

Available online at <http://www.ijims.com>

ISSN: 2348 – 0343

Historical Perspectives of Different Tribal Groups in India

Subhash Meena ^{1*} and **Nitesh Pal Singh Meena ²

1 Dept. of Psychology, Jai Narain Vyas, Univ. Jodhpur, India

2 Dept. of History, Rajasthan Univ., Jaipur, India

*Corresponding author: Subhash Meena

Abstract

The Tribal groups are one of the major parts of India. They are supposed to be one of the earliest settlers in the area. Their culture, therefore, manifests some of the oldest tribal traditions in the country. India is the country which has witnessed the most industrialization in the tribal belt resulting in major changes in the tribal culture. But of all the aspects of culture religion is one of the least changeable. For the present study, the author is trying to study the history, cultures and religion of different tribal groups of India.

Keywords: tribes, tribal groups, history, culture

Introduction

India is the home to large number of indigenous people, who are still untouched by the lifestyle of the modern world. With more than 84.4 million, India has the largest population of the tribal people in the world. These tribal people also known as the adivasi's are the poorest in the country, who are still dependent on haunting, agriculture and fishing. Some of the major tribal groups in India include Gonds, Santhals, Khasis, Angamis, Bhils, Bhutias and Great Andamanese. All these tribal people have their own culture, tradition, language and lifestyle.

Tribals constitute 8.61% of the total population of the country, numbering 104.28 million (2011 Census) and cover about 15% of the country's area. The **Scheduled Castes** ^[1] and **Scheduled Tribes** (STs) are two groups of historically-disadvantaged people recognized in the Constitution of India. During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively, of India's population (according to the 2011 census).^[2] The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 lists 1,108 castes across 25 states in its First Schedule,^[3] and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule.^[4]

Connotations of the word Adivasi

Although terms such as *atavika*, *vanavāsi* ("forest dwellers"), or *girijan* ("hill people")^[5] are also used for the tribes of India, *adivāsi* carries the specific meaning of being the original and autochthonous inhabitants of a given region and was specifically coined for that purpose in the 1930s.^[6] Over time, unlike the terms "aborigines" or "tribes", the word "adivasi" has developed a connotation of past autonomy which was disrupted during the British colonial period in India and has not been restored.

In Nepal, the infiltration of Khas people from west to east through the Middle Hills, then the consolidation of dozens of petty kingdoms by the Shahs followed by the usurpation by the Ranas brought indigenous nationalities under orthodox Hindu rule and then codified inferior social and political status into a corpus of law known as *Muluki Ain*. Although the Shah kings were restored to power in the revolution of 1950, they still governed mostly for and through high caste Bahuns, Thakuris, Chhetris and Newars. Enfranchisement of adivasis—except Newars—seldom advanced beyond lip service. This produced grievances that were instrumental in the Nepalese Civil War, where the rank and file of guerrilla fighters were largely adivasi. Thus in Nepal, there are no historical parallels to British interference with orthodox Hindu discrimination, nor was there much resembling India's significantly effective post-Independence efforts to improve the lot of adivasis.

In India, opposition to usage of the term is varied, and it has been argued that the "original inhabitant" contention is based on the fact that they have no land and are therefore asking for a land reform. They argue that they have been oppressed by the "superior group" and that therefore they require and demand a reward and more specifically a land reform.^[7]

In Northeast India, the term adivasi applies only to the Tea-tribes imported from Central India during colonial times, while all tribal groups refer collectively to themselves by using the English word "tribes". The fact that tribal people need special attention can be observed from their low social, economic and participatory indicators. Whether it is maternal and child mortality, size of agricultural holdings or access to drinking water and electricity, tribal communities lag far behind the general population.

These indicators underline the importance of the need of livelihood generating activities based on locally available resources so that gainful employment opportunities could be created at the doorstep of tribal people. Recognizing this need for initiating such livelihood generating activities in a sustained and focused manner, the Ministry of Welfare (now Ministry of Tribal Affairs) established an organization to take up marketing development activities for Non Timber forest produce (NTFP) on which a tribal spends most of his time and derives a major portion of his/her income. In 1987, the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) was set up with an aim to serve the interest of the tribal community and work for their socio-economic development by conducting its affairs in a professional, democratic and autonomous manner for undertaking marketing of tribal products.

Further to achieve the aim of accelerating the economic development of tribal people by providing wider exposure to their art and crafts, TRIBES INDIA, the exclusive shops of tribal artifacts were set up all over India by TRIFED. They showcase and market the art and craft items produced by the tribal people and thus demonstrate the magical mystique of tribal India espousing tribal cause.^[8]

History

Since the 1850s these communities were loosely referred to as Depressed Classes, or Adivasis ("original inhabitants"). The early 20th century saw a flurry of activity in the Raj assessing the feasibility of responsible self-government for India. The Morley-Minto Reforms Report, Montagu–Chelmsford Reforms Report and the Simon Commission were several initiatives in this context. A highly-contested issue in the proposed reforms was the reservation of seats for representation of the Depressed Classes in provincial and central legislatures.

In 1935 the British passed the Government of India Act 1935, designed to give Indian provinces greater self-rule and set up a national federal structure. The reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes was incorporated into the act, which came into force in 1937. The Act introduced the term "Scheduled Castes", defining the group as "such castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes', as His Majesty in Council may prefer".^[9] This discretionary definition was clarified in The Government of India (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1936, which contained a list (or Schedule) of castes throughout the British-administered provinces.

After independence the Constituent Assembly continued the prevailing definition of Scheduled Castes and Tribes, giving (via articles 341 and 342) the president of India and governors of the states a mandate to compile a full listing of castes and tribes (with the power to edit it later, as required). The complete list of castes and tribes was made via two orders: The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950^[10] and The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950,^[11] respectively.

Mughal and colonial periods

Mughal period

Although considered uncivilised and primitive,^[12] adivasis were usually not held to be intrinsically impure by surrounding (usually Dravidian or Aryan) caste Hindu populations, unlike Dalits, who were.^[13] Thus, the adivasi origins of Valmiki, who composed the Ramayana, were acknowledged,^[14] as were the origins of adivasi tribes such as the Grasia and Bhilala, which descended from mixed Rajput and Bhil marriages.^{[15][16]} Unlike the subjugation of the Dalits, the adivasis often enjoyed autonomy and, depending on region, evolved mixed hunter-gatherer and farming economies, controlling their lands as a joint patrimony of the tribe.^{[17][18]} In some areas, securing adivasi approval and support was considered crucial by local rulers,^[19] and larger adivasi groups were able to sustain their own kingdoms in central India. The Gond Rajas of Garha-Mandla and Chanda are examples of an adivasi aristocracy that ruled in this region, and were "not only the hereditary leaders of their Gond subjects, but also held sway over substantial communities of non-tribals who recognized them as their feudal lords."^{[17][20]}

This relative autonomy and collective ownership of adivasi land by adivasis was severely disrupted by the advent of the Mughals in the early 16th century.

Rebellions against Mughal authority are the Bhil Rebellion of 1632 and the Bhil-Gond Insurrection of 1643^[21] which were both crushed by Mughal soldiers.

British period

From the very early days of British rule, the tribesmen resented the British encroachments upon their tribal system. They were found resisting or supporting their brethren of Tamar and Jhalda in rebellion. Nor did their raja welcome the British administrative innovations.^[22] Beginning in the 18th century, the British added to the consolidation of feudalism in India, first under the Jagirdari system and then under the zamindari system.^[23] Beginning with the Permanent Settlement imposed by the British in Bengal and Bihar, which later became the template for a deepening of feudalism throughout India, the older social and economic system in the country began to alter radically.^{[24][25]} Land, both forest areas belonging to adivasis and settled farmland belonging to non-adivasi peasants, was rapidly made the legal property of British-designated zamindars (landlords), who in turn moved to extract the maximum economic benefit possible from their newfound property and subjects.^[26] Adivasi lands sometimes experienced an influx of non-local settlers, often brought from far away (as in the case of Muslims and Sikhs brought to Kol territory)^[27] by the zamindars to better exploit local land, forest and labor.^{[23][24]} Deprived of the forests and resources they traditionally depended on and sometimes coerced to pay taxes, many adivasis were forced to borrow at usurious rates from moneylenders, often the zamindars themselves.^{[28][29]} When they were unable to pay, that forced them to become bonded labourers for the zamindars.^[30] Often, far from paying off the principal of their debt, they were unable even to offset the compounding interest, and this was made the justification for their children working for the zamindar after the death of the initial borrower.^[30] In the case of the Andamanese adivasis, long isolated from the outside world in autonomous societies, mere contact with outsiders was often sufficient to set off deadly epidemics in tribal populations,^[31] and it is alleged that some sections of the British government directly attempted to destroy some tribes.^[32]

Land dispossession and subjugation by British and zamindar interests resulted in a number of adivasi revolts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as the Santal hul (or Santhal rebellion) of 1855–56.^[33] Although these were suppressed ruthlessly by the governing British authority (the East India Company prior to 1858, and the British government after 1858), partial restoration of privileges to adivasi elites (e.g. to Mankis, the leaders of Munda tribes) and some leniency in tax burdens resulted in relative calm, despite continuing and widespread dispossession, from the late nineteenth century onwards.^[34] The economic deprivation, in some cases, triggered internal adivasi migrations within India that would continue for another century, including as labour for the emerging tea plantations in Assam.^[35]

<u>ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS (8.27%)</u>	<u>ANDHRA PRADESH (6.63%)</u>
<u>ARUNACHAL PRADESH (64.63%)</u>	<u>ASSAM (12.42%)</u>
<u>BIHAR (0.92%)</u>	<u>CHHATTISGARH (31.82%)</u>
<u>DADRA & NAGAR HAVELI (78.82%)</u>	<u>DAMAN & DIU (8.86%)</u>
<u>GOA (0.04%)</u>	<u>GUJARAT (14.79%)</u>
<u>HIMACHAL PRADESH (4.02%)</u>	<u>JAMMU & KASHMIR (10.98%)</u>
<u>JHARKHAND (26.34%)</u>	<u>KARNATAKA (6.55%)</u>
<u>KERALA (1.14%)</u>	<u>LAKSHADWEEP (94.60%)</u>
<u>MADHYA PRADESH (20.26%)</u>	<u>MAHARASHTRA (8.87%)</u>
<u>MANIPUR (38.96%)</u>	<u>MEGHALAYA (86.42%)</u>
<u>MIZORAM (94.19%)</u>	<u>NAGALAND (88.98%)</u>
<u>ORISSA (22.19%)</u>	<u>RAJASTHAN (12.57%)</u>
<u>SIKKIM (20.61%)</u>	<u>TAMIL NADU (1.05%)</u>
<u>TRIPURA (28.44%)</u>	<u>UTTAR PRADESH (0.07%)</u>
<u>WEST BENGAL (5.49%)</u>	

This is a list of Scheduled Tribes in India, as recognised the Constitution of the Indian Republic; a total of 645 district tribes.

HISTORICAL ORIGIN AND CULTURES OF DIFFERENT TRIBES OF INDIA

BHIL TRIBES (Fig 1)

Places they inhabit

Bhils are popularly known as the bow men of Rajasthan. They are the most widely distributed tribal groups in India. They forms the largest tribe of the whole South Asia. Bhils are mainly divided into two main groups the central or pure bills and eastern or Rajput Bhils. The central Bhils are found in the mountain regions in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujrat and Rajasthan. Bhils are also found in the north eastern parts of Tripura.

History

Bhils belong to the race of the pre-Aryans. The name 'Bhil' is derived from the word villu or billu, which according to the Dravidian language is known as Bow. The name Bhil is also finds mentioned in the great epic called Mahabharata and Ramayana. The Bhil women offered ber to Lord Rama, when he was wandering through the jungles of Dhandaka, searching Sita. The popular legend represents them as being descended from Nishada, son of Mahadev by the human female. Nishad was brutal and ugly, who killed his fathers bull and as the consequence he was banished to mountains and forests. During the ancient era they were considered as the great warriors who fought against the Mughals, Marathas and the Britishers .

Language and Costumes

Apart from other states, Bhils comprise 39% of Rajasthan's total population. speak Bhili, which is an Indo Aryan language. Bhil women wear traditional saris and the Bhil men wear loose long frock along with pyjama. The peasants wear turbans. Bhils also wear brass ornaments. Bhils are tall, well built with the handsome features. They are known for their truthfulness and simplicity. They love independence. They are brave and their National weapon is bow made of bamboo. Earlier they were the great haunters. They now practice agriculture as the source of livelihood.

Culture and Religion

Religion practice among the Bhils differs from place to place. Most of them worship local deities like Khandoba, Kanhoba, Bahiroba, and Sitalmata. Some of the worship Tiger God called 'vaghdev'. They have no temples of their own. They consult Badvas -the hereditary sorcerers on all the occasions. Bhils are highly superstitious tribal people. They have Bhagat or Gurus who perform the religious rites. They have a village headman, who deals with their disputes. Bhils strictly follow rules and regulations. They marry only in their own classes. Their close relationships are tightly based on mutual love and respect. They have rich cultural history and gives much importance to dance and music. Ghoomar is the most famous dance among the Bhils. Than Gair is the religious dance drama performed by the men in the month of Sharavana (July and August). The Bhils are talented in the sculptured work. They make beautiful horses, elephants, tigers, deities out of clay.

Fair and Festivals

The Baneshwar fair is the main festival celebrated among the Bhils. This fair is held during the period of Shivatri (in the month of January or February) and is dedicated to Baneshwar Mahadev also known as Lord Shiva. On this occasion Bhils gather all together set up camps on the banks of the Som and Mahi River. They perform dance around the fire and sing traditional songs. At night they all of them enjoy raslila at the Lakshmi Narayan temple. Cultural shows, magic shows, animal shows acrobatic feast are the main attraction of the fair. This fair is actually the combination of two fairs, which are held in reverence of Lord Shiva and the other one that commenced after the setting up of Vishnu temple by Jankunwari. Holy and Dusshera are the other major festivals celebrated among the Bhils in India.

GONDS TRIBE (Fig 2)

Places they inhabit

The Gonds are the tribal community mostly found in the Gond forests of the central India. They are widely spread in the Chhindwara District of Madhya Pradesh, Bastar district of Chhattisgarh and also in the parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Orissa. The name by which the Gonds call themselves is Koi or Koitur which means unclear. Gonds are one of the largest tribal group in the world

History of Gonds

Gonds finds mention in almost the historical books of India. Gonds settled in the Gondawa in the ninth and thirteenth century AD. In the fourteen century they ruled several parts of the central India. They built number of forts, palaces, temples, tanks and lakes during the rule of the Gonds dynasty. The Gondwana kingdom survived till late 16th century. Gond dynasties ruled in four kingdoms - Garha-Mandla, Deogarh, Chanda, and Kherla in the central India. Gonds have been the warriors since the British period. During the British regime in India, Gonds challenged the Britishers in several battles. They also gained control over the Malwa after the decline of the Mughals followed by the Marathas in the year 1690.

Language and Identification

Gonds tribe speaks Gondi language which is related to the Telgu and the other Dravidian languages. In the northern parts Gonds are often seen speaking the local Hindi and Marathi. Some of the Gonds in the southern parts also speak Parsi or Persian. Gonds are mainly divided into four tribes namely - Raj Gonds, Madia Gonds, Dhurve Gonds, Khatulwar Gonds. Gonds men wear Dhoti, which is the long piece of cotton cloth wrapped around the waist passing through the legs. Women wear soft cotton saris along with the Choli or blouse. The staple food of Gonds are the two millets known as Kodo or Kutki. Rice is the ceremonial feast of the Gonds, which they prefer eating during the time of festivals. Most of the Gonds are the meat consumers.

Religion

Gonds have been largely influenced by the Hindus and for the long time have been practicing the Hindu culture and traditions. Gonds are the worshippers of Janani or the mother of creator. They use the title Thakur. Gonds mainly worship Pharsa Pen, who is worshiped under the form of the nail and sometimes a piece of iron chain. Besides Pharsa Pen, they also believe in several other Gods namely Mariai – the Goddess of plague and other diseases, and Bhimsen – the Hindu God. Apart from these God and Goddess, there exist great number of deities and spirits in the beliefs of Gonds. According to them every hill, river, lake, tree is also inhabited by a spirit. They say that the earth, water and air are ruled by the great number of deities which must be appeased by sacrifices. They have priests (devari) who perform all the religious formalities on all the occasions. Gonds also pay homage to the Gods of household, Gods of Cattle, Gods of fields. Animal sacrifice on the religious occasions is the common practice among the Gonds.

Customs and Festivals: Gonds fair and festivals are influenced from the Hindu traditions. Keslapur Jatra is the important festival of the Gonds. In this festival they worship the snake deity called Nagoba, whose temple is found in the Keslapur village of Indervelly mandal of Adilabad district. Gusadi dance is the most famous dance performed by the Gonds. It is performed by wearing head gears decorated with the peacock feathers. They wear cotton cloth around their waist. They smear ash all over their body and beards made of animal hair are also important part of the dance costumes. Madai is another major festival celebrated among the Gonds. It is the festival when Gonds meet their relatives settled in various parts of the country. During this festival they also sacrifice goat beneath the sacred village tree to appease the tribal Goddess. In the night they enjoy liquor and dance along with the tribal music. Apart from this they also celebrate Hindu festival called Dusshera.

MUNDA TRIBE (Fig 3)

Places they inhabit

Munda tribe mainly inhabit in the region of Jharkhand, although they are well spread in the states of West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Orissa and Bihar. Munda generally means headman of the village.

Language and Physical Characteristics

Mundas speak Mundari language, which belongs to the family of Austro- Asiatic. The complexion of Mundas is blackish. They have short curly hair. With the passage of time some of the Mundas resembles same features as that of the Bengali's. Common surnames used among the Mundas includes Topno, Barla, Aind, Hemrom, Guria, Herenge, Surin, Horo, Sanga and Samad.

History of Mundas

Mundas are the tribal communities from the south East Asia. There are some evidences of the Mundas kingdom in the Pre British times. For example the Ho/Munda kingdom of Chota Nagpur, and the Bhumij states, especially Barabhum.

Religion

Christianity is the main religion followed among the Mundas. Apart from that Mundas have their own religion known as Sarna. Sarna stress on the belief of one God. Mundas believe in the supreme being known as the Singbonga, which means the Sun God. According to the Mundas, he saves them from the external enemies and troubles of life. They say Singbonga punishes them if they break the law of marrying in their ones tribe. Mundas are of the belief that Singbonga is not the jealous God and gives his people the right to worship any celestial being. In Sarna the Mundas worship the nature. The Mundas are highly superstitious people. The Sarna people do not have any written code of moral laws. The idea of what is right and wrong is the adopted from their traditions and cultures. Some of the Mundas also worship Lord Shiva.

Occupation of the Mundas

Mundas have remained hunters for centuries. But now they have been converted into the settled agriculturist. Most of the thens do not have land of their own. They are largely dependent on the labour work in the fields to earn their livelihood.

Food and Clothing of Mundas

Mundas have been the animal eaters for the long time. They usually eat frogs, snakes, rats, earthworms, shells and snails. They prefer having Tari and Haria wine on the various occasions. As the Mundas are in close touch with the Hindu society. Munda men usually wear pant and shirts. While the Munda Women are seen wearing the cotton saris with the cholis or blouse.

Festivals

Mage, Phagu, Karam, Sarhul, and Sohrai are the few festivals celebrated among the Munda tribes.

GREAT ANDAMANESE (Fig 4)

Places they inhabit

Great Andamanese is the negrito tribe inhabitant in the the Andaman group of Islands. They form the largest population among the other tribes found in these islands.

Language and Clothing

Jeru, Khora and Andamani Hindi are some of the languages spoken by the Great Andamanese. Great Andamanese men wear narrow belts or girdles of hibiscus fiber. They tuck weapons into their belts when they go for hunting. Men also wear traditional cincture decorated with shells. Great Andamanese women wear branches of leaves cut into stripes and held by belts made of pandanus leaves. Great Andamanese girl wear tail skirt. They also love painting their bodies, which also protects them from the daily insects, direct sunlight and cold temperature. They are fond of wearing human bones around their neck and forehead.

Physical characteristics

Great Andamanese are jet black in colour. They have broad face with the heavy body. They smear their head with the clay. Great Andamanese also cut their eyebrows. The women traditionally left only two narrow parallel bars from forehead to neck where the hair was allowed to grow longer than 3 mm. The men left a circular patch on top of the head, not more than 20 cm (8 inches) diameter, while shaving everything around the central patch.

History

Before the advent of the Britishers in India, there was the great population of Great Andamanese in the Andaman Islands. There were at least ten sub groups of the Great Andamanese. They had their own language, culture and traditions. But today most of their sub groups have extinct.

Population

According to the census the population of Great Andamanese in the year 1789 was around 10,000. In the year their population decreased to 626. According to the reports their population further decreased to 24 individuals in the year 1971. But in 1999 their number increased to 41. The government is taking huge steps for the survival of these tribal people.

Food

Great Andamanese are foragers. They eat rice, wheat, dal, chapati etc. They are also dependent on fish, dugong, turtle eggs, turtle, crabs, roots, seeds and tubers. They love eating pork and Andaman water monitor lizard.

Occupation

Great Andamanese have been hunters for many centuries. They hunt for food. They are also seen cultivating vegetables for their livelihood. They have also established poultry farms.

BHUTIA TRIBES (Fig.5)

Bhutia Places they inhabit

Bhutia tribes are of the Tibetan origin. They migrated to Sikkim around 16th century. In the northern part of the Sikkim where they are the major inhabitants, they are known as the Lachenpas and Lachungpas. Majority of the Bhutias are concentrated in the dry valley of the north Sikkim.

Language and Costumes

Bhutia tribes usually speak Sikkimese. Apart from that they also speak Lepcha, Bhutia, Nepali, English and Hindi. Bhutia male wear Bakhu which is a loose traditional dress with the full sleeves. While the women dress consists of Silken Honju, which is the full sleeves blouse and a loose gown type garment. Female also prefer wearing jewellery of pure Gold.

Population and Occupation

Bhutias forms 14% of the total population of Sikkim. They are extremely warm hearted and simple people. They prefer living in the joint families. A Bhutia house called Khin is usually built in the rectangular shape. Most Bhutia follow tantric Buddhism. The legal system among the Bhutias is termed as the Dzumsa, which means the rendezvous point of the common masses. Dzumsa is headed by Pipon who is the village headmen. It ensured law and order and is responsible for conservation practises such as grazing, cultivation programs and the seasonal development of the community. Agriculture is the main source of occupation among the Bhutias. While some of them are also herdsmen and the breeder of sheep and yaks.

Cuisine

Bhutias usually prefer rice with the animal fat. They are common beef eaters. Some of their traditional costumes include Momos, Gya Thuk, Ningro with Churpi, Sidra Ko Achar, Saelroti, Shimi Ko Achar, Pakku, Kodo Ko Roti, Phapar Ko Roti, Silam Ko Achar, Phulaurah Gundruk, Phagshapa, Sael Roti. They are also fond of Chaang (the millet beer). It is served in the special bamboo container called Tongba with the hollow pipe made of Bamboo.

Festivals

Losar and Losoong are the main festivals celebrated among the Bhutia tribes. Losar falls in the first week of the February. It marks the beginning of the Tibetan New Year. The act of Fire Metho takes place in the evening. Losoong marks the end of the harvest season and also the end of the Tibetan year. It falls in the end of the tenth Tibetan lunar month (in December). It is among the most important festival among the Bhutia tribes in India. Chaa dancing and merry making at the monasteries at Palace (Tsuklakhang), Phondong and Rumtek. Archery competition is the main attraction of the festival. They make offerings to the God and exchange feasts among each other. Stage fights and passing through the crowds with the fire torches add more excitement to the festival.

ANGAMI TRIBE (Fig. 6)

Places they inhabit

Angami tribe belongs to the extreme north eastern part of the country, in the state of Nagaland. Nagaland is made up of 20 tribes and Angami is one of the them.

Language and Clothing

Tenyidie is the most common language spoken among the Angamis in Nagaland. The total population of the Angamis is around 12 million. Agriculture is the main occupation. They cultivate rice and grains on the hilly terrains. The design of the clothes worn by the Angami men and women are quite different from each other. Men wear shawls called white Mhoushu and the black Lohe. The women wear Mechala - the wrap around skirt and shawls of unique designs and patterns. Both men and women enjoy wearing beautiful ornaments. Beads, miniature mask pendants, bangles and bracelets are most common among them all.

Religion

Christianity is the major religion followed among the Angami tribal people. Their religious system revolves around several supernatural forces of life associated with the life cycles. They regard several objects as embodied spirits and have sharply drawn the distinction between the Gods and the soul of the human bodies. They are the firm followers of Ayepi (who bring peace and prosperity in their lives).

Art and Craft Culture

Angamis are quite popular for their woodcraft and artwork. People all India know them as the producer of bamboo work, cane furniture, beds, shawls and powerful machetes. Angamis play great music with the help of drum and flute, which is passed on from one generation to the other. The simple and rhythmic music plays the important role in their rituals and festivals. Traditional dancing is the main component in Angami gennas. Angami women also practice pottery at their houses. They are expert basket makers. Pork with bamboo shoot is the common dish among the Angamis.

Festivals

Sekrenyi is the main festival celebrated among the Angamis in Nagaland. The festival falls in the month of February and marks the beginning of the lunar year. This ten day festival is also known as the Phousnyi among the local's people. The foremost ritual of the festival is Kizie, in which the few drops of the rice water taken from Zumho (top of the Jug), are carefully put into the leaves and placed at three main points of the post of the house by women. Next morning all the young men of the village get up early in the morning and take a bath in the village well. They adorn themselves with the new shawls (white Mhoushu and the black Lohe). This ceremony is known as Dzuseva. The main attraction of the festival is the Thekra Hie, where the young ones of the village gather all together to sing and dance to the tunes of the traditional music. The participants make fun and enjoy themselves with the rice bear and plates of meat. Haunting is the important excitement of the festival. The major part of the ceremony falls on the eighth day when the gate pulling or the bride pulling is performed.

SANTHAL TRIBES (Fig 7)

Places they inhabit

Santhals are the third largest tribe in India. They are mostly found in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Jharkhand and Assam.

History of Santhals

Santhals belong to the Pre Aryan period. They were the great fighters during the British regime in India. They waged war against the permanent settlement of Lord Cornwallis in 1855. During the late 1850 Santhals hero Sidhu had accumulated around 10 thousand Santhals to run parallel government against the British government. Baba Tilka Majhi was the first Santhal leader who raised weapons against the Britishers in 1789.

Language and Identification

Santhals speak Santhali, which belongs to the Austro- Asiatic language family. Santhals have their script called Olchiki, which was developed by Dr Raghunath Murmu in 1925. According to the census their population is around 49,000. They are generally bilingual. Apart from Santhali they also speak Bengali, Oriya and Hindi. Santhals have long head and flat nose. Their complexion varies from dark brown to black in colour. Santhals usually have curly hair.

Santhal Economic Status

The livelihood of the Santhals revolves around the forests they live in. They fulfill their basic needs from the trees and plants of the forests. Apart from this they are also engaged in the hunting, fishing and cultivation for their livelihood. Santhals possess the unique skills in making the musical equipments, mats and baskets out of the plants. This talent is safely passed on from one generation to the other.

Culture

Santhals love dancing. It is in their blood. Dance is the important part of the Santhals fairs and festivals. After the long day hard work, Santhals relax themselves with the light music and dance. Santhal women dress in the red bordered white sari and dance in the line sequence. Apart from dance Santhals play great music using Tirio (bamboo flute with the seven holes), Dhodro banam (which consists of belly called lac covered with an animal skin on which rests the bridge (sadam, lit, horse), an open chest (korom), a short neck (hotok) and a head (bohok), Phet banam (a fretless stringed instrument with three or four strings), Tumdak, Tamak, Junko and Singa.

Religion

Santhals have no temples of their own. They even do not worship any idols. Santhals follow the Sarna religion. The God and Goddess of Santhal are

Marangburu, Jaheraera, and Manjhi. Santhals pay respect to the ghosts and spirits like Kal Sing, Lakchera, Beudarang etc. They have village priests known as the Naiki and shaman Ujha. Animal sacrifices to the Gods is the common practice among the Santhals to appease the Gods and Goddess.

Festivals

Santhals mainly celebrate the Karam festival which falls in the month of September and October. They celebrate this festival to please the God to increase their wealth and free them from all the enemies. It is the tradition among the Santhals to grow the Karam tree outside their house after the purification process. Other festivals of the Santhal community include Maghe, Baba Bonga, Sahrai, Ero, Asaria and Namah. They also celebrate haunting festival called Disum sendra on the eve of Baishakhi Purnima.

CHENCHUS TRIBE (Fig. 8)

Places they inhabit

Chenchu inhabit in the Nallamalai hills, which have been the part of the Nagarjuna Sagar Tiger Sanctuary for centuries in Andhra Pradesh India. They are mainly found in the districts of Mahabubnagar, Nalgonda, Praksham, Guntur, and Kurnool.

History of Chenchus: The origin of the Chenchus, is connected with the Lord Mallikarjuna of the Srisailam temple, who was the personification of the Lord Shiva. Once their lived husband and wife in the small hut near the Srisailam temple. Both of them were very happy with their life but they had no children. They pay homage at number and temples and worshiped many deities but were in all vain. One day they of them were haunting in the forest. On returning back they found Lord Mallikarjuna in the forest and told him about their sorrow. Lord Mallikarjuna granted their wish on one condition that they would dedicate their child to him. They both agreed and after nine months when the women gave birth to the female child, she dedicated her to the Lord Mallikarjuna. In the three years of age the girl child left her parents and started living in the forests under the Chettu tree. As she was living under the chettu tree she was called as the Chenchita. One day, while roaming in the jungle she met Lord Mallikarjuna and felt in love with him. He was also attracted to the girl and married him. The descendants are called Chenchus, which means children of the girl who was living under the chettu tree.

Language and Resemblance

Chenchus talk in Chenchu language with the Telgu accent. Their language is also known as Chenchucoolam, Chenchwar, Chenswar or Choncharu. Chenchus have short height with long head, well defined eyebrows with the flat nose. They have jet black curly hair and their complexion varies from wheat gray to brown. Chenchus have broad faces. They are characterized by independence and personal freedom. Young people are free to marry whomsoever they like and can get apart whenever they like. Their present habitat is confined to the rocky hills of the in the Nallamalai hills, extending on both sides of the Krishna River. They live in bee hive shaped tiny huts with wattle walls. Chenchus are good climbers.

Culture and Economy

Chenchus live in the forest areas. They move in groups in the forests searching for the fruits, roots, tubers and honey. They make leaf cups and leaf plates out of tobacco leaves, tamarind, mahua flowers and sell them in the local market, where they are in the great demand. They also make use of the mahua flower in making the liquor, sell able in the market. Chenchus love smoking and make tobacco cigarettes consumed by themselves. Honey is the favourite among them all. Chenchus are good hunters; they can be seen haunting for the animals like deer, wild boar, rabbit, wild cock, rat and birds. They use bow and arrow for haunting. Apart from root, tubers, and fruits, Chenchus love eating money fresh.

Religion

Chenchus worship number of deities. They mainly believe in Bhagaban taru who lives in the sky and look after the Chenchus in all their doings. Another deity they worship is Garelamai Sama, who is the Goddess of forest. She is believed to protect them from the danger, especially when they are in the jungle. Apart from these they pay homage to Potsamma- the God who cures the diseases like the small pox and Chicken pox, Gangamma, the deity of water, Mayasamma, the deity who protects the Chenchus from enemies. Chenchus have also adopted certain religious practices from Hindus.

KHASI TRIBE (Fig. 9)

Places they inhabit

Khasi tribe is mainly found in the state of Assam and the Khasi Jaintia hills in Meghalaya and in the states of Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir. They are called by the different names such as Khasi Pahriss, Khuchia, Kassi, Khashi and Khasa. Khasi forms the large part of the population in the state of Meghalaya.

History of Khasi

It is said that the Khasis were earliest immigrant tribes who came from Myanmar, and settled down in the plains of east Assam. Earlier the Khasis had their own kingdom, until the Britishers exercised control over them. The word Khasi find mention in the Shankradeva's 'Baghavata Purana', an Indo Aryan literature.

Culture of Khasi

Khasis follow the unique culture. The property of the Khasis is passed on from the mother to the youngest daughter. Music plays an important part in the life of Khasis. The musical instruments of the Khasis include drums, guitars, flutes, wooden pipes, and metal cymbals. Khasis are also fond of dancing. Khasis are warm hearted people. They offer Kwai or the Beetle nut as the gesture of friendship on every visit. After marriage the groom comes to live at the brides house.

Language, Clothing and Identification

Khasis speak Khasi, which is an Austro- Asiatic language. It is the part of the Mon-Khmer group of languages. The Khasi men wears the long sleeveless coat known as Jymphong, which is without the collars. They also wear headgears or turbans. While the dress of Khasi women is much complex with several pieces of cloths. Khasis also love wearing jewelery. They wear silver or gold crown on their head. Khasi men wear large earrings. Womens also different earrings which are circular or oval shaped. Both men and women wear gold and silver chains around their waists. Khasis have brown to light

yellow skin. They have folds on their skin and have aquiline noses.

Religion of Khasi

Most of the Khasis follow Christianity as the religion. The Khasi believe in the supreme creator God U Blei Nong-thaw. According to the Khasis this feminine Goddess protects them from all the troubles of the life. Among the Khasis the following major spirits are worshiped Ulei Muluk (god of the state); Ulei Umtang (god of drinking water and cooking water); Ulei Longspah (god of wealth); and O Ryingkew or U Basa Shnong (tutelary deity of the village).

Cuisine of Khasi

Rice is the staple food of the Khasis. Apart from that they also take fish and meat. On the ceremonial occasions they love drinking Rice beer.

Festivals

Nongkrem is the major festival celebrated among the Khasis. This five day religious festival falls in the month of November every year. It is popularly known as the Ka Pomblang Nongkrem. Another major festival celebrated among the Khasis is known as the Shad Suk Mynsiem. This festival lasts for the three days celebrated in the month of April.

Conclusion

Most tribes are concentrated in heavily forested areas that combine inaccessibility with limited political or economic significance. Historically, the economy of most tribes was subsistence agriculture or hunting and gathering. From the above findings and discussion it can be said that despite the drastic changes due to urbanization and industrialization the different tribes of India is still maintaining its religion and culture. We can conclude that in spite of the fast pace of modernization the tribal people are still maintaining their traditional religion, values and culture.

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Fig. 1



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4



Fig 5



Fig 6



Fig 7



Fig 8

Fig 9

