

5 TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

- Definitional problems
- Geographical spread
- Colonial policies and tribes
- Issues of integration and autonomy.

Tribal community, village community and urban community are three main components of India's social formation. The tribes are backward, particularly in regard to education and economic condition. They were exploited by the dominant sections of Indian society, namely, "Hindu landlords", money-lenders and industrialists who purchased their lands to establish industries in tribal areas.

A number of tribes have been "Hinduised" or converted to Christianity or Islam to break away from their tribal identity, to get redemption from exploitation and to elevate their status and honour. Sometimes it becomes difficult to draw a clear line between a tribal and a caste group. There are hunters and food-gatherers among the tribal on the one end, and there are tribal settled in villages, practically functioning as "caste groups" on the other.

Tribals have a strong sense of their distinctiveness and separate themselves from non-tribals. Christians and Muslims. Language is one of the strong traits by which they identify themselves. The Mundas, Santhals and Hos are identified as distinct tribes on the basis of their spoken languages (besides other attributes). A large number of tribals in India live in hilly and forested areas where population is sparse and communication difficult. They are spread over the entire subcontinent, but are found mainly in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

DEFINITIONAL PROBLEM

There are no specific criteria by which we may define a tribe. Broadly a tribe is defined as "a community occupying a common geographic area and having a similar language and culture or belief and practices". **Nadel** has defined tribes as a society with a linguistic, cultural and political boundary. But there are problems in such definitions. There are many tribal societies which lack government and the centralized authority in the ordinary sense of the term. Likewise cultural homogeneity in a tribe is also elusive in this age.

Mandelbaum writes

"In tribal life the principle links for the whole society are based on kinship." Kinship is not simply a principle of social organization; it is also a principle of inheritance, division of labour and distribution of power and privileges. Tribal societies are small in size. They possess a morality, religion and worldview of their own, corresponding to their social relations. However some tribes such as Santhals, Gonds and Bhills are quite large.

Sahlins writes that the term "tribal society" should be restricted to "segmentary systems". The segmentary system has relations on a small scale. They enjoy autonomy, and are independent of

each other in a given region. We may observe this about the Santhals, Oraons and Mundas of Jharkhand or about the Bhils, Meenas and Garasias of Rajasthan.

Distinctions between 'folk', 'peasant' and 'urban' or between 'tribal', 'folk' and 'elite' are not very useful for the understanding of tribes in India. For example, the tribes of Jharkhand have been interacting and cooperating with each other, despite geographical barriers, problems of communication, relative cultural autonomy and economic self-reliance; as they faced a common external threat to their traditional system of land relations, economy and cultural autonomy. The Hindu zamindars, Bengali moneylenders and the British administration exploited them, pushing them to the point of extinction and utter dehumanization. There was never inter-tribal isolation and cultural exclusiveness. The tribals of Bihar mobilized their members against their exploiters. They interacted with the administration, town elite and outsiders. The Jharkhand area, which contains numerous tribes of Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, is a tribal cultural zone comprising several tribal subcultures. The Mundas, Oraons, Hos and Santhals, the major tribes of this region, depend upon forest produce, settled agriculture, employment in industries, coal mines and government jobs. Some have settled in towns, others are in villages, and some of the latter are economically very well off. Thus, tribal culture is in part a "peasant culture" and in part an "urban culture".

Tribal exclusiveness, intact tribal solidarity and tribal consciousness on the one hand, and dependence upon towns and cities, administration and mobilization against their exploiters and on the other, have existed simultaneously among the tribal people. Even the revival of tribal aboriginality has been expressed in the form of an instrument for protesting against the external intrusions and impositions of rules and regulations.

The tribals of Jharkhand are peasants to a large extent, and therefore their 'peasant qualities' should become the basis to understand their economic problems. The characteristics of peasant societies, outlined by **Theodore Shanin**, aptly apply to the tribals of Jharkhand. These are:

- the peasant family farm is the basic unit of a multi-dimensional social organization;
- land husbandry is the main means of livelihood, directly providing the major part of the consumption needs;
- specific traditional culture is related to the way of life of small communities; and
- The peasants have the underdog position – domination of peasants by others.

The tribes of Bihar have been called peasants by **S.C. Roy**. They have fought against feudalism for 300 years. Today, they are facing problems emerging out of industrial urbanization in the Jharkhand region.

Mandelbaum mentions the following characteristics while defining Indian tribes:

- kinship as an instrument of social bonds;
- lack of hierarchy (rigid status distinctions) among men and groups (clans and lineages)
- absence of strong, complex, formal organizations; communitarian basis of landholding;
- segmentary character;
- little value on surplus accumulation, on the use of capital, and on market-trading;
- lack of distinction between form and substance of religion; and
- A distinct psychological make-up for enjoying life.

Tribes are relatively isolated from larger cultural influences, have a relative cultural homogeneity and a simple technology. They believe in spirits, magic and witchcraft. They have their own taboos which prohibit certain actions that are punishable by the community, by the

supernatural, or by magical consequences. Large number of the tribes believes in animism, according to which all objects counselled – both animate and inanimate – are permanently or temporarily inhabited by spirits or souls. Often, an activity is believed to be caused by these spirits. Some spirits are worshipped and treated with fear and respect. Some scholars have maintained that animism was the earliest form of religion of the tribes. Many tribes believe in ancestor worship too.

Some general defining features of tribes in India are :

- **Common name:** Each tribe has a distinct name of its own through which it is distinguished from others.
- **Common territory:** Tribes generally occupy common geographical areas.
- **Common language:** Members of one tribe speak the same language. Each tribe has its own dialect, if not the script.
- **Common culture:** Each tribe has prescribed patterns of behaviour and festivals and deities to worship.
- **Endogamy:** Each tribe has the practice of marrying members within their own tribe.
- **Political organization:** All tribes have their own political organization. They have councils of elders to control members.
- **As against the national average of 43 per cent, 57 per cent of the tribals are economically active.**
- **As regards the nature of work, against 73 per cent national average, 91 per cent tribal workers are engaged in agriculture. About 3 per cent tribals are engaged in manufacturing (against 11% of general population) and 5 per cent in servicing (tertiary sectors) against 16% average of general population. About 1 per cent tribals are engaged in forestry and food-gathering.**

Tribes have been separated from other social categories on the basis of these features. The British conducted a detailed enumeration of the tribals in the 1930s. Tribes were distinguished from castes on the basis of their religious and ecological conditions. However, tribals are also peasants, as a good number of them today live in villages and have been engaged in agriculture and allied occupation, just like peasants belonging to various castes and communities. Today there are more than thirty million tribals divided into 427 tribes. They form about 8 per cent of the total population. There is vast diversity among the tribes in terms of habitation, ecology, economic pursuits, language, religion and contacts with the outside world. Each tribe is internally stratified. It may be said that members of a given tribe do not have a clear perception about their existential conditions or that they have a distorted or false consciousness.

GEOGRAPHICAL SPREAD OF INDIAN TRIBES

The large tribes of India are the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh; the Bhils of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh and the Santhals of Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal. The Gonds and the Bhils are more than four million each. The Santhals are more than three million.

Roy Burman divides tribal communities into five territorial groupings, taking into account their historical, ethnic and socio-cultural relations. These are :

- North-east India, comprising Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura;
- the sub-Himalayan region of north and north-west India, comprising hill districts of Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh;
- Central and East India, Madhya Pradesh (Chhattisgarh), and Andhra Pradesh;
- South India comprising Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Karnataka; and
- Western India, comprising Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

L.P. Vidyarthi divided the tribal people into four major zones :

- The Himalayan Region, comprising, Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh (Bhot, Gujjar, Gaddi), Terai area of Uttar Pradesh (Tharus), Assam (Mizo, Garo, Khasi), Meghalaya, Nagaland (Nagas), Manipur (Mao) and Tripura (Tripuri) and having 11 per cent of the total tribal population of the country;
- Middle India, comprising West Bengal Bihar (Santhal, Munda, Oraon and Ho), Orissa (Khonds, Gond) and having about 57 per cent of Indian tribal population;
- Western India, comprising Rajasthan (Bhil, Meena, Garasia), Madhya Pradesh (Bhill, etc.), Gujarat (Bhil, Dubla, Dhodia), and Maharashtra (Bhil, Koli, Mahadeo, Kokna) and containing about 25 per cent of the Indian tribal population; and
- Southern India, comprising Andhra Pradesh (Gond, Koya, Konda, Dova), Karnataka (Naikada, Marati), Tamil Nadu (Irula, Toda), Kerala (Pulayan, Paniayan) and Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Andamanese, Nicobari) and containing about 7 per cent of the Indian tribal population.

The tribals living in different states belong to various

- **Racial groups** (e.g., proto-australoid, which include Santhals, Munda, Oraon and Bhumij, and Mangoloid which include Garo, etc.),
- **Linguistic groups** (austric like Santhals, Munda, Bhumij, Dravidian like Oraon, and Tibeto-Chinese like Garo, Bhutia, etc.)
- **Economic categories** (food-gatherers, cultivators, labourers),
- **Social and religious categories.**

There is also a wide range of variation in their level of development and their level of socio-cultural integration. Though the majority of the tribals follow patrilineal system of social organization, yet there are quite a few who have matrilineal systems (like Garo, etc.). A sizeable proportion of Nagas, Mizos,

Santhals, Oraon and Munda, etc., have embraced Christianity. Some (like Bhutia, Lepcha) are largely identified with Buddhism. Some tribes have been assimilated into the Hindu fold, like the Bhumij and the Bhills. The dominant racial type among tribes is the proto-Australoid. In the sub-Himalayan belt, the Mangoloid type is preponderant. The Mediterranean and the Negrito are found in other regions. Tribal languages belong to all the types: the Austric, Dravidian and the Tibeto-Chinese. Tribal people are generally found to be bilingual. The main occupations of the tribes are forestry and food-gathering, shifting cultivation, settled agriculture, agricultural labour, animal husbandry and household industry. Despite many variations, there are also certain similarities also. The tribals as whole are technologically and educationally backward.

COLONIAL POLICIES AND TRIBES

Although the early anthropological work of the colonial era had described tribes as isolated cohesive communities, colonialism had already brought irrevocable changes in their world. In most parts of the country, colonialism brought radical transformation of the tribals as their relative isolation was eroded by the penetration of market forces and they were integrated with the British and princely administrations. A large number of money-lenders, traders, revenue farmers and other middlemen and petty officials invaded the tribal areas and disrupted the tribal's traditional way of life. They were increasingly engulfed in debt and lost their lands to outsiders, often being reduced to the position of agricultural labourers, sharecroppers and rack-rented tenants. Many were forced to retreat further into the hills. Belated legislation to prevent alienation of land by the tribal people failed to halt the process.

Verrier Elwin, who lived nearly all his life among the tribal people in central and north-eastern India and who was one of the formative influences in the evolution of the new government's policies towards the tribes, was to refer to the fate of the tribal people under British rule as

follows: 'But now they suffered oppression and exploitation, for there soon came merchants and liquor-venders, cajoling, tricking, swindling them in their ignorance and simplicity until bit by bit their broad acres dwindled and they sank into the poverty in which many of them still live today. Simultaneously, missionaries were destroying their art, their dances, their weaving and their whole culture.'

Colonialism also transformed the tribals relationship with the forest, they depended on the forest for food, fuel and cattle feed and raw materials for their handicrafts. In many parts of India the hunger for land by the immigrant peasants from the plains led to the destruction of forests, depriving the tribals of their traditional means of livelihood. To conserve forests and to facilitate their commercial exploitation, the colonial authorities brought large tracts of forest lands under forests laws which forbade shifting cultivation and put severe restrictions on the tribal's use of the forest and their access to forest products.

Loss of land, indebtedness, exploitation by middlemen, denial of access of forests and forest products, and oppression and extortion by policemen, forest officials and other government officials was to lead to a series of tribal uprisings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for example the Santhal uprising and the Munda rebellion led by Birsa Munda and the participation of the tribal people in the national and peasant movements in Orissa, Bihar, West Bengal, Andhra, Maharashtra and Gujarat. Following the various rebellions in tribal areas in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the colonial government set up 'excluded' and 'partially excluded' areas, where the entry of non-tribals was prohibited or regulated. In these areas, the British favoured indirect rule through local kings or headmen.

The famous **isolation versus integration debate** of the 1940s built upon this standard picture of tribal societies as isolated wholes.

- The isolationist side argued that tribals needed protection from traders, moneylenders and

Hindu and Christian missionaries, all of whom were intent on reducing tribals to detribalized landless labour.

- The integrationists, on the other hand, argued that tribals were merely backward Hindus, and their problems had to be addressed within the same framework as that of other backward classes.

This opposition dominated the Constituent Assembly debates, which were finally settled along the lines of a compromise which advocated welfare schemes that would enable controlled integration. The subsequent schemes for tribal development – five year plans, tribal's sub – plans, tribal welfare blocks, special multipurpose area schemes all continue with this mode of thinking. But the basic issue here is that :

- The integration of tribes has neglected their own needs or desires;
- Integration has been on the terms of the mainstream society and for its own benefit.
- The tribal societies have had their lands, forests taken away and their communities shattered in the name of development.

The strategies adopted by the British administrators for solving the problems of the tribals included acquiring tribal land and forests and declaring certain tribal areas as excluded or partially excluded. But the British government had also established a number of schools and hospitals in the tribal areas with the help of Christian missionaries who converted many tribals to Christianity. Thus, by and large, during the British period, the tribals remained victims of colonial-feudal domination, ethnic prejudices, illiteracy, poverty and isolation.

After independence, provisions were made in the Constitution to safeguard tribal interests and promote their developmental and welfare activities. Gandhi and Thakkar Bapa also did some pioneering work among the tribals. Nehru enunciated the policy of Panchseel for tribal transformation, which rested on following five principles:

- Avoiding imposing the culture of the majority people on them and encouraging in every way their own traditional arts and culture.
- Respecting tribal rights on land and forest.
- Training tribal leaders for administrative and developmental activities with the help of some technical personnel from outside.
- Avoiding over-administering of the tribal areas.
- Judging results not on the basis of money spent but the quality of human character evolved.

In 1960, the **Scheduled Tribe Commission** was set up under the chairmanship of U.N. Dhebar to work for the advancement of the tribals. After the Fifth Five Year Plan, the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy was designed in 1980 which consisted of two things :

- socio-economic development of the tribes, and
- Protection of tribals against exploitation.

The funds for TSPs are provided by state governments and the cultural ministries.

However, TSP results have not been commensurate with the expectations and the investments made so far, as heavy emphasis is laid in several states on infrastructural development without corresponding emphasis on the development of the STs. The TSP schemes are supposed to lay emphasis on family oriented income-generating schemes in sectors like agriculture, animal husbandry, cooperatives, tribal crafts and skills, etc., besides laying emphasis on education, health and housing.

In the Five Year Plans, the programmes for the welfare of the STs aim at:

- Raising the productivity levels in agriculture, animals husbandry, forestry, cottage and small-scale industries, etc.,
- to improve the economic conditions,
- rehabilitation of the bonded labour,
- education and training programmes, and
- special development programmes for women and children.

But various evaluation studies on all these programmes for the integrated development of the tribals have brought out the inadequacies of these programmes.

ISSUES OF INTEGRATION AND AUTONOMY

Forced incorporation of tribal communities into mainstream has had its impact on tribal culture and society as much as its economy. Tribal identities today are formed by this interactional process rather than any primordial (original, ancient) characteristics peculiar to tribes. Because the interaction with the mainstream has generally been on terms unfavourable to the tribal communities, many tribal identities today are centered on ideas of resistance and opposition to the overwhelming force of the non-tribal world.

The positive impact of successes – such as the achievement of statehood for Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh after a long struggle – is moderated by continuing problems. Many of the states of the North-East, for example, have been living for decades under special laws that limit the civil liberties of citizens. Thus, citizens of states like Manipur or Nagaland don't have the same rights as other citizens of India because their states have been declared as 'disturbed areas'. The vicious circle of armed rebellions provoking state repression which in turn fuels further rebellions has taken a heavy toll on the economy, culture and society of the North-eastern states. In another part of the country, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh are yet to make full use of their new-found statehood, and the political system there is still not autonomous of larger structures in which tribals are powerless.

Another significant development is the gradual **emergence of an educated middle class** among tribal communities. Most visible in the North eastern states, this is now a segment beginning to be seen in the rest of the country as well, particularly among members of the larger tribal communities. In conjunction with policies of reservation, education is creating an urbanized professional class. As tribal societies get more

differentiated, i.e., develop class and other divisions within themselves, different bases are growing for the assertion of tribal identity.

Two broad sets of issues have been most important in giving rise to tribal movements. These are :

- issues relating to control over vital economic resources like land and specially forests,
- issues relating to matters of ethnic-cultural identity.

The two can often go together, but with differentiation of tribal society they may also diverge. The reasons why the middle classes within tribal societies may assert their tribal identity may be different from the reasons why poor and uneducated tribals join tribal movements. As with any other community, it is the relationship between these kinds of internal dynamics and external forces that will shape the future.

Tribes are faced with the problem of preserving their cultural identity and their social existence. Each tribe has three alternatives:

- to exist side by side with the majority,
- to absorb itself in the dominant group, and
- to secede and seek political independence on the basis of equality.

Different tribes have adopted different processes from amongst the above mentioned three processes. For example,

- the Bhils and the Meenas have adopted the first process of co-existence,
- the Oraon and the Khond tribes have adopted the second process of absorbing themselves in the Hindu society,
- the Nagas and the Mizos have adopted the third process of secession.

Our government has not adopted a uniform policy of cultural integration of all tribes because different tribes are at different stages of development and have different goals and aspirations. Naturally we find different levels of integration of different tribes. We can only hold

that tribes are gradually being drawn into the wider economic framework of the country and they are getting themselves involved in the market economy.

Agriculture has come to occupy a central place in the economic activity of many tribes. According to the 2001 census figures, about three-fourth of the tribals in the country work as cultivators and about one-fifth as agricultural labourers and the rest as labourers in mines, forests or are engaged in other services. The fact that the tribal cultivators are responding positively to modern methods of cultivation points out a positive change in tribal's economic system. The economic integration of the tribes, however, does not necessarily mean that all tribes have achieved a high level of income. Many are still living below the poverty line.

Tribals are also being integrated in the political system of the country. The introduction of the Panchayati Raj has offered them opportunity for an increased involvement in the political activities. By contesting elections, they have started acquiring power at Panchayat Samiti and state levels. This has also resulted in educational and social development of tribals.

In social life too, because of the reservation policy, they now occupy important social positions. Though clan panchayats have not become altogether irrelevant for them, yet their role is confined to marital and land conflicts. The tribal councils have thus weakened now.

It may be averred that on the one hand, the tribals have maintained their cultural identity and on the other hand, they have integrated themselves in the broader economic, social, political and religious systems of the country. This integration has enabled the tribals to bridge the social distance that existed between tribals and non-tribals, though they have not succeeded in achieving social equality.

While analyzing the tribal integration in larger society, would it be relevant to adopt **Ghurye's** model of labeling tribals as 'backward Hindus', or

Majumdar's model of adopting Hindu ideas by tribals through contacts with caste Hindus, or **Srinivas's** model of sanskritisation, i.e., tribes emulating high caste practices, or **Bailey's** model of postulating a continuum at the two ends of which stand a tribe and a caste, is a matter of discussion. **Lutz and Munda** criticizing Ghurye and Srinivas models have suggested '**modernization model**' for understanding tribal change.

Anthropologists have been evaluating the effectiveness of government programmes and pointing out the causes of their failure.

- **Roy Burman** had observed the strong ethnocentric bias of Indian society, the Indian government, and the social scientists vis-à-vis the tribes. He maintained that these groups were designated as 'tribes' because the mainstream caste Hindu society perceives these tribes as being radically different from itself, in the past as well as in the present.
- **Vidyarthi** asserted to incorporate the tribal viewpoint which is considered significant for the tribal change. Our contention is that tribals themselves must discard their feeling of 'being tribals and thus having limitations'. They must develop self-pride and self-confidence, and must stop thriving on borrowed concessions and government's reservation policy. It is this attitude which will help them achieve social elevation and equality. Government policies alone cannot contribute to their development through 'appeasement' approach. It is not by being rooted in the traditional culture but by seeking opportunities to assert themselves that they can elevate themselves in Indian society.

Tribes are becoming conscious, both socially and politically, of maintaining and preserving their ethnic and cultural identity and also of protecting themselves against exploitation by dikus (outsiders). They have stressed their political solidarity. This may, however, result in a new form of ecological-cultural isolation. Tribes have

generally taken such steps due to their economic backwardness and a feeling of frustration.

To integrate the tribes with the mainstream, special economic opportunities are offered to them. The "assimilationist" model of the tribe's integration with non-tribals. The "isolationist" model would not be much relevant today in the face of rapid changes in Indian society. Despite vast changes taking place in India, tribal consciousness has been strengthened mainly to project tribes as distinct components of Indian society. Industrialization in the tribal belt in Jharkhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh for example, has promoted both tribal consciousness and integration with the non-tribal sections in the region. The demand for autonomy by tribals has originated from their fear of loss of cultural autonomy and of exploitation.

To Niharranjan Ray, the very expressions "tribes", "criminal tribes", "scheduled tribes" and "scheduled castes" are misleading. He believes that these expressions are unfortunate and unwise. "It has conditioned our attitude towards these communities of peoples and our approach towards the solution of their problems which are theirs as much as of the rest of the Indian population." From the point of view of Indian nationalism, Ray makes the following observations:

- Tribes are Janas or peoples, just like the peoples of other territorial and cultural regions of India. Tribes or Janas differ from other communities in terms of the socio-economic system of jati to which non-tribal Hindu communities belong. Ray writes: "Jati is not caste nor it is just a socio-religious system; it is also an economic system, hereditarily and hierarchically organized according to groups recruited by birth."
- There is a sharp distinction between "incorporation" and "integration". The tribes have been incorporated rather than integrated into the jati-fold by placing them at different hierarchical levels of the system, generally

at the lower levels. Even this process has been slow, and it has also become redundant because of considerable fluidity in the caste system. There is a need, therefore, to draw them into the new techno-economy, a new production system.

- There is a need to understand the stresses and strains being suffered by the tribals due to the quicker tempo of modern life, new legal, administrative and economic systems.
- The tribal people have migrated to other places from their birth places due to economic and other hardships. They have also joined to army.
- The nomenclatures – “scheduled tribes”, “denotified tribes” and “scheduled castes” – have inherent seeds of division.
- Tribes today are in search of a sense of identity, of a sense of belonging and for self-determination in a new social order. Several new states have been formed in the north-eastern region. The demand for the formation of a separate state is indicative of this new identity. Ray writes: “Any consideration in the contemporary context, of the traditional Hindu method of tribal absorption is therefore, sheer madness to my mind. In the present context this is simply anachronistic.”

But the fact of the matter is that a large number of major tribes have either Hinduised or converted to Christianity and Islam. These processes of change and mobility have no doubt reduced the gap between tribals and non-tribals, but have also created factions and feuds between the non-converts and the converts. A sharp line is drawn in Jharkhand between the tribals converted to Christianity and those who continue to adhere to their traditional way of life.

CONCLUSION

Tribes are generally backward. To protect against injustices done to them and to bring them up with other sections of society, the Constitution of India has granted them special concessions for their upliftment. However, there are some tribes who have not been “scheduled” as such sections by the Constitution. Generally, tribes are distinct from non-tribes; particularly from caste groups and other non-caste communities like Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, etc. Tribal people have been victims of exploitation by non-tribals for centuries.

A strong sense of identity is prevalent among the tribes of India. Language, religious and magical beliefs and practices, food habits, styles of dress, pattern of habitation and dependence upon forest produce are important features of their life which make them distinct from non-tribal groups. Kinship is the key principle of social organization as it governs major social, juridical, economic and political activities of their life.

Tribal societies are generally of a small size. There is not much social interaction between people of different tribes. However, intra-tribal solidarity has been strong. Tribal culture is in part of peasant culture, in part it has its exclusiveness, and in part it has taken elements from urban culture. Tribal people are differentiated like non-tribal people in terms of wealth, power and accessibility to resources and opportunities.

Today, the main problems of tribals are not of integration or assimilation with castes and communities in India. Their main problems are of poverty, unemployment, indebtedness, backwardness, displacement and ignorance. There are indications of inter-tribal solidarity movements and concerted action against their exploitation and suppression.

