



TRIBALS IN INDIA WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO TRIBES OF MADHYA PRADESH

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Abstract:

The indigenous people, recognized as the original inhabitants of our nation, have led a straightforward existence deeply rooted in the natural surroundings. Over centuries, they have cultivated cultural traditions that harmonize with both their physical and social milieu. References to such tribal communities can be traced back to ancient literature, including the periods of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. As per L.P. Vitharthi, a tribe is characterized as a social entity marked by specific traits such as a defined territory, a shared name, common lineage, a shared culture, endogamous practices, collective taboos, and a distinctive social and political system. Moreover, tribes place unwavering trust in their leaders and often achieve self-sufficiency within their local economies. Tribal groups can be found in ancient literature, such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This suggests that tribal communities have a longstanding history in the region. Tribal groups can be found in ancient literature, such as the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. This implies that tribal communities have a rich historical presence in the region. Globally, there are around two hundred million tribal individuals, making up approximately 4% of the world's population. It also notes that tribal populations are often among the poorest communities worldwide. In India, as of the latest census of 2011, Scheduled Tribes (STs) make up 8.65% of total population. However, the distribution of ST populations has a significant variation across different states and territories, with states like Lakshdweep and Mizoram having a high percentage of STs (close to 95%), while states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu have a lower percentage (1%). However the absolute tribal population is found in Madhya Pradesh. The majority of tribal communities in India reside in remote areas, including forested hills and rough terrain in plateau regions. The highest absolute tribe population is found in Madhya Pradesh. The country is home to around 700 different tribes, showcasing significant diversity among these groups. Diversity is observed among various tribal groups, with certain ones categorized as particularly vulnerable, often referred to as primitive tribes. Following Indian independence, a range of policies and programs were introduced in tribal regions. These endeavors were designed to tackle the unique needs and difficulties encountered by tribal communities, leading to significant impacts on their socio-economic circumstances.

Tribe:

As per the Oxford Dictionary, a tribe is defined as a collective of individuals in a primitive or less advanced stage of development. These groups recognize the leadership of a chief and generally perceive themselves as sharing a common ancestry. A tribe is a social unit characterized by common traits like using a shared language, having a system of governance, collaborating for mutual goals, sharing a collective identity, inhabiting a connected territory, maintaining a relatively consistent culture or lifestyle, and preserving a tradition of shared lineage.

According to A.B. Bardhan, a tribe is characterized as a social-cultural entity existing at a particular historical phase of advancement. It is viewed as a singular endogamous community with a cultural and psychological composition that can be traced back to a distant historical period.

As per Majumdar, a tribe comprises families or groups that share a common designation. Individuals within the tribe reside in the same geographical area, communicate in the same language, observe specific restrictions related to marriage and professional activities, and possess a well-organized system of mutual obligations and reciprocity.

Tribes in Madhya Pradesh:

The state of Madhya Pradesh came into its present form on 1st November, 2000. It has been nicknamed 'Heart of India'. It is located between the latitudes of 21° 6' North to 26° 30' North and longitudes of 74° 9' East to 82° 48' East. It ranks as the second-largest state in the country in terms of land area and the sixth-largest in population.

The present state of Madhya Pradesh comprises the parts of Udaipur-Gwalior region, Bundelkhand region, Vindhyanchal-Baghelkhand region and Malwa region as demarcated by Singh (1971). As per Census 2011, the total rural population of Madhya Pradesh is 525.57 lakh people (72.3 percent) of which 142.77 lakh person (27.16 percent) are scheduled tribe comprising 71.88 lakh males (50.35 percent) and 70.89 lakh females (49.65 percent). Madhya Pradesh has a significant tribal population. Hence, every fifth person in Madhya Pradesh belongs to the scheduled tribes. The highest proportion of scheduled tribe population has been recorded

in the Alirajpur district (93.43 percent), while the lowest rural population has been found in the Bhand district (0.11 percent) of Madhya Pradesh.

Family Structure and Education:

The majority of the tribal population in Pachamalai hill region belong to nuclear families. Additionally, a significant portion of the population is reported as being uneducated, suggesting lower levels of formal education within the community.

Economic Dependence: The economic condition of tribes is generally dependent on agriculture, forest-related activities, and labour. Half of the population is engaged in agriculture, and 25 percent are involved in forest work.

Income Levels:

The monthly income of the majority of the people in the tribal community falls within the range of Rs. 1000-2000. This indicates a relatively modest income level for a significant portion of the population.

Government Assistance:

A small portion of the population receives aid from the government. The passage suggests that lack of awareness among the tribes might be a factor contributing to the low uptake of government assistance programs.

Health Challenges:

The health, nutrition, and medico-genetic issues faced by tribal communities are characterized as distinctive and present a significant challenge. A considerable portion of the population is affected by typhoid, and there are additional health concerns including chickenpox, malaria, and whooping cough.

Healthcare Seeking Behaviour:

More than half of the people with health issues seek treatment from government hospitals. Additionally, a quarter of them opt for traditional treatments, indicating a mix of modern and traditional healthcare practices within the community.

The majority of Madhya Pradesh's tribal communities reside in houses constructed from mud, bamboo wood, and thatch. A distinctive aspect of these dwellings is the presence of a small granary for each house, resembling a miniature hut within the courtyard, providing storage space. Initially, these houses were not equipped with tiles or terraces, but in recent times, some villages have witnessed the emergence of tiled and terraced houses.

Utensils:

Primary Use of Earthen Vessels: The predominant choice of utensils among the tribes is earthen vessels. This suggests a traditional and cultural preference for utensils made from natural materials such as clay.

Limited Use of Metal Utensils:

While earthen vessels are the usual choice, the passage notes that a few metal utensils are also noticed. The specific metals mentioned are Brass and Aluminum, indicating a limited but existing use of metallic kitchenware within the tribal communities. Abundant firewood is sourced in the hilly region, making it a primary fuel source.

Ornaments for Both Genders:

Both men and women among Scheduled tribes of Madhya Pradesh wear ornaments made of gold and other metals, showcasing a shared cultural practice in adorning themselves.

Gold Ornaments for Women:

Women wear specific gold ornaments, including "Lolakku," a gold earring, and "Kappu," a gold bracelet. These ornaments contribute to the aesthetic sense and personal adornment of women.

Gold Earring for Men:

Men also wear a specific gold ornament called "Kadukkan," described as a golden earring. This indicates that men, too, engage in the practice of wearing gold ornaments, emphasizing the cultural significance of such adornments.

Women's Attire:

Regardless of their economic status (rich or poor), women wear sarees. The saree is a traditional and versatile garment commonly worn by women in various regions of India.

Men's Attire:

Men, on the other hand, wear a combination of garments. The specified attire for men includes a loin cloth, shirt, and turban. Additionally, it is mentioned that a few men also wear dhotis, which are another traditional garment commonly worn by men in India.

Dress Uniformity:

A certain level of uniformity in the traditional dress across different economic classes. Both rich and poor women wear sarees, while men typically wear a combination of a loin cloth, shirt, and turban, with some opting for dhotis.

Meal Frequency:

The community members eat three meals a day, aligning with the typical eating habits of people in the region.

Main Components of Meals:

The main components of their meals include "kali" or gruel. Occasionally, they eat the residue of rice cooked the previous night, although this is noted to be rare.

Lunch Composition: For their midday meal, they often have kali and gruel, accompanied by greens. Kali refers to a type of porridge or gruel crafted from various grains.

Dinner Composition: The evening meal typically consists of rice or kali, with kali prepared using grains like ragi, jowar, or maize. It is commonly served alongside side dishes such as pickles and greens.

Worship:

The tribal people of Madhya Pradesh adhere to traditional beliefs, worshipping a pantheon of gods and goddesses. They actively participate in various festivals such as Gal, Bhagoriya, Nabai, Chalawani, Jatra, and Hindu festivals. Notably, the Bhagoriya Festival is celebrated eight days before Holi, during the month of Kartik, predominantly in the regions of west Malwa and Nimar.

During Bhagoriya, tribal youth express their love and often elope. The couple refrains from returning until their families agree to their marriage, adhering to a longstanding tradition. The major deities revered by these tribes include Sheetla, Ambika, Bairah, Mahadev, and Laxmandev. The predominant religion among Bhils is Hinduism, with more than 90% practicing this faith. Those who converted to Islam are referred to as Tadvi Bhils, who also incorporate the worship of the bow.

The Korku tribe predominantly resides in the southern areas of Madhya Pradesh, along the Tapti River and its tributaries, covering districts such as Hoshangabad, Betul, Chhindwara, and Seoni. In contrast, the Paridhi tribe is located in the central part of the state, spanning districts like Bhopal, Raisen, Ashoknagar, Guna, and Sehore..

Engaging in Jhum cultivation, also known as the Weber or Podu system, the Korku tribe practices exorcism rituals and collects minor forest produce like honey and Harra. Additionally, they are involved in fishing and hunting activities and employ oxen for cultivation. The agricultural land is termed as Baiga Chak in Dindori-Mandala and Godi Kachar in Shahdol, showcasing the diversity of cultural practices and traditions among these tribal communities.

Festivals:

Celebrated in November, Deepavali holds immense significance among the local populace. An intriguing aspect of this festival is the inclusion of customs that involve the shooting of animals or birds. During the festivities, villages come alive with large gatherings, and traditional games, such as hunting, take center stage.

One distinctive practice during Deepavali involves bullfighting, where cattle are released from specially constructed enclosures. The bulls are allowed to run until they tire, and then they are captured one by one in a display of skill and tradition.

Remarkably, these customs are not confined to tribal communities alone; non-tribal people also actively participate, suggesting a noteworthy level of cultural exchange and shared traditions among diverse communities in the region. This intermingling of customs adds a layer of richness to the cultural tapestry, fostering a sense of shared heritage and celebration.

Conclusion:

In light of the presented facts, this study endeavored to examine the socio-economic characteristics of tribes in India, specifically focusing on those belonging to Madhya Pradesh. In conclusion, the findings reveal that the socio-economic conditions of tribes in Madhya Pradesh have experienced only partial development.

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