in 1991 was 23.63 per cent. This is lower than not only of the general population figures but also of the SC population figures. The literacy rate of the rural tribal women was recorded in 1991 to be 12.74, which was the lowest of all social groups in India. Literacy rate for STs was lowest in Andhra Pradesh (17.16 percent) and highest was in Mizoram (82 percent).

Ashram schools, especially meant for tribal children living in remote and isolated villages, have been opened up. While a separate school for each tribal hamlet is not feasible, the nearest regular school for all children with no specification is too far away, for them to attend it and return home the same day. That is why the Ashram schools are residential, providing free board and lodging to the pupils. In terms of their curriculum, they are supposed to impart craft-based education, thus linking learning with productive activities. Once the students finish the school, they are sufficiently prepared to take up any of the craft-based occupations. In this way, diversification of tribals in different jobs is expected to result.

But the evaluative studies of these schools speak otherwise. The curriculum is more tilted towards literacy-based education. Half-hearted attempts are made to impart craft-oriented education. And the specific character of Ashram schools is relegated to the background. They start resembling the regular schools.

A study of the patterns of tribal education in India raises two important issues. The dropout rate of the tribal children is very high, and as one moves to secondary and higher levels, this rate increases exponentially. According to Census 1981, the dropout rate in primary, middle and secondary stages was 75 per cent (boys 71.57, girls 78.43), 84.99 per cent and 91.65 per cent respectively. Secondly, the number of tribal students reaching professional and university courses is very low. Writing about the Gond of Andhra Pradesh, Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 130) concludes that, "in thirty-six years of tribal education only five Gond and two

Pradhan have been awarded university degrees". The representation of tribals in professional courses, according to the figures of 1978-79, given in the Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1986-88 (Twenty-eighth Report: 522-523) it is clear that very few tribal students reach post-graduate courses in professional disciplines. Therefore, their distribution in higher professional positions is almost negligible.

This Report shows also that the Scheduled Tribes have done well as compared to the Scheduled Castes. But, the figures from North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, a central university, have in fact tilted the graph in favour of the Scheduled Tribes. In this University, there are five Professors, nine Readers, forty-six Lecturers, and five Research Associates from various tribal communities. Thus all the five Professors and all the nine readers in central universities are from NEHU. Out of a total of 50 Scheduled Tribe Lecturers, 46 are from this university. When we take the figures from NEHU, thinking that Meghalaya is predominantly a tribal state with Khasi and Garo having a long tradition of education, we find that in none of the teaching and research positions does the percentage of Scheduled Tribes reach fifty. There are only 10.20 per cent Professors, 10.71 per cent Readers, 31.72 per cent Lecturers and 45.45 per cent Research Associates from tribal communities in NEHU. In other words, even in tribal states the non-tribals are holding a majority of the higher positions. Some tribes like Meena of Rajasthan have been quite successful. A large number of them have taken up jobs in administration (Civil Services), private sector, financial institutions and colleges.

Certainly there has been an increase in tribal literacy. But the number of students continuing to stay in schools till higher classes and then entering the portals of college is very low. Dropout rate, as said earlier, is very high, and for girls, it is much higher. In mixed areas, where small tribes live with larger ones, the dropout rate among the former is higher. In the schools of Baiga Chak, we saw that the Baiga students generally failed to stay in schools after the primary, while the Gond continued to study till higher classes. Education is one of the crucial factors of modernisation, but when the tribals fail to seek its advantages, the degree of modernity, mobility and diversification of occupations among them is sharply reduced.

There are several reasons accounting for high dropout rate. The curriculum in most cases is not relevant to the conditions in which the tribals live. They find education a kind of onerous burden. Low standard of teaching and facilities in tribal schools is another factor. It has also been found that teachers in these schools are generally from non-tribal communities and they take posting in tribal areas as a kind of punishment. Thus, they are able to evince little interest.

Domestic duties of the tribal children, especially the girls, are another factor. From young age, they are entrusted with household chores, fetching water to looking after the younger brothers and sisters. Absence of feedback from the family, inspiring the children to take their study seriously, is an important factor. The economic status of tribal households, in most cases, cannot afford to keep the children as consuming, rather than producing members for a long time. Table 28.1 gives percentage distribution of persons aged seven years and above at different levels of education by social group for 1999-2000.

Table 28.1: Percentage Distribution of Persons Aged 7 Years and Above At Varying Levels of Education by Social Group: 1999-2000

Social Group	Rural India			Urban India		
	Note Literate	Upto Middle Level Schooling	Educated Persons	Not Literate	Upto Middle Level Schooling	Educated Persons
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Scheduled Castes	53.4	40.3	6.3	33.8	50.4	15.8
Scheduled Tribes	57.8	37.0	5.2	30.0	47.5	22.5
OBCs	45.2	45.1	9.7	24.7	51.0	24.3
Others	32.2	50.8	17.0	13.5	44.3	42.2
All Groups	44.0	45.2	10.8	20.2	47.3	32.5

Source: NSS Report No. 473 (55/1.0/11), September 2001, pp. 20.24.

In some cases, the medium of instruction poses grave problems. If the Kond are taught in Oriya instead of their own dialect, they may find learning an uphill task (Mahapatra, 1984: 376). Moreover, the objectives of educational departments in imparting teaching to students are not clear. Their chief interest lies in raising literacy, rather than making education a productive activity, guaranteeing social mobility and ameliorating the local people in their traditional milieu.

Check Your Progress 5

- i) Read the following statements and write T against True and F against False statements:
 - a) The relations in industry affect negatively the ethnic and social ties among the tribals.
 - b) Industrialisation in tribal areas offered new job opportunities.
 - c) The process of industrialisation weakens traditional institutions.
- ii) Who has played an outstanding role in spreading education among the tribal groups of India? Use three lines for your answer.

.....

.....

.....

- iii) What is the literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes? Use one line for your answer.

.....

- iv) Give, in five lines, the reasons for high dropout rate among tribal students.

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28.4.3 Adverse Effects of Modernity

The aim of modernisation is to bring the society on the path of progress, to diversify its occupational structure, to provide the people with efficient technology which vouchsafes higher production, to give them avenues of social mobility and to bring them on par with other developed sections of the society. But the results are not encouraging in all cases. With an introduction of development plans, some societies have found themselves disintegrated. Modernity has given rise to adverse effects.

Take the case of industrialisation. As we saw earlier, the establishment of heavy industries, construction of dams and launching of development plans in tribal zones has necessitated displacement of the local population. Thousands of tribal families were displaced from their traditional habitats. Compensation was supposed to be provided to them in terms of money and alternative land, but not all of them got an alternative place to live.

The report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for 1962-1963 informed that in Ranchi district of Bihar, 14,461 tribal families were displaced from an area of 62,494 acres, and only 3,479 of them were allotted alternative land. The compensation provided to them in cash was recklessly spent. The tribals not fully conversant with cash economy squandered the money on various attractions that were available in nearby industrial towns. Soon their funds had depleted. With their land gone for developmental activities and left with no training, equipment or aptitude for skilled or semi-skilled jobs, they had no option but to enter the town as unskilled labourers, taking up various 'marginal jobs' of domestic servants, rickshaw pullers, vendors, hawkers, etc. They could enter the industrial sector at the lowest level, and their chances of moving up were meagre as they remained untrained for industrial jobs requiring technical know-how. Eventually they were proletarianised. Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 321) writes, "...in the streets of Ranchi one can still see Munda and Oraon rickshaw-pullers who not long ago were independent cultivators tilling their own land".

Contact situations with the outsiders have been equally detrimental. Destruction of the forests as a consequence of felling of trees for industrial purposes has threatened the small communities of hunters and food-gatherers. Modern diseases unknown to tribals have been introduced with the entry of outsiders in tribal areas. The tribal population in Andaman Islands has greatly declined because of high mortality rate. Measles and influenza, the killer diseases for those who had not developed any resistance to them, played havoc with the Andaman tribals.

Similarly, at the time of Independence, the Toda population had fallen to under 500. The chief cause of their decline was the prevalence of venereal diseases (Walker 1986: 283). In most cases, depopulation of a tribe was mainly because of rapid ecological changes that created imbalances in their habitats. For new schemes, either of medical treatment or development, the people were not fully prepared to accept them. Hence, they reacted in a lukewarm manner to all those institutions that could have changed and modernised them.

Modernisation created economic disparities in various sections of the society. Those who could take advantages of new economic and educational frontiers were able to better their lot, while a large sections of the tribals, not adequately prepared to deal with new challenges, gradually depressed into poorer sections of the society. Against economic and social disparities, they have raised a collective voice. Modernisation, in other words, has given rise to a new consciousness amongst the people. The already existing solidarity between them has become strengthened.

Activity 2

On the basis of sub-section 28.4.3, try to work out adverse effects of modernity on your own community and write a note of 250 words on Negative Impact of Modernity on My Community.

28.4.4 Tribal Movements

In the latter half of the last century, the tribals, especially in central India, had reacted against their exploiters. These movements were directed towards freeing their land from all those who exploited them economically and culturally. At the same time, each of these movements put emphasis on revitalisation of their culture, their traditional culture which was swayed under the impact of the outsiders.

The Tana Bhagat movement, for example, derived its name from the ritual of 'expelling from the Oraon land foreign spirits, nefarious powers and ghosts', borrowed from the Munda. Along with this, they also sought to drive away the 'evil powers of modern innovations' like steam boat, motor car, bicycle, etc. These modern innovations that were being introduced into their land were seen as the means of exploitation. Exorcising the 'ghost of modernity', they desired to revert to their original religion, the *Kurukh Dharma* (Roy 1915). The charismatic leaders of Oraon, Santal and Munda were believed to free the people not only from the webs of evil supernatural powers, but also from the 'iron clutches' of the non-tribal exploiters and oppressors (Roy 1915; 1928; Singh 1983). Another such movement occurred in 1922 among the tribals of South Gujarat where under supernatural command of the female goddess, Devi, they stopped consuming liquor, and later on it took nationalist turn (Hardiman 1987).

The rebellion of 1855-1857 was a great event in history of the Santal. This event is still remembered in their folk songs and talks. It was an attempt to recover the tribal land, which was steadily lost to the outsiders, and to wipe out the non-tribals from their territory (Mahapatra 1986: 8-29). In the Santal myths of the nineteenth century, there was a description of the ancient days of independence and glory, and all this was swept away once the outsiders with modern weaponry started infiltrating into their areas. Martin Orans (1965: 35) writes, "The Santal are thus pictured as independent, powerful and constituted exactly in the image of an ideal Hindu Kingdom". The movement had the aim of reverting to their traditional religion *Sarna Dharam*, and social structure.

As a response to modernity, and the fact that traditional institutions of the people disintegrate under its impact, there have been conscious attempts to revive traditional ways of living. Cultural identity is cemented, because it can be instrumental in achieving political goals. Consciously the tribals have tried to introspect into their cultures to single out and eradicate their 'evil customs and practices'. For regulating the behaviour of people, so that the feeling of collectivity remains intact, rules have been collectively arrived at. Nonconformity to any one of them may call for an imposition of fine. Modernity has made people conscious of their culture.

For example, the Sahariya of Morena district (Madhya Pradesh) have founded their association called *Adivasi Jati Sudhar Sangha*. For 'purifying' their people, it has identified twelve principles like regular bath, education for the children, abstaining from eating 'dirty' animals (like swine, sambur, etc.), respect for the educated people, etc. (Joshi 1987: 308-317). Similarly, the Rabari have formed

Akhil Bhartiya Rawari Rayaka Samaj Mahasabha, where measures for uplifting the community and eradicating its evils have been collectively arrived at. In the same way, one of the major aims of the Toda Uplift Society is “to strive for the eradication of bad habits”, and by ‘bad habits’ they mean “polyandry, wife-capture, drunkenness and the excessive sacrifice of buffaloes at funeral ceremonies” (Walker 1986: 289).

These tribal associations serve two purposes. They endeavour their best to keep the whole group united. For such a unity, the traditional styles of living, except those, which are ‘bad’ cannot be given up. They must be revived. Such a unity is needed for demanding better deal from the government. The ethnic interests of the tribals, thus, merge with political demands for separate states and are voiced and sustained.

One of the best studied cases is of Jharkhanda movement. The Jharkhanda Party, founded by Jai Pal Singh, an Oxford educated Christian of the Munda tribe, demanded carving out of a new state, spreading from Palamau in Bihar to Keonjhar in Orissa and from Surguja in Madhya Pradesh to Midnapur in West Bengal, of the Indian union of which tribal people would be numerically dominant. The basic issues behind this movement were land and forest alienation, training and job deprivation due to influx of the outsiders, cultural submergence, and imbalanced development (Munda 1988: 31). As you already know, Jharkhand has now achieved the status of a state. Coming to the North-East, the Bodo and the Naga movements are good examples of how ethnic identity takes up political route for realising their interests. Uneven development and modernisation, concentration of gains in some areas and their non-dispersal to the others, and urban-oriented models of growth are the chief causes in all these separatist movements.

Check Your Progress 6

i) What were the tribal movements in Central India? Use two lines for your answer.

.....
.....

ii) What was the main aim of the Santal movement of 1855-57? Use one line for your answer.

.....

iii) What purposes are served by tribal associations, such as, *Adivasi Jati Sudhar Sangha* of the Sahariya of Morena, Madhya Pradesh, *Akhil Bharatiya Rawari Rayaka Samaj Mahasabha* of the Rabari and the Toda Uplift Society? Use four lines for your answer.

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28.5 LET US SUM UP

To summarise, modernisation is a process of spreading the values, institutions and technical aspects of 'modern society'. The tribals, living mostly in hilly terrains and forested belts, and having autonomy in every sphere of their social existence, remained by and large untouched by modern developments till their territories were opened up for strategic reasons. These reasons involved exploitation of forest and mineral resources. At the same time the need for manual labour was also important. Once these tribals were exposed to the wider world, they underwent traumatic experiences of losing their rights and land, and being incorporated into a system that they knew little about.

The impact of modernisation of tribals is varied. Some tribals (like of the North-East) have benefited a lot from modernisation, while others (like those of Central India) have been losers. Further, modernisation does not lead to a total change in the society. Certain aspects of culture, especially pertaining to economic and technical domain, change at a faster pace. Social institutions do not show such a qualitative change. Religious and ritual life may continue to survive essentially in a traditional mould. Modernisation reinforces traditional links and bonds. Thus, the consciousness of belonging to a tribe, or tribalism, is accentuated, and this may transform a tribe into a strong ethnic and pressure group.

The separatist movements coming to settle in some large tribes may be curbed if the benefits of modernisation and development are equally distributed. The effects of modernisation should be visible in all institutions of society. Since the historical experiences of a society shape the incoming modernity, the concepts derived from the experiences of other society, particularly western, are not applicable for a complete understanding of modernity in the tribal societies of India.

28.6 KEYWORDS

Bewar	The Baiga term, referring to the type of tillage in which the axe and not the plough is the primary instrument
Cosmology	is the science of universe.
Ethno-centric	This is used to describe the attitude that one's group is superior.
Exogenous	This adjective is used to describe that which originates from external causes.
Fossil	remnant; preserved in strata of earth; recognisable as remains or impressions of past; belonging to the past
Occiput	The back part of the head or skull
Reference group	Those groups of people whose attitudes, beliefs and actions are taken as appropriate. People do not have to be members of the groups to which they refer. Also, attitudes can be formed by both a positive identification with a reference group and negative comparisons or rejections of it.

Shaman	refers to a priest who uses magic for curing the sick, divining the invisible and controlling events.
Symbiotic	It is used to describe living together of two dissimilar elements in a mutually advantageous relationship.

28.7 FURTHER READING

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28.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Examples:
 - a) The Chenchu are the hunters and food gatherers,
 - b) The Rabari are pastoralists,
 - c) The Maler are shifting cultivators,
 - d) Santal, Gond, Bhil and Munda are plough cultivators.
- ii) The tribes of Andaman Islands, namely, Jarwa, Onge, Great Andamanese, Shopmen, Sentinel and Toda of South India are called 'minor' tribes.
- iii) In 2001 there are seventy five 'Primitive Tribes' in India.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) It is not possible for a tribe to be completely isolated. Some or the other type of relationship always exists between a tribe and its neighbouring communities. Such communities may be other tribal groups or non-tribal

groups. The relationship may be of friendly exchanges of economic goods or of hostility, involving even warfare.

- ii) The fact of inter-tribal relations does not substantially affect the ethnic and cultural identity of a tribe. For example, the Oraon and the Munda have lived side by side and interacted socially in many areas of life, yet both the groups have maintained their separate cultural and ethnic identities.
- iii) Coming into contact with the neighbouring Hindus did not mark the beginning of tribal groups' modernisation. This process, in fact, began when these groups came in contact with the wider world which itself had experienced many changes because of the colonial rule.
- iv) The two elements of the British policy towards the tribals were that (i) it favoured isolation of the tribal areas from the mainstream and (ii) at the level of reform, the British administration was interested in 'civilising' the tribals.
- v) Chotanagpur plateau and the North-Eastern India were the main areas for the Christian mission activities and corresponding modernisation.
- vi) The classical ethnographic studies of the tribal societies in India recorded as meticulously as possible the traditions of the people and provided the administration with the cultural background of the people they were to rule.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) The Baiga tribe is mainly found in the districts of Mandla, Shahdol, Sidhi, Balaghat, Bilaspur and Surguja.
- ii) The cultural system of the Baiga has not undergone any appreciable changes. The details of their culture as recorded in 1932-39 are not very different from what is found today.
- iii) Geographical and cultural isolation of the Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh has not posed any obstacle in the tribe's modernisation. Rapid modernisation in material, technological and social life has not however meant the loss of the tribe's distinct ethnic identity.
- iv) The Christian missions have played a responsible role in modernising the tribals. They did not uproot the people from their culture. The local tribal languages were treated with respect and not replaced by English. This helped the people to retain their culture.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) The Rabari tribals domesticated camels, sheep, cows, buffaloes and goats.
- ii) In recent years taking advantages of modern education, some of the Rabari have become teachers. Other educated Rabari work in government offices, camel and sheep breeding farms, and private and public sectors. They make efforts to also inspire the younger generation to take education as a means of raising their social status.
- iii) The contacts with government agencies like Nilgiri Collectorate, Agricultural Department, Veterinary, Health and Medical Offices, Police Department etc. have helped the spread of modernity among the Toda.

- iv) The Toda came into contact with South Indian Hinduism. As a result, they have begun to worship Hindu gods and goddesses. But this does not mean that they have any less respect for their traditional rituals, they simply accept and practice both.

Check Your Progress 5

- i) a) False
b) True
c) True
- ii) The Christian missionaries have played an outstanding role in spreading education among the tribals of India. The government is also committed to provide education to these groups.
- iii) Literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes, according to Census 1991, is 23.63 per cent.
- iv) The high dropout rate among the tribal students can be related to the following factors:
- a) the curriculum is often not relevant to the tribal society,
 - b) low standard of teaching and lack of facilities in tribal schools,
 - c) domestic duties of tribal children,
 - d) absence of encouragement to students from the family to take their studies seriously,
 - e) medium of instruction,
 - f) education is often aimed to raise literacy rather than to promote social mobility.

Check Your Progress 6

- i) The tribal movements in central India were mainly against the exploiters of the tribals.
- ii) The Santal movement of 1855-57 was aimed at reverting to the Santal religion.
- iii) Tribal associations, named here, serve two purposes? a) they try to keep the group united and b) they form an interest group to demand better deal from the government. For the first purpose, they ask their people to preserve the traditional

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