



SOCIAL INCLUSION: PURSUING THE ART AND LIVELIHOOD
SCOPES OF UNSEEN TRIBAL INDIA

INTRODUCTION

- One of the important social collectivities of India is the Tribal community. There are 645 distinct, they nearly constitute 8.6% of the total population. The tribes are said to be discrete social category with unique political and economic organizations and thus they form a different form of social identity.
- The history of Tribes in India dates back to Pre-Aryan era. At a certain point of time the tribes were primarily seen as a group of people who have a common ancestor. Different anthropologists have defined tribes according to their understanding. European scholars studied the tribes for understanding the evolution of human institutions which were imagined having originated in the primitive cultures of tribes. Since, British rule, the British and Indian-civil-servants-turned anthropologists studied castes and tribes. Though, these studies were not meant to scientific ethnographic studies of tribes but were meant to provide the basic information of Indian cultural groups to facilitate administration by indirect rule.
- After the British conquered different parts of India and incorporated the areas, which were inhabited by the tribes, they found that these social communities who were residing in the interiors of India, were different kind of people. The kind of administration they hold was different from that of the general population. Later, they were acknowledged by their own language, their own culture, their own territory and their own government.
- Therefore, anthropologist writings depict that whosoever has these kinds of feature, will be termed as "tribes".

Keywords

- Tribes
- Socio-economic
- Culture
- Commercialization
- Perseverance
- Classification
- Art
- Crafts

OBJECTIVE and SIGNIFICANCE of the Paper

The objective of this paper is to study and understand the Indian tribal society their religious customs, traditions based on their geographical classifications, linguistic classification and ethnicity and cultural divisions.

The significance from this paper arises from the fact that these traditions and religious customs of Indian tribal society needs to be preserved. Along with this, the main motive of this paper is to focus on the possible scope for providing market to these artistries of the Indian tribal society.

Classifications of Indian Tribes

India has the largest concentration of Tribes in the world and are believed to be the earliest settlers of Indian Peninsula. A self-contained unit without any hierarchical discrimination and present a society which is rich in cultural heritage and believes in forest living near to nature. It is very important to acknowledge the different orientation and classifications of tribes based on their origination to understand the kaleidoscopic variety of culture, they hold. The classification of tribes are based on three basic segments:

1. Geographical Classifications
2. Linguistic Classifications
3. Racial, socio-economic and cultural divisions

1. GEOGRAPHICAL CLASSIFICATION

Different sociologists and anthropologists have termed tribes with different definitions and terms based on their origination. The tribes of India live in hilly areas or isolated regions and are known by different names that means they are either the people of forest or the original inhabitants and they are named as :

- Vanyajati (*castes of forest*)
- Vanvasi (*inhabitants of forests*)
- Pahari (*hill dwellers*)
- Adivasi (*first settlers*)
- Janjati (*folk people*)
- Adimjati (*primitive people*)
- Anusuchit jati (*scheduled tribe*)

However, after these classification different anthropologists and sociologists came at a point and have referred to zones and presented the distribution of tribes in these areas. They are:

- North-Eastern Himalayan region
- Central Himalayan region
- North- western Himalayan region
- Middle India region
- Western India region
- South India region
- The island

2. LINGUISTIC CLASSIFICATION

Language helps in classifying people. The linguistic map of India and the languages found among the tribal indicate the Dravidian linguistic family is found in the Dravidian region in South India and few in middle India in Chota Nagpur and pockets of north western borders. A high degree of diversity in their language and dialects is striking most feature of India. It is evident that most people have entered India in different span of time and got settled here. After the arrival in India, cultural mixing has taken place among various races which also led to the mixing of languages and dialects to great extent. The classifications are as follows:

- Austro-Asiatic family (*Nishada*)
- Tibeto-Kirata family (*Kirata*)
- Dravidian family (*Dravida*)
- Indo-European Family (*Aryan*)

All these families are again subdivided into different segments which help us to understand the linguistic feature and origination of languages of Indian tribes.

3. RACIAL CLASSIFICATION-ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DIVISIONS

Scholars like B.S.Guha, J.H.Hutton and D.N.Majumdar attempted to provide racial classification of the Indian people. However, Guha's classification of 1935 is the most important and most accepted classification. His six main races with subtypes are:

I. The Negrito

II. The Proto-Autroloid

III. The Mongoloid, again divided into

- Palaeo mongoloids

- Tibeto-mongoloids

IV. The Mediterranean is subdivided into

- Palaeo Mediterranean

- Mediterranean

- Oriental type

V. The Western Brachycephals is subdivided into

- Alpinoid

- Dinaric

- Armenoid

VI. The Nordic

3. CULTURAL DIVISIONS

The tribes are an integral part of the Indian population. The tribes of India hold the oldest civilization of the world with a kaleidoscopic variety and rich cultural heritage. Their socio-economic life, religious beliefs are distinct and their association with the Hindu neighbors, for a long time has all given a definitive characters to their lives. Tradition and customs continuity have become possible because of optimum utilization of resources by the tribal people. Despite the force of tradition and perpetuating isolation, changes have occurred amongst the tribes of India, though change has always been challenging for them. The general classifications on the point that there is hardly any tribal community bereft of contact with rest of the Indian population:

- Assimilated
- Adaptive (the so-called transitional culture)
- Commensalic (common economic pursuits with neighbors)
- Symbiotic (interdependence)
- Acculturative (one-way traffic of cultural traits)

There is one more classification of tribes wrapped in a four-fold group based on their orientation towards the Hindu social order:

- Incorporated in the Hindu social order
- Positively oriented
- Negatively oriented
- Indifferent towards Hindu social order

3. ECONOMIC DIVISIONS

Elwin in 1943 presented a four-fold classification on external influence being the basis on the tribal life:

1. Most primitive community live a joint communal life and cultivate with axes.
2. Community who believe to their solitude and stick to ancient traditions are less occupied with axe-cultivation.
3. Most numerous community who are under external influence are extinct to their tribal culture and social organizations.
4. Bhils and Naga tribes retain their original tribal life and are free of cultural contact.

Apart from this classification, one more classification is important to understand the concept of economic divisions of tribes and why we call it an economic division. The Indian Conference of Social Work constituted Indian Tribal Welfare committee in 1952 and divided the tribes into 4 lines:

- Tribal communities: stick to original habitats. Forest hunting tribes and hill cultivators.
- Semi-Tribal communities : settled in rural areas. Agriculturist tribes.
- Acculturated Tribal communities: migrated to Urban or semi-urban areas and are in modern occupation. Industrialist laborers.
- Totally assimilated.

INDIAN TRIBES AND THEIR ART

MANIPUR

Tribes originated from Tibetan-Burmese group of Mongoloids and includes atleast 29 communities. Traditional activities are:

- ❑ **Coiled Pottery of Manipur:** Also known as Longpi gets its Longpi from Ukhrul district. The utensils made from black stone have the benefits of health and hygiene. The Longpi pottery is famous for its unique style and technique. It is made up with the mixture of clay and powdered stone. Longpi pottery are specifically designed for specific purpose and is used for food stuffing as well as cooking. It is 100% handmade and 100% natural.
- ❑ **Stone carving:** this is a traditional craft of Manipur. Bishnupur, a district of Manipur is rich in natural resources, hence the utility items like bowls, candle-stands, grinders, stone glasses and plates are made. They hold a custom of constructing an engraved memorial for their deceased ones, that describes their achievements and good deeds near the village.
- ❑ **Textile weaving:** The Lasingphee (quitted cotton material) is produced in this state and used as a covering in winters. Colours are obtained from natural sources such and juice of wild indigo is used as black or dark blue dye.

SIKKIM

Post-historic times the state was emerged with three groups of major tribal people namely- The Lepcha (Tibet), The Bhutias (Tibet) and The Nepalese (Nepal)

- **Lepcha weaving of Sikkim:** Originated by the group of indigenous people of this state. They belong to Tibeto-Burman linguistic category, which classify as Himalayish. The Lepcha women do folk work on traditional back-starp loin looms. The cloth woven by the women is used for women's traditional coat material. Cotton yarn is the basic material whereas the woolen yarn is utilized for the motifs over the coat. The length of the coat material is usually around 3.5m and the breadth is kept at 55 cm. This scenario has emerged as a big picture, because now the local artists also work on items such as bags, gloves and both men and women are engaged in this work.
- **Dhurries and Carpet weaving of Sikkim:** Dhurrie is a form of Indian carpet which uses the non-pile technique of weaving and combines a variety of materials and patterns to create a vibrant throw for the floor. The women of Bhutia community of Sikkim practice the oldest form of carpet-weaving in the world. They traditionally weave hand-knotted woolen carpets with chiefly Tibetan designs on upright wooden frame loom.
- **Thangaka paintings:** These paintings are the culmination of Tibetan-Buddhist art, Thangkas are pictorial scrolls. Thangka art was first developed in Tibet in 7th century from Eastern India and neighboring countries. These scrolls are hung in the homes and at monasteries. Thangkas are usually painted on a cotton fabric and on silk.
- **Handmade paper of Sikkim:** The handmade paper stems from two sources- recycled paper and *Argali* or *Lokta*, a plant of Daphne species found in the hilly regions from 3000 feet to 10,500 feet above the sea level. The bark of the pruned branches of this shrub is used for making paper pulp. The beautiful part of producing these papers is that it is totally eco-friendly and there is absence of acids, toxins and chemicals besides, no plant is destroyed neither harmed in the entire pulp extraction and paper making process.

NAGALAND

The tribes of Nagaland are popularly known as Nagas. The Nagas particularly belong to the Indo-Mongolian family.

- **Wood carvings:** The wooden carvers of Nagaland tribes produce unique pieces of wooden work from traditional instruments of adze, chisel, dao and axe. Wooden figures of human beings, elephants, hornbill, mithun head, tiger and other animals are the main products of traditional industry of wood carving. The tribes of Wanchos, Phom and Konyaks are known for their splendid mastery over the traditional art of carving beautiful products from woods which they have inherited from their forefathers.
- **Paintings:** Nagaland is famous for the culture of cloth paintings. The tribes belonging to Lotha, Ao and Rengma communities are used to practice this highly skilled art of paintings on clothes. There is a similarity of paintings between the art of Ao tribes and Rengma tribes. The colors, they use in these paintings are natural, that are prepared by mixing the sap of a tree, with very strong beer and the ash of leaves and fine chiseled bamboo sticks are used as brushes.

MIZORAM

The tribes of Mizoram are popularly known as Mizos. From the books of historic records, we get to understand that, Tibetan and Burmese people had a great influence on the lifestyle and behavior of core groups of Mizoram. The Mizos are mainly divided into tribes and sub-tribes.

- **Cane and Bamboo handicrafts of Mizoram:** Cane and bamboo are hugely popular in Indian Handicrafts. Cane and bamboo are not only known for their natural qualities but are highly durable and long-lasting hence, their prominent products like basket, utensils, hats, flower vases, furniture and other decorative products are made from these cane and bamboo handicrafts

JHARKHAND

Jharkhand is primarily known as tribal state with total tribal population of 28% which is the total population of this state. The tribes of Jharkhand are known for their diverse and indigenous cultures and ethnobotany. The tribal artwork in Jharkhand is popular that mainly inculcates the wooden work, bamboo artwork, pottery, traditional tribal jewelries, weapons, metal work and masks. However, these metal works are highly used in the agricultural and hunting processes. The tribes of Jharkhand include near about 32 tribal groups that inhabit the state and most of them are the belongings of Proto-Australoid tribes and Austro-Asiatic tribal communities.

- **Painted Masks:** masks were made of leaves in the early times, but now they use highly stylized masks and use a wide variety of items such as wood, pumpkin, gourd, cloth even papier Mache. The variety of masks range from mythological masks, animal masks, and those with various human facial expression masks.
- **Creation in metal:** Malhar and Tentri tribes of Jharkhand, practice the ancient metal craft. The objects have a core of clay concealed in metal casing and is created from brass scrap. This ancient metal craft emerged with a popular name “*Dokra art*”. The traditional Kansa or ball metal has been the core item of many beautiful products with a matte finish on the outside and shiny golden finish in the inside are made here.
- **Paintings:** Oraon tribes of Jharkhand are very hands-on in paintings and are traced back to ancient times. Images like cattle, feeding troughs, papyrus, birds, fish plants, circled lotus, zigzag, square, opposing triangle geometric forms, arches in series are common. Floral art forms are used during harvest times.
- **Leaves product:** Jharkhand abounds forest that includes varieties of wood and leaves. The tribal economy revolves around using forest products, by products and minor products. Kendu leaves, Bamboo and its manufactured products, Mahua fruits, leaves are mainly used in making of “*Dona*”, “*Pattal*”, lac etc. “*Pattal*” is leaves-based plates and “*Dona*” is leaves based bowls are made from “*Sal*” leaves and “*Sabai ghaas*” are widely used during wedding and other festivities. “*Sabai ghaas*” or wild grass is woven to form bowls, pen-stands, coaster and mats or dyed to convert it into intricate and colorful boxes, dolls, table mats and Christmas tree decoration.

CHHATTISGARH

Chhattisgarh is by and large considered as a tribal subjugated state. It houses a major population of the tribes in its territory. The Chhattisgarh tribes are known for their distinctive features and unique lifestyle, rituals, traditional beliefs and superstitions and different administrative structures.

- **Ball metal/ Dokra art:** One thing that Chhattisgarh holds in common with Jharkhand is Dokra art. Tribes like ‘Ghaswas’ of Bastar and ‘Jharas’ of Raigarh mainly practise this form of craft and thus this art makes Bastar and Raigarh popular for metal handicrafts. The process is same as that of the Dokra art done by Malhar and Tentri tribes of Jharkhand.
- **Clay and Terracotta of Chhattisgarh:** The tribe of Bilaspur are found to have animal and human figures of their roof tiles made of votive terracotta. The Baigas and Gonds of the Mandla region make figures with these terracotta and clay items. The mud walls of houses are adorned with clay murals, clay reliefs or carvings, usually done by women. Tribal terracotta masks are made during community celebrations and are highly popular in the regions of Bastar, Sarguja, Mandla and Betul. Terracotta products include lamps or diyas, one famous “*chidiya Diya*” of Sarguja is a complicated wheel thrown oil lamp that works on the siphon principle.
- **Godna/ Tattoos of Chhattisgarh:** The community believes that the ornaments are mortal as they are human made, hence they invented the art of Godna or tattoos in order to beautify one’s body with a thought that it would remain in their bodies even after their death. It is believed to have adapted from the primitive form of art and is capaciously performed by women of Jamgala village of Sarguja district. This trend soon deteriorated when the older ladies adept at making tattoos went out of practice. However, the trend changed, and the tribal women are improvising this art by painting on the fabrics, silk, canvas, walls and doors and other various means, instead of body painting.

MADHYA PRADESH

The tribes of Madhya Pradesh have ranked on top in terms of the tribal population. Tribal culture of Madhya Pradesh is marked by blended remnants of the Dravidian and Scythians culture. Important mention about the tribes of this state is that they prefer to live in the primitive stage and are far away from the mainstream of development.

- **Gond Art:** Known as the cultural hub, the Gondwana region of MP that includes places like Mandla, Chhindwara, Seoni, Balaghat and Shahdol produce the famous forms of art called the Gond art. The word ‘Gond’ has been taken from the Dravidian term “*Kond*” which means the ‘green mountain’. It is this expression which has given foundation to the art form that celebrates every form of nature the mountains, the rivers, the animals and so on. The artists use natural colors like charcoal, plant sap, colored soil, cow dung and leaves. Dots and lines come together to form a piece of Gond art which further imparts a sense of movement to the still images. The Gond community believes that viewing a good image begets good luck. While this community celebrate nature by these arts, it is believed that it wards off the evil energies. It is this belief, that has led the Gonds to decorate their houses and floors with traditional tattoos and motifs.

WEST BENGAL

West Bengal has a variety of tribes found in almost the nooks and corners of the state, which add a beautiful flavor to its culture.

- **Leather product of West Bengal:** West Bengal is prominent for its leather craft in the whole world. Leather craft also known as Embossed Leather crafts, are made using vegetable tanned goatskin leather. The detailing of every piece is done using a metal dye and afterwards, it is painted individually by hand using spirit colors. The importance of the craft increases its value in the context that every product is constructed by hand.
- **Kalighat Pata:** The Kalaghat Pat is an exemplary transformation of rural folk art with an urban milieu. The making of these Pat is an epitome of teamwork. The head of the Pataus started with a Pat and did the detailing and was completed by his helpers. These Pata were made using natural pigments, one was of paper and other using clay. The paper pats were based on ancient scriptures and the pats were shaped according to the length of the stories. These paper pats place so much of significance because these were made of ***Tulot paper*** (cotton pulp), their brushes were made up of goat's hair. The vegetable colors made of turmeric (for yellow color), beetle leaf/catechu (for red color), water cress/Hilincha (for green color), Pui-creeper used as a pot herb-the fruit or seed is crushed to get the color (for purple color), Ghusum soil/pond (for white color), Nilmoni fruit (for blue color) and so on.

ORISSA

Orissa is blessed to have great diversity with unique and vibrant socio-cultural life. The distribution of tribes in different districts varies differently. The tribes of Orissa belong to three linguistic divisions namely Dravidian, Indo-Aryan and Austric.

- **Pattachitra painting:** The art form that is closely related to the cult of Shree Jagannath and the temple tradition in Puri, is believed to have originated as early as the 12th century. A fine cotton cloth is coated with white stone powder and gums are made from tamarind seeds. These are the natural pigments that make the canvas ready to paint with natural colors. The chief ingredient used as a base for making different pigments by adding raw materials is the gum of 'Kaitha tree'.
- **Saura Painting:** one of the most ancient tribes in Hindu mythology and classics, notably the Purans, are the Sauras. Saura tribal painting is a style of wall murals painting associated with saura tribes. These paintings are also known as '*ikons*'. These paintings draw upon tribal folklore and have ritualistic importance relating to life and death.
- **Applique art:** Applique work has been prevalent in this state for a substantial time frame. In the initial phase, it was used during Rath Yatra for decorating the chariot of the reigning deity Shree Jagannath. It is an art form, where one material is woven or sewed with other to make an extra-ordinary decorative pattern.

COMMERCIALIZATION OF TRIBAL ART

Apart from the government sites, there are certain online platforms which are a great helping hand to these artisans. Different individuals and NGOs altogether giving their bit to make these artisans socialize for their livelihoods knowing the fact that tribal people need special attention and can be observed from their low social, economic and participatory indicators. The tribal who have migrated from one place to another for any specific reason, are found much vulnerable whether it is maternal and child mortality, size of agricultural holdings or accessibility to have water and electricity, they are found lag far behind the general progress. Some of the institutional bodies that have emerged as the helping hand to the tribal communities could be either government organizations or could be individual organization.

TRIFED, known as the *Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India*, is a national-level organization that works under the *Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India*, that also works as an FCI agency to procure wheat and rice. The body aims to institutionalize the Minor Forest Produce and the Surplus Agriculture Produce as the tribal community is dependent on the forests for their needs. The objective of the institution is to hasten the economic development by marketing these produce, or products made by the tribal communities and to proffer them wide exposure not only in the domestic markets but in the international markets.

TRIBES INDIA is a brand under *TRIFED* which came into existence in 1987. The magical mystique of tribal India finds expression at Tribes India which is the exclusive shop of tribal artefacts in India espousing tribal cause. The brand aims to hasten the economic burgeoning of tribal people, through the marketing of these home-made and hand-made products on sustainable basis.

DARICHA FOUNDATION, is an online website known for the aces of the tribal artists and craftsperson. In short, it is an online window to acknowledge and proffer exposure to the indigenous heritage and their culture. This portal leans towards the promotion of folk and tribal arts and talk about the knowledge on our folk and tribal art practitioner. With all these subjects Daricha Foundation is a not for profit registered society based out of Kolkata, in April 2013.

CONCLUSION

The tribes of India lag the general population this drags them into low socio-economic exposure, illiteracy, low health systems and so on. The intolerant destitution has diversified the tribal communities to accept the lethargic system and hence they developed different art and crafts form to produce their needs. The inclination towards producing the art and crafts have helped them to get non-agricultural income but that is too little to satisfy. Some of the artists have so far gained the eminence from their work in the national as well as international markets. The fact cannot be denied that due to the increase in demand for such products internationally, different organizations have been encouraging the artists to produce more of such crafts and paintings and have a commercial sale. Different states and central government with the help of civil society organizations have been constantly arranging the various exhibitions, skill centers, training centers and provide them proper incentives.

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