Unit 20

Social Differentiation among Tribes

Contents

Learning objectives

After reading this Unit, you will be able to understand:

- Concept of social differentiation;

- Definition of social differentiation;

- Types of social differentiation;

- Social differentiation among tribes with special reference to India;

- Various principles and bases of social differentiation, such as kinship and descent, sex, age, rank and hierarchy, occupation, education, religion, language, among others.

20.1 Introduction

All human beings, in the course of its social processes and historical destiny, have always been associated and identified with one (basic) group or another-voluntarily or involuntarily. The combined influences of the individuals shape the nature and type of the group in which they live. At the same time, the group so formed, shape the total behaviour of the individual members. This is how we find various types of individual personalities and groups that differ from one another. We also find range of groups from simple egalitarian societies to highly stratified and complex societies. Yet even among the egalitarian societies, we still observe elements of role differentiation and stratifications. All this differentiation is what we generally call 'social differentiation'. The process of social differentiation generally occurs when inherited and socially acquired personal differences come to be used as the basis for accomplishing social tasks and filling social positions.

Social differentiation is a broad concept. It is a pervasive process too. The outcome of social differentiation can be seen in two main ways- as 'the complex of roles (and associated statuses) comprising a society's institutions' and as 'the complex of roles intersecting the institutions' (Stebbins, 1987). Some of these roles are division of labour, social stratification, sex, gender, age, and ethnicity. These roles operate both at the core as well as at the periphery of the institutions. The differentiated roles may be *ascribed* or *achieved*.

The ascribed roles are gained or inherited from birth or at certain age. The roles of sex, age, race, nationality, majority and age are examples of ascribed roles. The achieved roles are those which are earned by a person or a group in the course of one's life or period. Examples of achieved roles would among others include power, gender, social class and occupation. For instance, individuals earn the role of a feminist, a Prime Minister, rich man or woman.

Social differentiation is among others closely related to the concepts of division of labour and social stratification. But they are not the same concept either. Therefore, the differences of these concepts merit brief statement for due clarity. Social differentiation is a broader concept than the division of labour as generally understood in modern sociology. In the analysis of social division of labour, the focus is thrust on the group and organisational functions of the society. Whereas, the analysis of social differentiation would include even the aspects of cross—institutional roles such as deviance, age, and community status *inter alia*.

Again, social differentiation may be distinguished from social stratification by defining the latter as a hierarchical system in which social inequalities are institutionalized, and are generally passed down from generation to generation. Social stratification models look at people's opportunities in life and their relationship with one another which are largely based on class, gender, ethnicity, race, occupation, age, prestige, power, religion, polity, location and so on. However, the concept of social differentiation is considered as a broader term than social stratification.

20.2 Definition of Social Differentiation

Social differentiation has been defined in many ways by different scholars. We shall first of all acquaint with some of the definitions. According to Eisenstadt, social differentiation is "the situation that exists in every social unit, large or small, by virtue of the fact that people with different characteristics perform different tasks and occupy different roles...(which tasks and roles) are closely interrelated in several ways."

Ritzer *et al* (1979) defines social differentiation as a "hierarchical system in which inherited and socially acquired personal differences come to be the basis for accomplishing social tasks and filling social positions... (which process) is a precursor to social inequality and social stratification."

Stebbins (1987) defines social differentiation as a "broad social process in which people are distinguished from one another according to age, sex, deviant, ethnic, and social stratification roles."

Sorokin (1962; 1972) defines social differentiation in terms of two broad basic categories, namely, *intragroup differentiation* (differentiation within a group) and *intergroup differentiation* (differentiation between and among two or more groups). According to him, intragroup differentiation is manifested in the nature of division of the group into sub-groups that perform different functions in the group. The division of labour in a family between husband and wife is an example of intragroup differentiation. When the sub-groups are ranked as 'higher' and 'lower' or 'superior' and 'inferior', then the intragroup are said to be stratified. Intergroup differentiation on the other hand, is a broader concept that exemplifies differentiation of social groups or social systems. These groups would include smaller social groups such as high school football clubs and large social groups such as world religious organizations.

Herbert Spencer (1967) feels that in the process of the growth of a society from relatively simpler to more complex societies, the individual components become differentiated but are mutually interdependent. On the functional principle of the process of social differentiation, Spencer (1967:8) opines:

"As [society] grows, its parts become unlike: it exhibits increase of structure. The unlike parts simultaneously assume activities of unlike kinds. These activities are not simply different, but the differences are so related as to make one another possible. The reciprocal aid thus given, causes mutual dependence of the parts. And the mutually dependent parts, living by and for another, form

an aggregate constituted on the same general principle as is an individual organism."

20.3 Types of social differentiation

Social differentiation has been classified into many different ways. Here, we shall consider a few classifications as found in sociological literature. Durkheim's conception of 'division of labour' in the society is a kind of social differentiation. He explains this phenomenon with the nature of solidarity that exists in the society. He classifies two kinds of solidarity among the members of the society, namely, *mechanical solidarity* and *organic solidarity*. By 'mechanical solidarity', is meant, the phenomenon generally observed in the smaller and non-literate societies characterized by homogeneity of values, beliefs and behaviour, loyalty to tradition and kinship, simple division of labour and roles, little specialization of functions and little tolerance of individuality. 'Organic solidarity' on the other hand is a kind of societal solidarity which is found in modern industrial society, wherein unity is based on complex division of labour, cooperation, and highly specialized roles and functions. This kind of solidarity is called 'organic solidarity' because of its similarity to the functional unity of a biological organism.

Svalastoga (1988) identifies four major forms. They are: (1) Functional differentiation or division of labour; (2) Rank differentiation; (3) Custom differentiation; and (4) Competitive differentiation. According to Svalastoga, functional differentiation exists to the extent that people perform different jobs or occupations. Rank differentiation exists in the society due to differential distribution of scarce and desired goods and services, status, prestige, power etc. He opines that the fundamental character of systematic rank differentiation is implied by its presence in all known human societies and in a wide range of animal societies as well. By custom differentiation is meant the outcome brought about by given situation where rules for proper behaviour differ from one another. Competitive differentiation exists to the extent that the success of one individual or group causes the failure of others.

Sorokin's (1962; 1972) classification of social differentiation is said to be one of the most comprehensive classifications. He classifies social differentiation into 'unibonded' and 'multibonded' groups. In the following, we shall consider his classification to have a fair view of the scope of discourse of social differentiation.

20.4 Sorokin's classification of social differentiation

Sorokin's classification of social differentiation may be presented in a simplified form as the following. Sorokin classifies social differentiation into two broad categories based on the nature of its bonding and differentiations, namely, *Unibonded groups* and *Multibonded groups*.

I) *Unibonded groups*

   Unibonded groups are those whose members are bound into a solidary system by one main value or interest. They are mainly of two kinds-

   a) Groups organised (semiorganised, or as if organised) around biosocial values, such as,

      (1) race; (2) sex; (3) age.

   b) Groups organised (semiorganised, or as if organised) around specified socio-cultural values, namely,

      1) kinship groups;

   2) groups, such as neighbourhoods, based on territorial propinquity;

3) national and ethnic groups, based on community of language, culture, and history;

4) state (that is, governmental) groups;

5) occupational groups;

6) economic groups;

7) religious groups;

8) political groups;

9) ideological and cultural groups (science, philosophy, the fine arts, ethics, education, sport, and so on);

10) a nominal group consisting of the elite (individual man and woman of genius, eminent leaders, and historical personages).

l) Multibonded groups

These groups are formed by the amalgamation of two or more unibonded values:

a) The main types of family formations (embracing all families of the same type);

b) clans and tribes;

c) nations;

d) castes;

e) social orders ("estates");

f) social classes.

20.1 Action and Reflection

Discuss Sorokin's classification of social differentiation.

20.4 Social differentiation among tribes

Social differentiation among tribes is mainly based on descent groups, sex, and age. The pattern of social differentiation among tribes is not the same for all societies (tribes). There are variations of social differentiation from tribe to tribe in accordance with their social system, tradition and belief systems. A matrilineal society depicts different system than those of the systems and practices in the patrilineal and patriarchal societies. Again, there are also variations in the mode of differentiation within both the matrilineal and patrilineal societies. Therefore, while considering social differentiation among tribes, it does not imply a uniform pattern. In the following, we shall discuss a few forms of social differentiation among tribes, with special reference to India.

20.4.1 Social Differentiation by Kinship and Descent Groups

Kinship and descent groups are most basic and important bases of social differentiation among tribal societies. The status of a person, its rights and duties is largely determined by the rules of the systems of kinship and descent. The phenomenon can also be understood in terms of *ascribed roles and statuses*. This sense of ascribed roles and statuses is very much relevant to the traditional lives of the tribals.

Kinship refers to those that are related by blood or by marriage. In the words of Rivers (1914), kinship is 'a social recognition of biological ties'. The members who are related by birth or blood are known as *consanguineal relatives* (one's/ego's *cognates*), while members related through marriage are known as *affinal*

relatives (one's/ego's *affines*). Kinship systems help people to distinguish between different categories of kin, their rights and obligations and for organizing themselves as social groups or kin groups. *Descent* is a narrower term that refers to the rules of a culture that establishes affiliations with one's parents. Descent groups are social groups of relatives whose members/descendants are related lineally through a common ancestor. In the other words, the status of a person is, by and large, determined by genealogical relationships. The members of a primary social group are linked by kinship.

Kinship system may be broadly classified into two categories- *classificatory* and *descriptive* (after Morgan, 1871). Classificatory system of kinship is a system of describing kinsmen by a terminology that has more than one meaning and for a varying degree of relationship. For example, the use of the terminology, such as, 'father', 'mother', 'brother', 'sister' for many people outside one's own immediate family. Descriptive system, on the other hand, is a system where specific terms/terminologies are used for specific relationships. For instance, the terms 'father', 'mother', 'brother' and 'sister' that is used for one's immediate family members only.

Descent groups may be two main types- unilineal descent group and cognatic (or non-unilineal) descent group. Unilineal descent refers to the type of group where ancestry is traced through either the father's line or mother's line. The unilineal groups where the ancestry is traced through the father's line are called *patrilineal descent* groups, while, those whose ancestry is traced through the mother's line is called *matrilineal descent* groups. Unilineal descent groups are classified into four further types: *lineages*, *clans*, *phratries*, and *moieties*. In terms of magnitude, the four types may be arranged in ascending order, as, lineages – clans – phratries – moieties.

A *lineage* refers to a unilineal descent group which traces ancestry upto about ten successive generations. Lineages may be of two types- patrilineages (descent traced through male line) and matrilineages (descent traced through female line). In some societies, lineages have segments (sub-divisions) and sub-segments and sub-sub segments. A clan is a unilineal descent group which usually consists of ten or more generations. The members of a clan believe that they are descendants of a common ancestor. In certain tribal societies, we do have clans consisting of two or more lineages.

A *phratry* comprises of two or more clans. In India, phratry is more commonly found among the tribes of North-Eastern Himalayan region and also in central region. The Ao Nagas, the Raj Konds and Murias are some of the tribes that have phratry system.

Box 20.1: Models of social differentiation in India

There is no agreement on the nature of the form of social differentiation in India. This is due to the various forms of tribal social formations in India. However, there are some forms that are most prevalent among the tribal societies in India. The following prevalent models put forward by different anthropologists (as reviewed by Vidyarthi and Rai (1985) are reproduced below (italics mine).

It has been suggested by T.C.Das (1953) that tribal organization in India reveals seven types. He bases this classification on the difference in the types of spheres or units. The seven types may be illustrated as under:

1) Family — Local Group - Tribe

2) Families – Clans - Tribe

3) Families – Moieties - Tribe

4) Families – Clans – Phratries - Tribe

5) Families – Clans – Phratries – Moieties - Tribe

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6) Families – Clans – Sub-tribe – Tribe

7) Families – Sub-clans – Orthogamous Clans or Selected Clans – Tribe.

But Dube (1971) opines that in India tribal design consists of family, then clan, phratry and finally tribe. The minimum sphere for an Indian tribal design will include in itself four spheres, i.e., individual forming families, families forming clan or local group and clans forming the tribe.

A *moiety* (French, *moitie,*'half') consists of two unilineal descent groups.The Moyon Nagas of Manipur for instance has this kind of moiety system. It is also known as 'dual organisation'. They may be exogamous, agamous, or endogamous. The practice is found among many Indian tribes, such as the Todas of Nilgiri Hills in Tamil Nadu, the Nagas (Ao, Anal, Moyon and Monsang, etc.) of North East region, the Tharus of Central Himalayan region, and the Bondos of Eastern region (in Orissa). Among the Anal Nagas, the society/tribe is divided into two exogamous divisions (moieties)- *mocha*l and *moshum*. The members belonging to the same moiety group cannot intermarry. They do have phratries within each moiety. The agamous kind of moiety is found among the Ao Nagas. The two moieties of the Ao tribe- *mongsen* and *chungli* are further divided into several clans. In the level of the clan, there is a system of exogamy.

20.4.2 Social Differentiation by Sex

The most elementary basis for social classification is based on the biological division of human beings into male and female. Every society has some form of division of roles based on sex. A woman is generally expected to engage most of her labour and time in domestic affairs. This is mainly so for the fact that women bear and suckle children and nurture them. As we observe in many societies, women are generally expected to perform lighter works while leaving the heavier works to men (males), as men is considered to be physically stronger than women. However, some of these observations could be wrong for some societies where women even outdo men in performing heavy duties, while men would remain as consumers and dependents of women in many areas of existence.

In subsistence agricultural societies where people get their food and other needs by their labour from their immediate environment, women have a large share of the work of agriculture and domestic roles. Women rear children and nurture them; perform household chores, such as cooking and serving them to the family members, bounding of paddy, etc.; collect water and firewood; carry out clearing and tilling of land/ground; plant saplings and weed them; harvest and carry the produce to their granaries. She is also engaged in growing vegetables and crops, usually in the nearby house and courtyards. Some women also sell their horticultural and agricultural produce in the nearby market or in the village markets. Thus, a woman is found to engage all the time in one work or the other throughout the day and through out the year. The workload is hectic indeed.

Men are expected to perform heavier works which is generally outside home, such as warfare, hunting, fishing, and herding cattle. Nearer home, he is also engaged in many roles such as cutting firewood, ploughing agricultural field, clearing jungle for *jhum* (*swidden*) cultivation (in many societies), and doing irrigation canals. Men are also engaged in carpentry works, trade and commerce. At home, men carry out *jural* authority that concerns with rights and obligations. Men are the policy and law-makers in the village. They are also decision makers of the village. This tradition also percolates down to the level of the family where husbands exercise authority in the family and is expected to be the decision makers of the family. Men also run the administration of the village. A woman by virtue of her sex is not supposed to be part of the village council or administration.

The roles of men and women also overlap in many areas of labour. For example, women also do fishing in river. They also engage in clearing of jungle for jhum cultivation. Women also participate in doing irrigation canals. Likewise, men also carry firewood and participate in plantation and harvest.

Apart from such social differentiations, we also observe in many tribal societies segregation of members on the basis of sex. For instance, among the Tangkhul Nagas (located in North Eastern India and North Western Myanmar), there is a tradition of youth dormitory systems for boys and girls known as *mayarlong* (boys' dormitory) and *shanaolong* (girls' dormitory).

20.4.3 Social Differentiation by Age

All societies have some division of its population on the basis of age. This is due to the fact that every individual does not have the same physical and mental strength and maturity at a given point of time. There are phases of human development, viz., from childhood to adulthood, and again to old-age phase. A child will not be able to perform what is expected of an adult member. In the same way, an old-aged person does not have the needed physical strength to carry out the tasks that is expected of an adult member. In this sense, one finds, the idea of dependency of the child and the aged members on the adult members.

Among the tribes, by and large, there is a process of the phases of life. A child has to undergo certain rituals to enter into the next stage of life, viz., adulthood stage. The ritual basically means for formal recognition of the boys and girls by the community for taking up the role of an adult according to the customs and tradition of the society. Such ritual is generally known as '*rite of passage*' or '*rite de passage*'. We have finest cases of age group differentiations among the Nagas. In Box 1.2 supplied, we shall see age and sex based grouping ('dormitory system') among the Nagas. There are almost similar systems found among other Indian tribes as well (not to be discussed here).

Box 20.2: Naga dormitory system

The Naga dormitory system is a traditional learning institution based on age and sex. There are two dormitories - *boys' dormitory*, and *Girls' dormitory*. But in general, we find only one dormitory system that combines of both the systems. To be part/member of the system, a person has to fulfill certain age criteria. Among the Tangkhul Nagas, the system is called *long* (boys' dormitory, *mayarlong*; girls' dormitory, *shanaolong*). The Ao Nagas called them *arichu*. In the following we shall consider the age grouping system and the arichu system of the Ao Nagas.

The Ao Nagas had a tradition where a young child (especially male child) has to go through certain processes for attaining adulthood (manhood). A boy who has attained about 15 years is entitled to be registered in the traditional *arichu* system. Prior to the entry into the system, a boy is expected to have learned basic knowledge from his parents and grand parents. Generally, there are five to seven age groups or stages.

Tzuir is the first stage of the arichu system. This is the stage of physical test with rigorous training for the new entrants. *Tenapang Yhanga* age group (viz., blooming age) is the second stage. Their main duty is to teach the younger members. Most members marry at this stage. *Tekumchet Yhanga* or *Tepui Zunga* (*tepui*, 'escaped from certain compulsion') is the third stage where the members become the masters of the organization. They are exempt from hard work and punishment. *Juzen* or *Chuzen* (matured stage) age group comprises of the senior members. They take care of the overall situation of the arichu system. *Pener* or *Bencha* age group (old age group) is the last stage of the system. From this stage, a member can enter into the affairs of village administration. A man who leaves the arichu is considered to be equipped with and capable enough of shouldering any given responsibility that an average Ao man is expected of.

[Refer: *Imchen, 1993; Vashum, 2000*]

In many societies, 'marriage' during adulthood stage is another important phase of life. A married person is expected among others by the society to perform certain roles and expectations that are not obligatory or entitled to his age group members who are unmarried. Among the Nagas, a person becomes eligible for a membership in the village council by virtue of his marriage.

20.4.4 Social Differentiation by Rank and Hierarchy

In tribal world, there are practices of recognising certain members and/or families by way of heredity. They are ascribed status on the basis of descent. This concept of differentiation is known as 'rank' system or 'ranking' system. The notion refers to a kind of hierarchy in the society where certain lines of descent are considered as superior to others, and are entitled certain respects, status, and privileges.

In many societies, members of the higher rank are regarded as 'royal' families and those in the lower rank are commoners. But there may be still hierarchical order even among the commoners. Among the Nagas, by and large, the chief of the village was regarded as having the highest status. He is also entitled with certain privileges apart from being the head of the village, such as, free and voluntary service of the villagers to help in cultivation of agriculture or construction of residential house from time to time. Again, even among the families of a clan or phratry, there are rankings of family on the basis of seniority of the descendants (male descendants). The Konyak Nagas is an apt example of social ranking system. Such kind of ranking is also found among the Bhutias and Tharus of the sub-Himalayan region, the Andh of Andhra Pradesh, and so on.

Among the Tharus, the community (tribe) is divided into two sections- the 'higher' and the 'lower'. The higher section has several endogamous sub-divisions called *kuries*. The five kuries, namely Batha, Birtia, Dahait, Badvait and Mahtum which group is called *Rana Thakur* consider themselves superior to other groups of the Tharu community. The groups even restrict themselves from intermarriage and interdining.

The Andhs of Andhra Pradesh also have the notion of hierarchical order within the community. Of the two sub-tribe divisions, namely, Vartati and Khaltati, the former considered themselves as superior to the latter (viz., the Khaltati). The two groups also restraint from intermarriage.

20.4.5 Social differentiation by occupation

We can understand the kind of differentiation of roles in tribal societies in two but overlapping ways- the traditional and the modern trend. In the traditional sense, we see the role of the family as a crucial factor based mainly on production and consumption of resources. Such differentiation in terms of occupation in the familial traditional set up, are again, largely based on sex, age, expertise and other statuses such as being a father, a mother, son, or daughter and so on. In this context, every individual is expected to perform one's respective roles in accordance with the norms of the society. They are, however, not well-defined occupations specific to the members in many cases. This is simply because a person who is good in one occupation is also found to be performing in some other occupations and roles. For example, an agriculturist is also a good artisan and vise versa. Likewise, in a village level too, there are role differentiations in terms of certain roles and statuses recognized by the villagers, particularly in religious and political aspects. The chief of the village is expected to play certain roles according to the status (ascribed) he holds. He is regarded as the founder of the village and the first citizen (inhabitant) of the village. He performs specific roles and functions after his position. In return he is also given recognition and given certain roles

due to him by the villagers, be it, in terms of giving service in agricultural works from time to time and other services due to him.

In the modern times, many of these traditional norms would not be seen. The old practices have been eroded and have given way to modern practices. Modern education, modernization, and the need for diversification of occupations and specializations have demanded for a more elaborate and differentiated roles and occupations. Today, an educated tribal would hardly be seen in the agricultural work or other manual traditional occupations. S/he would go out and look for decent jobs outside the village and opt for decent jobs in town or city. There are tribals who have even succeeded in going overseas and find fortune for themselvs. These educated tribals who have gone out of their village for their fortune, temporary or otherwise, experience change in their way of life and attitude. The longer they isolate from the village life, there are more chances of cultural erosion and connectivity to their village roots. For many of these educated tribals, the village situation would not quite fit their lives anymore. This trend is also true for those unskilled and semi-killed tribal labourers. Thus, differentiation by profession and/or occupation has also been much prevalent in modern tribal situation. This kind of differentiation of occupations and professions has also led to emergence of a kind of class system in tribal societies.

20.4.6 Social Differentiation by Education

Education is a significant factor for social differentiation in the modern days. This is for the fact that 'education' most directly affects occupational attainment or upward occupational mobility in the contemporary world. The truth is substantiated by studies conducted across countries where the influence of education on occupational mobility and attainment 'transcend the direct effects of occupational inheritance' (Ramirez et al, 1980; Porter, 1979). However, education should not be construed as a neutral and independent factor. Education has always been affected by the backgrounds of class, ethnicity, race and even locality. The phenomenon is also quite true in the context of the tribals and indigenous peoples in various parts of the world.

Social differentiation among tribals in India, by and large, show that the educated tribals as they go out of the village and look for decent jobs find themselves in a different situation which gradually leads them to adapt to the environment and adopt the norms and culture of the new environment, be it of town or of city in one way or another. In course of time, they (tribals) found themselves different or differentiated from the original community life, be it in terms of habit, attitude and even worldview *inter alia.* This trend is most true with those tribals who have taken jobs outside the village and have settled in the new locality where they work. The second generation (children) of these educated tribals would have already missed most of the cultural values and norms of their community. There are still others who have even remained quite detached from the community. Thus, the factor of education in effecting social differentiation among tribals has become very prominent in most of the tribal areas.

20.4.7 Social Differentiation by Religion

In tribal societies, we can see two kinds of social differentiation in terms of religion which are based on factors of 'the ascribed' and 'the achieved'. In traditional societies, we would find role differentiation due to ascribed positions and statuses. There are variations of such differentiation from tribe to tribe. However, the underlying principle seem to suggest that every tribe recognizes roles of certain members, be it eldest or youngest, man or woman, etc. who performs religious roles. For example, among the Tangkhul Nagas, the head of

the clan has religious obligation. Likewise, the chief of the village too perform religious roles, be it for starting agricultural cycle (tilling the field), seed sowing, harvest, etc. by performing rituals to the almighty god for a good harvest.

In the modern times, trend social differentiation has become very complex and much differentiated even among the tribal societies. The existence various religious groups and denominations have diversified the roles and differentiation of the tribals. A tribal group may be well differentiated from another tribal or non-tribal group who profess different religion. Even among the same religious group, different denominations or sects have created social differentiations. Among the Christian tribals, differences of denominations, be it, Roman Catholic, Baptist, Methodist, Church of Christ, Seven Day Adventists, etc. have their own organizations within the community set up and outside the community. This necessitates for maintaining different organizations and associations of different religious denominations in a village and larger set up. A village or tribe of multi-denominations would carry out different roles and functions under different organizations and affiliations. This practice results in social differentiation of believers of different religions and/or faiths. Likewise, in a broader scenario, a social group of certain belies system, be it sect, denomination or religion, differentiate from each other according to their belief systems and religious practices. For instance, a Christian would be differentiated from a Hindu, a Sikh from a Buddhist, a Muslim from a Hindu and so on. This kind of social differentiation based on dissimilarity of religions also takes place among the tribals.

20.4.8 Social Differentiation by Language

Language also plays a major role in bringing about social differentiation in tribal societies. There are various trends in this phenomenon based on language differences. There is a general tendency that people speaking the same tribal language seem to be closer as they identify themselves as being a fellow tribal on the basis of ethnicity. We find differentiations of social groups based on among other criteria, language, be it from tribe to tribe or from tribe to non-tribal communities.

Social differentiation also takes place within the same tribal group in a multi-dialectic situation. There are certain divisions which are maintained on the basis of similarity and dissimilarity of dialects among other things. They would primarily identify their association and loyalty with the cultural and dialectic zone they live in and to which they are a part of. Along with language differentiation, every village also maintained their own entity and affairs of life. Every village has their own self-governing mechanism (government) that takes care of the welfare and security of the village and the villagers. They have head (chief) of the village, representatives of the various clans and the commoners in the village set up. They consider the system as a democratically run mini-government based on a kind of socialism. The Tangkhul Nagas is an apt example of this kind of situation. Hence, language and/or dialect differentiation also plays significant role in social segregation and social differentiation.

20.4.9 Social Differentiation by Association

Among tribal societies, formation of associations for one kind or another is largely based on kinship and affinity. Clan associations which are usually spread over in one or more villages are generally prevalent in most of the societies. These associations are mainly launched for cooperation and/or protection in any circumstances called for. Tribal societies do have associations beyond kinship and affinity obligations such as political affiliations and allegiance for achieving certain goals and interests. People also become part of an association by way of being a follower of some icons and participation in rituals. Sometimes, they

are called *cult* associations, because, the members or followers participate in rituals addressed to a particular divinity. They are also called 'secret societies' because the divine power, or craft and knowledge they acquire and possess through divine revelations and power are generally not revealed to other members outside the congregation.

There are also associations based on sex and age. For instance, there are women societies for secular and/or also religious purposes. Again, based on age groupings, there are youth associations for unmarried men and women as well, called 'youth club' in many tribal societies of North East India. Yet in some societies, there are associations based on marital status. For instance, among the Tangkhul Nagas, we observe, associations of married men known as '*gahar long*' (married men council) which objective is to assist in the general welfare and development of the village.

People also launch associations for economic purposes in the form of 'credit association' or 'cooperatives'. According to the system, the members of the association subscribe a fixed sum of money periodically and withdraw the money over time in turn which is decided by lot or some other ways. Among the tribals of Manipur, the system is known as '*marup*' (meaning 'friendship' or 'cooperation').

20.4.10 Social Differentiation by Territory and Physical Environment

Territorial or geographical social differentiation is one of the unique characters of the tribal societies. The notion of territorial differentiation is prevalent from simplest tribal societies like the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh to relatively more advanced tribal groups like the Mizos and Nagas. The notion of territoriality is observed even among transhumant-pastoral societies like the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh. The idea of territoriality and its perceptions, however, would differ from one tribal group to another. Among the Nagas, there is a unique tradition of territorial differentiation through village formation. A Naga village is either a republic or a monarchy which has all the elements of an independent and self-contained set up. The systems function through the principles of democracy and socialism. A village has a well demarcated and strict territorial jurisdiction among other things. No village has the right to encroach on the jurisdiction of another village. Several villages constitute a larger social group called 'tribe'. In some of the Naga tribes, there is a kind of dual division of tribe like moiety system but maintaining territorial differentiation. For example, the Rengma Nagas and Konyak Nagas have dual territorial divisions. Such divisions are also found among various tribes in India.

Sometimes, new villages are also founded from the parental villages for one reason or another. A parental village may even have over three to four tributary and independent villages. Again, in some tribal societies, a village has sub-divisions or localities. Generally, each locality or unit is exclusively occupied by one clan or at least dominated by a clan. For example, among the Naga villages, there are distinct localities where a clan is concentrated. They call these localities '*khel*' or '*tang*' by the Angami Nagas and Tangkhul Nagas respectively. Each *khel* or *tang* is indeed a mini-village despite being part of a village. However, in the recent years, such tradition is gradually eroding due to various external influences. Such kind of territorial local groups are also observed among other Indian tribes such as the Kamars of Chhatisgarh, the Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh among others.

In almost the same principle, roles are differentiated on the basis of climate, etc. There are varying climates in a society that gives rise to differences in the nature of the work they perform at different seasons. Even in societies

with little variation of climate, they would have some seasonal variations which makes them differentiate their roles. Thus, climate variation also play role in giving rise to social differentiation.

20.2 Action and Reflection

What are the various types of social differentiation found among the tribals? Discuss them briefly.

20.5 Conclusion

Human society has always been divided into societies from time immemorial. These societies seek to represent society in general and strive for solidarity within the members of a society and among societies as well. Social differentiation is a process by which different statuses, roles, strata, and groups exist within a society. Social differentiation has been classified into many different ways.

In this Unit, we have considered Pitirim A. Sorokin's comprehensive classification of social differentiation. Sorokin classifies social differentiation into two broad categories based on the nature of its bonding and differentiations which he terms '*Unibonded groups*' (group bound into a solidary system by one main value or interest, such as, race, sex, age, kinship groups, ethnic groups, occupational groups, economic groups, religious groups, political groups, etc.) and '*Multibonded groups*' (group formed by the amalgamation of two or more unibonded values, such as, clans, tribes, castes, nations, classes, etc.).

Social differentiations among tribes and simple societies are mainly based on descent, sex, age, rank and hierarchy *inter alia*. The patterns of social differentiation among tribes differ from one another according to variations in their social system, tradition and belief systems. There are also variations in the mode of differentiation within a society. The various tribes in India are no exception to this variation.

20.6 Further Reading

Bowles, S. 1971. Unequal education and the reproduction of the social division of labor. *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 3:1-30.

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Tonnies, Ferdinand 1957 (1887). *Community and Society*. Translated and edited by Charles P. Loomis. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press.