

# Session 1: TRIBES IN INDIA



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# TRIBES IN INDIA



# INTRODUCTION

- The word “tribal” or Adivasi brings to our mind a picture of half-naked men and women, with arrows and spears in their hands, feathers in their heads, and speaking an unintelligible language.
- There were communities still living in line with their traditional values, customs and beliefs, where they could continue to live in peace with Nature and their unpolluted environment.
- These communities variously as *natives, Aborigines, Adivasis, Tribals, Indigenous and un-contacted people* etc.
- In India, we mostly refer them as Adivasis/Girijans.



- The transformation among tribal society is very slow. That is why they have been backward and poor in comparison to other communities.
- Today, the governments of all over the world are paying special attention towards the development of the tribal.
- Number of inclusive policies and programmes are being run by the governments to connect tribals with mainstream of the world.



# Defining a Tribe

- The term, “tribe” originated around the time of the Greek city-states and the early formation of the Roman Empire.
- The Latin term, “tribus” has since been transformed to mean, “A group of persons forming a community and claiming descent from a common ancestor”.
- The Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1911, defines a tribe as a “collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous though originally it might have been so”.



- Another definition of a tribe by D.N. Majumdar (1961, 367) is that “a tribe is a collection of families or group of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations



- Tribals in India were considered to be as “backward class” and until 1919 they were termed as “depressed class”.
- The census of India accorded the different nomenclature for tribals, in 1931 census referred them as “primitive tribes”, 1941 census as “tribes” and 1951 census as “scheduled tribes”.
- The Constitution of India refers to such communities as „Schedule Tribes“.



- Article 366 (25) defined scheduled tribes as "such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution".
- The criterion followed for specification of a community, as scheduled tribes are indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness. This criterion is not spelt out in the Constitution but has become well established.





## Geographical and Demographic Profile

- **Census of 2011:** Total population of Scheduled Tribes is 10,42,81,034 persons, constituting 8.6 per cent of the population of India.
- **Draft National Tribal Policy, 2006** records **698 Scheduled Tribes** in India. As per the **Census of India 2011**, the number of individual groups notified as Scheduled Tribes is 705.



- The five broad regional groupings of tribes: **Himalayan Region** (a) North-eastern
- (a) Himalayan region, (b) Central Himalayan region, and (c) North-Western Himalayan region), **Middle Region** (Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh where more than 55 per cent tribal people of India live), **Western Region** (Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra and Nagar Haveli), **Southern region** (Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala), **Island Region** (Andaman and Nicobar in the Bay of Bengal and Lakshadweep in the Arabian Sea).



- **Northeast** is often viewed as a singular and homogeneous entity, the region is highly diverse with over 200 tribes and sub-tribes, each of which have their own language, culture and political structures.
- Northeast differs from tribes in other parts of India, particularly in terms of their **historical relationship with the colonial and Indian State.**
- The Islands are administered as a Union Territory under the Central Government and are home to some of the smallest tribes such as the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa and the Sentinelese.



## Language:

- **Indo-European**-only a little over one per cent of tribal population speak languages of this family, the Bhil and Halbi tribes being the two main groups among them.
- **Dravidian family** languages are spoken by tribes such as the Gond, Khond, Koya, Oraon, and Toda.
- **Tibeto-Burman** languages are spoken by the tribes of the Himalayas and Northeast India.
- **Austro-Asiatic** family of languages is spoken only by tribals in the country like the Santhal, Munda, and Ho.
- Scheduled Tribes communities live in about 15% of the country's area.



- The sex ratio among the Scheduled Tribes is 991 females to every 1000 males in rural areas and 980 females to every 1000 males in urban areas, the average being 990.
- Regarding the distribution of ST population by States, Madhya Pradesh stands first with 14.7%, followed by Maharashtra (10.1%), Odisha (9.2%), Rajasthan (8.9%), Gujarat (8.6%), Jharkhand (8.3%), Chhattisgarh (7.5%), Andhra Pradesh (5.7%), West Bengal (5.1%), Karnataka (4.1%), Assam (3.7%), Meghalaya (2.5%), and the remaining States represent 11.6% of the tribal population.
- Proportion of ST population in the rural areas is 11.3% and in urban areas is 2.8%.



## Distribution of Tribes in India

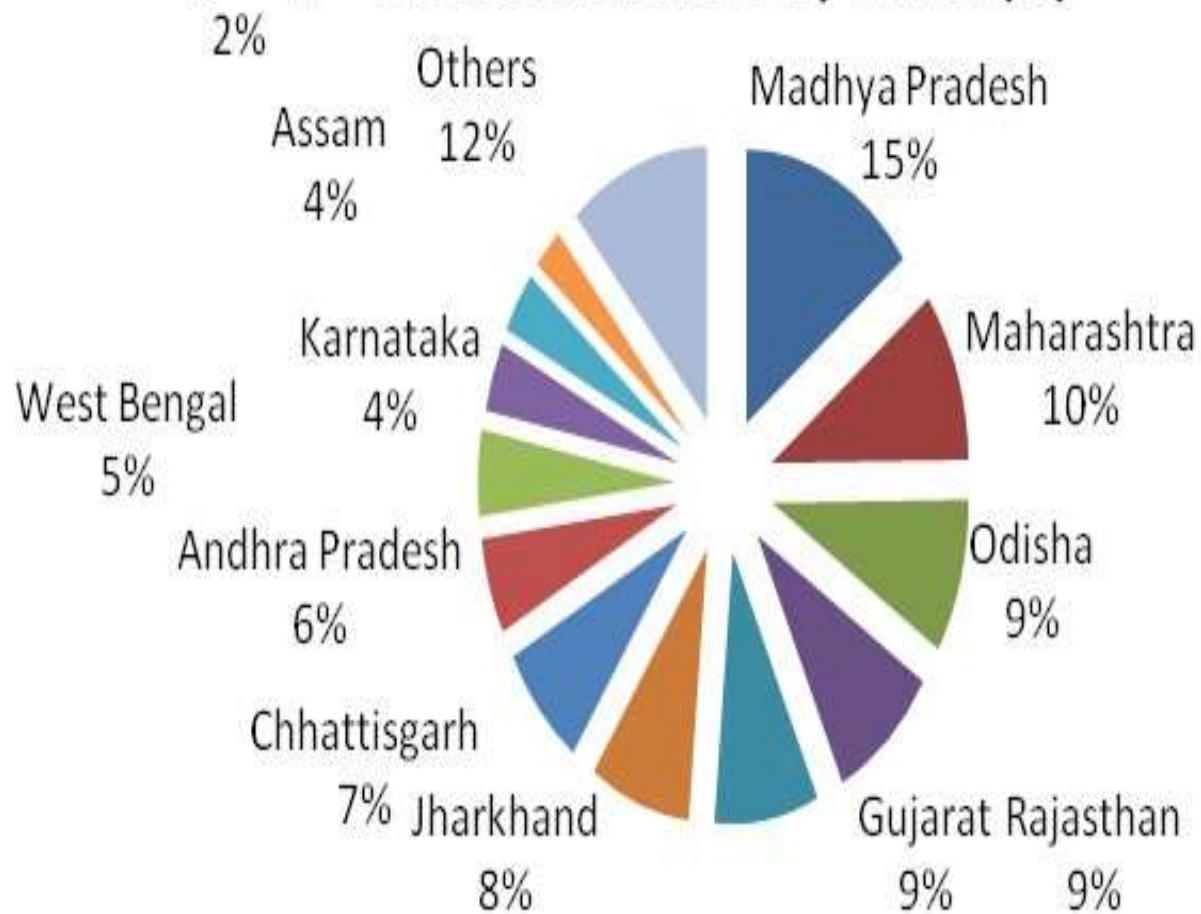
- The Scheduled Tribes are notified in 31 States/UTs.
- The tribal population of the country, as per 2011 census, is 10.43 crore, constituting 8.61% of the total population. 89.97% of them live in rural areas and 10.03% in urban areas.
- The decadal population growth of the tribal"s from Census 2001 to 2011 has been 23.66% against the 17.69% of the entire population.



- Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland are the 3 states of India where 100 % of tribal population living in tribal areas. We have 32% tribal area in India. The sex ratio for the overall population of India is 940 females per 1000 males and that of Scheduled Tribes 990 females per thousand males. At the district level, 2011 Census reveals that there are 90 districts where ST population is 50 per cent or more. As per Census 2001, this number was 75 districts. Out of these 90 districts, 48 districts are in 8 North Eastern States. All the districts in Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland have more than 60% of ST Population. Madhya Pradesh has the largest number of ST"s contributing 14.69% to the total percentage of ST population of India .
- No community has been specified as Scheduled Tribe in relation to the State of Haryana and Punjab and Union Territories of Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry.



## Distribution of STs by States (%)





# Characteristics of Tribal People In India

- Kinship as an instrument of social bonds.
- A lack of hierarchy among men and groups.
- Absence of strong, complex, formal organization.
- Communitarian basis of land holding.
- 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
- A distinct psychological bent for enjoying life.



**Endogamous Group:** Tribal people generally do not marry outside their tribe and marriage within the tribe is highly appreciated and much applauded. But the pressing effects of changes following the forces of mobility have also changed the attitude of tribals and now, inter-tribe marriages are becoming more and more common.



**Protection Awareness:** Tribal people always need protection from intrusion and infiltration and for this a single political authority is established and all the powers are vested in this authority.

- The safety of the tribal is left to the skill and mental power of the person enjoying political authority. The tribal chief is aided by a tribal committee, in the events of contingencies.
- Tribe is divided into a number of small groups and each group is headed by its own leader. The chief of a group works according to the directives received by him from



## **Rudimentary type of Religion:**

Tribes believe in certain myths and a rudimentary type of religion. Further, they believe in totems signifying objects having mystic relationship with members of the tribe.

**Egalitarian Values:** The tribal social organization is based on the egalitarian principle. Thus there are no institutionalized inequalities like the caste system or sex based inequalities. Thus men and women enjoyed equal status and freedom. However some degrees of social inequality may be found in case of tribal chiefs or tribal kings who enjoy a higher social status, exercise political power and possess wealth.

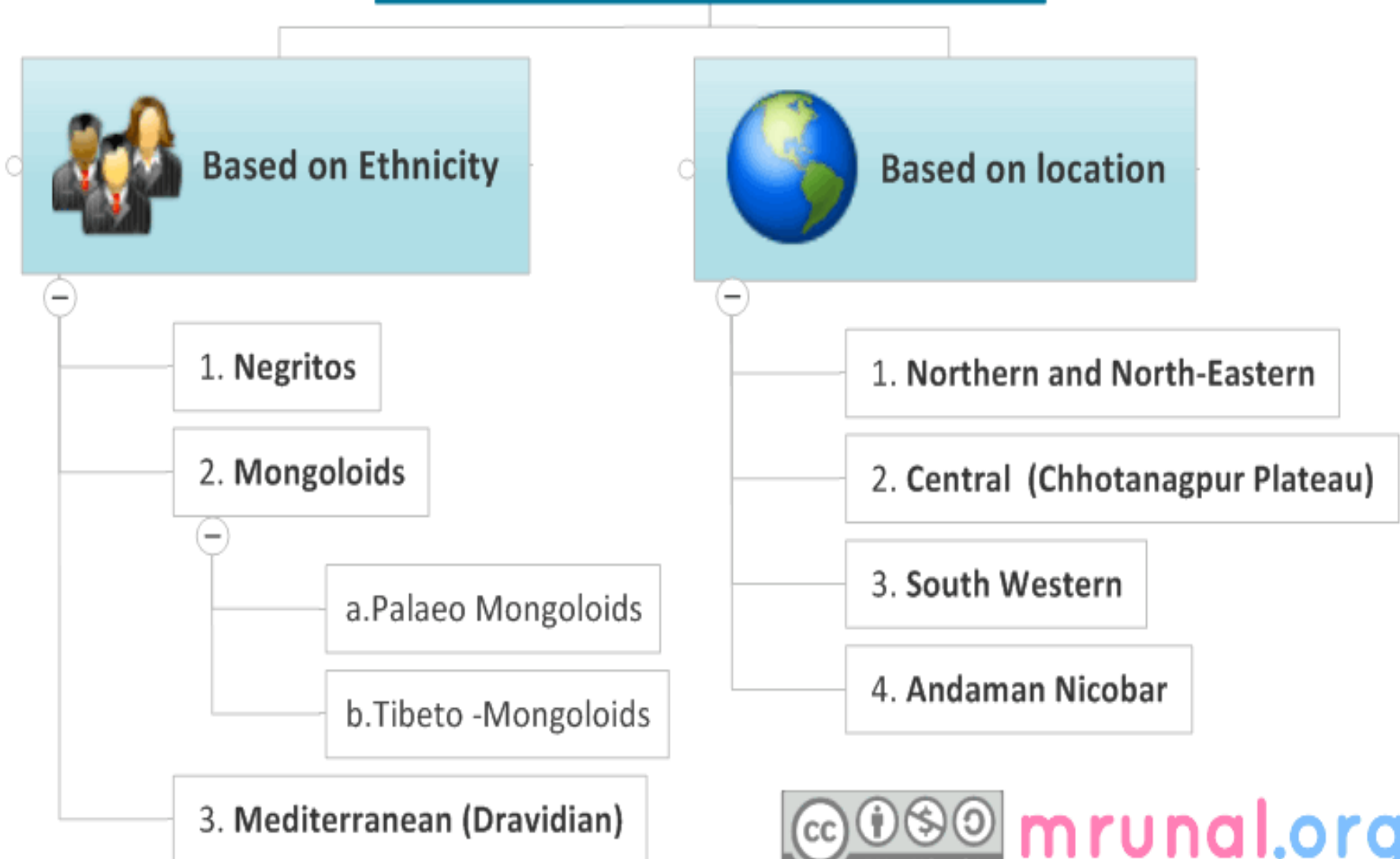


**Distinct Political Organization:** Every tribe has its own distinct political organisation which looks after the interests of tribal people. The whole political authority lies in the hands of a tribal chief. In some tribes, tribal committees exist to help the tribal chief in discharging his functions in the interests of the tribe



# Racial, Cultural and Economic Classification of Tribes in India

## Classification of Tribals in India



## Why do we study tribes

It is important to know about the tribes because tribal people are considered to be the best conservationists and they have managed their cultivable lands for many generations.

They help us to help

- 1. protect our environment,**
- 2. fight climate change,**
- 3. build resilience to natural disasters.**



# 1. Their traditional agricultural practices are resilient to climate change

Throughout the centuries, indigenous peoples have developed agricultural techniques that are adapted to extreme environments, like the high altitudes of the Andes, the dry grasslands of Kenya or the extreme cold of northern Canada. These time-tested techniques, like terracing that stops soil erosion or floating gardens that make use of flooded fields, mean that they are well-suited for the increasingly intense weather events and temperature changes brought on by climate change.





## **2. They conserve and restore forests and natural resources**

Indigenous peoples see themselves as connected to nature and as part of the same system as the environment in which they live. Natural resources are considered shared property and are respected as such. By protecting natural resources, like forests and rivers, many indigenous communities help mitigate the impacts of climate change.



### 3. Indigenous foods expand and diversify diets

The world currently relies very heavily on a small set of staple crops. Wheat, rice, potatoes and maize represent 50 percent of daily calories consumed. With nutritious, native crops like [quinoa](#), [oca](#) and [moringa](#), the food systems of indigenous peoples can help the rest of humanity expand its narrow food base.



## 4. Indigenous foods are resilient to climate change

Because many indigenous peoples live in extreme environments, they have chosen crops that have also had to adapt. Indigenous peoples often grow native species of crops that are better adapted to local contexts and are often more resistant to drought, altitude, flooding, or other extreme conditions. Used more widely in farming, these crops could help build the resilience of farms now facing a changing, more extreme climate.



## **5. Indigenous territories hold 80 percent of the world's biodiversity**

Preserving biodiversity is essential for food security and nutrition. The genetic pool for plants and animal species is found in forests, rivers and lakes and pastures. Living naturally sustainable lives, indigenous peoples preserve these spaces, helping to uphold the biodiversity of the plants and animals in nature.



## **6. Indigenous peoples' lifestyles are locally adapted and respectful of natural resources**

Indigenous peoples have adapted their lifestyles to fit into and respect their environments. In mountains, indigenous peoples' systems preserve soil, reduce erosion, conserve water and reduce the risk of disasters. In rangelands, indigenous pastoralist communities manage cattle grazing and cropping in sustainable ways that preserve rangeland biodiversity. In the Amazon, ecosystems improve when indigenous people inhabit them.



# Conclusion

- Tribals are among the most deprived and oppressed sections of India. Half of the adivasi people do not have land.
- Poverty, deprivation and now the reduction of government expenditure on basic medical health facilities is reflected the absolutely poor health condition of adivasi women and children.



- India has several laws and constitutional provisions, such as the Fifth Schedule for mainland India and the Sixth Schedule for certain areas of north-east India, which recognize indigenous peoples' rights to land and self-governance.
- The laws aimed at protecting indigenous peoples have, however, numerous shortcomings and their implementation is far from satisfactory.



# Questions-

- What are tribal people in India called ?
- Base on locations in how many major parts are Tribals classified in?
- Define any two distinctive features of Tribals.
- What is the significance of Tribal communities?

