



CHANGE IN OCCUPATIONAL AND LIVING TRENDS AMONGST THE TRIBAL SOCIETIES OF INDIA

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Abstract

Agriculture is the most popular economic activity of the tribal population of India. In comparison with the hunters and the gatherers, the horticulturists extract more resources from a given area of land and they have greater effect on the environment. The people inhabiting the hilly areas have adopted shifting cultivation methods. There are a number of tribes in India who subsist on traditional crafts and cottage industries like basketry, wood craft, weaving, iron smelting and rope making. There are certain tribes in India who are traditional singers, dancers, bards, acrobats and snake-charmers. Tribes belonging to this category depend on their art for their economic survival and subsistence. In the post Independence era, the Constitution of India has helped in creating job opportunities for tribal people by reserving seats in different services. As a result we find tribal people engaged in offices, hospitals and administrative jobs.

Key Words: *Occupational trends, Living trends, Economy, variability, Folk artist.*



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DISCUSSION AND RESULTS: In different regions of India, there are living various nomadic and tribal societies. These societies are still unaware of the main stream of development and social changes.

Occupations and living trends of Tribal Societies:

On the basis of the mode of livelihood or the subsistence pattern, Indian tribes can be divided into:

- i) Food gathering and hunting
- ii) Horticulture
- iii) Pastoral
- iv) Hill cultivation
- v) Agriculture
- vi) Artisan
- vii) Folk Artist

viii) Labor works

ix) Industrial workers

I) Food gathering and hunting

Hunting and gathering is the oldest of human subsistence patterns. Hunting and gathering methods and tools may not be highly advanced but they are efficient for forest dwelling people to obtain a regular supply of food. Hunters and gatherers interfere with the environment to a limited extent and their social structure is comparatively flexible and egalitarian. Examples of hunter and gatherer tribes of India include the Chenchus, ChallaYanadi, Malaya Pandaram/ Hill Pandaram, Cholanaickan and the Great Andamanese

II) Horticulture

In comparison with the hunters and the gatherers, the horticulturists extract more resources from a given area of land and they have greater effect on the environment. Their societies are organised around groups based on kinship and descent. Inter-group exchange and trade is common among them.

III) Pastoral

Pastoralism usually involves a complex interaction between groups specializing in herding and those specializing in farming on a regional basis. Pastoralism is not completely independent of farming. Pastoralists are able to adapt to marginal environment where farming would be extremely risky or totally impossible. Bakarwals, Bharwads, Broqpas, Gujjars, Todas are pastoralist tribes.

IV) Hill cultivation type

The people inhabiting the hilly areas have adopted shifting cultivation methods. Hill cultivation is a seasonally regulated procedure designed to open up and bring a patch of land under cultivation. After one or two seasons of cropping, the land is left fallow for several years with the aim of restoring the fertility of the soil. Following this, the land is again cleared and burnt and likewise another cycle of cultivation begins. Simple implements like the digging stick with a metallic end, spade, sickle and axe are used. Hill cultivators apply three techniques which include:

- i) Slash-and-burn cultivation with the help of digging sticks;
- ii) Hoe-and-burn cultivation; and
- iii) Terrace cultivation in the Terai areas equipped with natural irrigation sources.

Hill cultivation is known by various names like *Jhum* in Assam, *Kurwa* or *Khallu* in Santhal Parganas; *Podu*, *Rema*, *Dahi*, *Gudia*, *Bringa* in Orissa; *Penda*, *Dahiya*, *Bewar* in Madhya

Pradesh; *Kondapady* in Andhra Pradesh. The practice of hill cultivation is widespread in our country. Tribal communities inhabiting the hills of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh including the Adis, Akas, Birjias, Bondos, Chakmas, Chirus, Gangtes, Hmars, Jamatias, Juangs, Dimasas, Karbis, Mijis, Mishmis, Aos, Konyaks, Phoms, Paites, Riangs, Tangsas, Wanchos practice the Hill cultivation methods.

V) Agriculturists

Agriculture is the most popular economic activity of the tribal population of India. A large percentage of the tribes are supported by agriculture who practice it as their primary source of livelihood. It is a simple form of settled type of cultivation which requires ploughing the land with two animals. An important feature of tribal agriculture is cooperation among relatives and among the villagers on a reciprocal basis during the different stages of agricultural activities. Tribal communities practicing agriculture are the Apatanis, Cheros, Deoris, Miris, Hos, Jaintias, Khambas, Kharias, Khasis, Kolams, Tiwas, Rabhas, Kinnauras, Bhumijis, Santhals, Mundas, Oraons, Kharwas, Baigas, Gonds, Bhils, Minas, Warlis, Koyas; the list is endless.

VI) Simple artisan type

There are a number of tribes in India who subsist on traditional crafts and cottage industries like basketry, wood craft, weaving, iron smelting, rope making, etc. Except in few cases, these are usually practiced as subsidiary occupations. The Asurs of Bihar, Goduliya Lohars of Rajasthan, Agarias of Madhya Pradesh are engaged in iron smelting; the Birhors are engaged in rope making; the Garas of Jammu and Kashmir and the Kammarus are blacksmiths. The Katkaris are engaged in catechu making; the Kotas and the Tharuas are potters; the Sauntas and the Mahalis are basket makers. In fact a majority of the tribes of India are engaged in basketry which caters to their individual needs and requirements.

VII) Folk artist

There are certain tribes in India who are traditional singers, dancers, bards, acrobats and snake-charmers. Tribes belonging to this category depend on their art for their economic survival and subsistence. Some of the tribes belonging to this category are the Nats and Saperas of Uttar Pradesh; the Mundupptas and Kelas of Orissa who are acrobats; the Pardhans and the Ojhas who are bards; the Pamulas and the Kalbelias of Rajasthan who are snake charmers; the Dommaras who are acrobats; the Gorait who are drum beaters; the Mons and the Paradhias who are musicians.

These communities have ceremonial relations with their neighbouring communities. For instance, the Pardhans are considered the bards of the Gonds. Their presence is mandatory in the social functions of the Gonds. The Pardhans play on the *Kikri*- a stringed musical instrument and live on ritual begging and the customary alms received from the neighbouring Gonds. Similarly the Ojhas are the bards and minstrels of the Gonds. Similarly the Kotas of the Nilgiris apart from catering to the needs of the Todas and the Badagas for pots and knives also offer music essential in the ceremonies of the Todas and the Badagas. They are offered grain in return of the same. The Kotas also have a reciprocal relationship with the Kurumbas who compensate the Todas with honey and fruits.

VIII) Labourers/industrial workers

Some of the tribes traditionally belonging to the agricultural or artisan type have adopted the work of wage labourers. They work as daily wage labourer in the agricultural fields or non-agricultural sector like the industries on a casual basis. The agricultural work is available in the locality itself where as the non-agricultural work opportunities are available in the locality as well as distant places including neighboring states.

The emergence of the non-agricultural labour sector is a result of the rapid growth of population and the opening of mines and different industries in tribal areas. As a result tribal peoples from the agricultural and artisan type move out to distant places as seasonal migrants to work in the mines, industries, tea gardens, road and railway construction, forestry and other civil work like construction of dams, bridges, etc.

The most renowned non-agricultural labour belt is the Chotanagpur of Bihar. Tribals of this area are found working in the tea gardens of North-East India, forestry and other sectors in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, etc. The Santhals and the Hos dominate the laborer sector of the iron mines and industries of Bihar, almost half the labour force of the manganese industry of Madhya Pradesh is constituted of tribal people. The tribal people are found to be taking industrial labour work either as the primary occupation or subsidiary work. Such occupational changes have led to changes not only in the income and expenditure pattern but also in the traditional occupational structure, importance of the traditional crafts, dress and food habits

as well as in the family and social structure of the traditional tribal societies.

IX) Skilled workers

In the post Independence era, the Constitution of India has helped in creating job opportunities for tribal people by reserving seats in different services. As a result we find

tribal people engaged in offices, hospitals, administrative jobs, etc. It is difficult to identify any particular tribal group that is extensively engaged in skilled jobs but educated tribal people are engaged in such jobs in different capacities all over the country.

There are great changes observed in the occupational and living trends of tribal and nomadic communities of India after independence. The constitutional provisions are too much helpful to develop these ancient societies.

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