
UNIT 28 TRIBES AND MODERNISATION IN INDIA

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28.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit, you will be able to

- discuss the contacts of the tribal populations with non-tribal social groups
- describe the nature of the British Policy towards the tribals
- give examples of specific tribal groups for showing different levels of modernisation among them
- identify some aspects of modernisation in relation to the tribal societies in India.

28.1 INTRODUCTION

After discussing social structure and religion of the tribal societies in India, we now examine the impact of the process of modernisation on them. Before proceeding to discuss the tribal societies of India in relation to modernisation process

a point of caution needs to be inserted here. Tribes in India are characterised by extreme heterogeneity, being placed at different levels of social and economic development. Each one has reacted differently to the forces of modernisation. Some have become devastated as they came into contact with highly developed societies. In contrast, there are some who have richly benefited from the gains of modernisation. Because of differential impact the tribals have received, it is hazardous to generalise, although some of the basic trends of modernisation and change may be conveniently outlined. To give an idea of differing impacts of modernisation, we shall first describe the heterogeneous character of the tribal societies and see how in anthropology a tribe is conceptualised in relation to its contacts with other tribal and non-tribal groups. Secondly, we will give some case studies to show the nature of modernisation in the tribal groups from different parts of India. Then we will discuss different aspects of modernisation in relation to the tribal societies.

28.2 SCHEDULED TRIBES IN INDIA

Scheduled Tribes in India constitute, according to 1981 Census, 8 per cent of the total population, divided into 427 communities, and inhabiting almost all the regions and parts of India. By 1991 they were 8.10 per cent of the total population (Census of India, 1991) with 533 communities of which 75 were said to be primitive tribes. They widely differ in their demographic and cultural characteristics. The Great Andamanese number only in two digits the Toda are in three digits; Hill Miri (Arunachal Pradesh) are in four digits; there are Chenchu in five digits; Saora constitute a population of six digits; the Gond are more than 4 million, and so are the Santal and Bhil. Santal, Gond, Bhil and Munda are plough-cultivators; Rabari (Gujarat) are pastoralists; Chenchu are hunters and food-gatherers; Maler (Rajmahal Hills) are shifting cultivators like some of the tribes of the North-East. The large, plough-cultivating tribes are not different from the peasants (Beteille 1974: 58-74). They are politically conscious, aware of their rights, and their level of modernisation and development is relatively high. They have come to be known as *haldar* (owner of the plough), *Kisan* (peasant), *Kashtkar* (tiller of the land) in different areas. They have also responded to modern education. In independent India, they have started taking advantage of the policy of reservation. Similarly, the tribes of the North-East have modernised by seeking advantages of the educational institutions.

But such is not the situation with a large number of other tribes especially what are called 'minor' ones. Some of them, especially the tribes of Andaman Islands (Jarawa, Onge, Great Andamanese, Shompen, and Sentinel) and Toda, are facing the problem of declining numbers and extinction. During the Fifth Five-Year Plan, it was felt that the benefits of state-sponsored modernisation and development activities were being chiefly monopolised by the big tribes, thus the gulf between them and the other smaller tribes was widening. The need was to have special schemes for them. From the list of Scheduled Tribes, the communities which were educationally and socially backward and nearly isolated, surviving at a pre-agricultural level, and had a declining or near-constant population, were separately placed in a list of Primitive Tribes. There were 72 such communities in India in 1981. In the year 2003, 75 communities were termed as primitive. The degree of modernisation amongst them is low. As their number has been less, with people

living in dispersed villages, most of these tribes have not been able to form 'associations' that could exercise pressure on the state or central government. Some of them have 'associations' but they are concerned with social reforms rather than acting as effective pressure groups.

Check Your Progress 1

i) Give examples of the Indian Tribes, which follow the following types of occupation; a) Hunting and food gathering, (b) Cattle rearing, (c) Shifting cultivation, and (d) Plough cultivation. Use two lines for your answer.

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ii) Name, in two lines, at least six of the tribes called minor.

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iii) How many 'Primitive Tribes' are there in India in 2003? Use one line for your answer.

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28.2.1 Contacts of the Tribal Societies with Other Tribal and Non-tribal Social Groups

In anthropology, a tribe was conceptualised as a relatively isolated or semi-isolated community. Such a community had its own cultural system being defined by self-sufficiency, political autonomy, a well-demarcated territory, a common dialect, folklore and deities. It had a sense of belongingness to the same group. The geographic and cultural isolation of a tribe, thus defined, had implications for methodology. A tribe could be studied in itself without necessarily referring to other exterior social units. If a tribe was 'whole society' the peasant constituted 'part-society' with 'part-culture'. Such a neat formulation of 'tribe' as juxtaposed to 'peasant' was an ideal representation, far from both historical and contemporary reality.

A large number of examples were offered to show that a tribe was never completely isolated. It entered into a set of relationship with its neighbouring communities, tribals as well as non-tribals (Bose 1971: 4; Dube 1977: 2). The relationship in some cases was of intense hostility, punctuated with cases of periodic raids (as was the case with the tribes of Naga Hills). Or some economic exchanges obtained between independent tribes, a classical example of which was described by Mandelbaum (1955: 223-254; 1972: 600-1) from the tribes of Nilgiri Hills. Notwithstanding these relations between independent tribes, each one of them was a cultural whole, if not a cultural isolate.

And moreover, the inter-tribal relations did not contribute to vast magnitudes of acculturative changes. In spite of sharing the same geographic and ecological zones, each tribe maintained its own identity and cultural patterns. For example, in several tribal villages of Ranchi, Oraon and Munda live together. They may have faith in the local holy men. For instance, the holy man (Baba) of Kamre village (Ranchi district) was 'worshipped' by both Oraon and Munda. But the historic facts of

living together and several cross-cutting ties did not mitigate the inter-tribal cultural and linguistic differences: Oraon speak Kurukh which is Dravidian while Munda belong to the Austro-Asiatic branch of linguistic groups in India.

Besides the inter-tribal relations, the tribal settlements close to caste Hindu villages had exchange relations on the pattern of *jajmani* with other patron and occupational castes (Dumont 1962: 120-2; Sinha 1965: 57-83). As a result, some of the tribal communities came to call themselves *Adivasi jati*. Once they entered into service relations with other jati, they also started incorporating certain Hindu deities and the elements of Hindu **cosmology**. Gradually, the little tradition of the tribals became a part of the great tradition of the Hindus. But such an absorption of the tribals in the caste system, as Bose (1971) has described it, did not signal the beginning of their modernisation, which actually began when they came in contact with the wider world? the world that had already undergone qualitative changes because of the colonial rule.

28.2.2 The Tribals and the British Policy

The British policy towards the tribals had two major elements. Firstly, it favoured isolation of the tribal areas from the mainstream (Bhowmick 1980; Chaudhuri 1982). Thus was given the concept of 'excluded' and/or 'partially excluded areas'. Because the British tribal policy was political and colonial, the British administrators feared, that if these tribals (bow-and-arrow armed tribals were often labelled as militant, unruly and *jungle*) were to have contact with the mainstream of Indian society, the freedom movements would gain further strength. In this background it seemed logical to them to isolate, administratively and politically, the regions that had predominantly tribal populations.

Secondly, at the level of reform, the British administration was interested in 'civilising' these people. In an **ethno-centric** assessment, the tribals were viewed at par with stage of bestiality. The classical theory of evolution, which had gripped academic attention in late nineties and early twenties, had treated the 'contemporary primitives' as the remnants or survivals of the early stages of humanity, savagery and barbarism. In the words of Sir E.B. Tylor, these people inhabiting the hilly or forested terrain with sparse population and difficult communication were 'social **fossils**'; a study of whom would illuminate the prehistoric phases of human existence.

The intellectual climate about the historical and evolutionary place of these 'primitives' considerably influenced the political action. Missionaries were sent to some of the difficult areas inhabited by these people. Animism, as the tribal religion was often characterised, was replaced by one or the other denomination of Christianity. Schools were opened up, and obviously English was opted as the main language of instruction. Along with came the Western medical system, which slowly started exorcising the traditional practices of cure. Styles of life and ways of behaviour began changing. And they became very conspicuous in dress patterns, especially of men.

The Westernisation of tribals had begun. Here, two things need to be mentioned. Not all tribes were subjected to the efforts of modernisation. There were many which continued to survive in their traditional modes till India's Independence. Secondly, the decision of the Administration to admit missionaries in some areas to open schools there was conditioned by strategic factors. Chotanagpur plateau and the North-Eastern India were the main candidates for the mission activities

and concomitant modernisation. In these cases, as well as in others, Christianity was the sole vehicle of modernisation. The neo-converts not only became a part of the Great Tradition of Christianity, but were also linked to the Great Tradition of the Western culture, English language, Western dress, mannerism and medicines, being ineluctable components of the rulers, culture, flourished as far superior and 'advanced' to the local culture. The fate of traditional material culture and styles of living was decided: they were to be 'preserved' as museum specimens.

And this evaluation – the tribal culture must be 'museumified' lest it disappear with the onslaught of modernity – promoted the classical ethnographic studies. In them, the way they were changing was not attended to. The attempt was to record as meticulously as possible the tradition, or better the dying tradition of the people.

These studies served another purpose. They provided the administrators with the cultural background of the people they were going to rule. Detailed accounts of the local customary laws were written so that the administration of people and arbitration of their inter-personal conflicts could be done very much in terms of their laws and rules of conflict settlement. Along with this, attempts were made to synthesise the customary and the modern laws. In all these efforts, the focus was on modernising the tribals. But the colonial experience elsewhere had taught the protagonists that were the people to be detached from their tradition almost completely, there would be a backlash of modernisation and breakdown of its agencies. In the next section we discuss actual cases of the impact of modernisation on selected tribal groups of India.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Is it possible, in your view, for a tribe to be completely isolated? Give your answer in three lines.

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- ii) Do inter tribal relations affect cultural and linguistic identities of the tribes? Use three lines for your answer

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- iii) Do the contacts of a tribe with its Hindu neighbours signal the beginning of its modernisation? Use two lines for your answer.

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- iv) Give, in two lines, the two elements of British policy towards the tribal populations

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v) Which were the two main areas for the Christian mission activities and corresponding modernisation? Use one line for your answer

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vi) What is the main approach of classical ethnographic studies of Indian tribes? Use two lines for your answer

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28.3 CASE-STUDIES TO EXAMINE THE IMPACT OF MODERNISATION

Modernisation is a process of spreading the values, institutions and technical aspects of ‘modern society’. To highlight different responses to the forces of modernisation we give you five case studies of the tribal groups from different parts of India.

28.3.1 The Baiga Tribe of Madhya Pradesh

The Baiga tribe of Madhya Pradesh is famous in anthropological literature because it was in its context that Elwin (1938: 511-521) suggested one of the first, most controversial approaches to the tribal problem. According to him, since the genesis of tribal problem lay in their contact with the non-tribal exploiters, the tribes (and in this case, the Baiga) should be isolated in a ‘tribal reserve area’, where the entry of non-tribals, missionaries, landlords and other exploiting elements should be completely prohibited. Though Elwin later withdrew his advice of isolating the tribals, the positive consequences of isolation, fostered by geographical factors and strongly supported by the Administration, have been noticed in some hill tribes, the most outstanding being the Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh, a case we shall discuss after that of the Baiga. Having a population of 1,76,934 individuals (according to Census 1971), the Baiga, one of the six Primitive Tribes of Madhya Pradesh, are mainly concentrated in the districts of Mandla, Shahdol, Sidhi, Balaghat, Bilaspur and Surguja. According to a Tribal Research Institute (Bhopal) Report (1986: 5) they are ‘one of the most backward tribes of the state’, with the percentage of literacy among them being 4.51.

The Baiga used to practice shifting cultivation (*bewar*) till quite recently. They have now been advised (or ‘forced’) to give it up. Only inside the Baiga-Chak reservation, which has fifty-two villages, in Mandla district, that they are permitted to pursue *bewar*-cultivation in a restricted manner. Though mentally adjusting to the new requirements of plough cultivation now, they are nostalgic about their past when they used to grow twelve varieties of grain through *bewar*. The Baiga term *Bewar* refers to tilling of the land by the axe.

Their cultural system has not undergone any perceptible changes. Traditionally, the males used to keep tangled hair, almost resembling a bun, on the **occiput** region of their head. Now, except for a couple of educated people, this cultural trait is still valued. Similarly, the women were tattooed on every part of the body, including forehead. Even now this custom prevails. The Baiga had been famous as **shaman** (*gunia*). The shamanistic lore has not weakened over time. Marriage rules are strictly adhered to. The inter-personal conflicts are resolved in the village

by the intervention of their council. As a matter of fact, the details of their culture as documented by Elwin in his field work from 1932 till 1939 are not very different from the facts collected by a contemporary ethnographer.

The headquarters of Baiga Chak is called *Charha*. There is a dispensary having a resident doctor, a pharmacist and a nurse. Only a negligible number of the Baiga attend the dispensary when they are ill. Their faith in shamanistic healing (*gunia*) is unshakable.

It has primary, middle and secondary schools. But there are very few Baiga children attending the schools as compared to the Gond. As one moves to higher classes, the number of the Baiga further declines. Drop-out rate amongst them is much higher than among other communities. There are only two Baiga teachers in the whole region. The following photograph, taken by Dr. Surinder Nath, is from Baiga Chak, Mandla District, Madhya Pradesh. Here two Baiga teachers, in shirt and trousers, are convincing an illiterate Baiga about the importance of modern education inspiring him to send his children to the school.

A couple of changes may be noticed in their economic life. As said earlier, the plough-hating Baiga (for them, ploughing amounted to 'tearing the mother earth's breasts') have taken up settled cultivation. Some of them work as agricultural labourers with the Gond. They also work on the jobs provided by the forest department like, wage labourers for making the forest wall, working in the rope-making factory, in jobs of plantation, etc. In spite of all this, they have maintained aloofness in behaviour, mixing less with the Gond and other communities. Even today, it is not uncommon to see the Baiga running away to seek shelter in dense forests when they encounter non-tribal cosmopolitan people coming to their hamlets.

28.3.2 Apa Tani and Other Tribes of the North-East

Apa Tani, numbering about 15000, live in the high lands of Subansiri district of Arunachal Pradesh. For a very long time, they maintained a self-contained social order, which was uninfluenced by outside power. Though they had developed an efficient system of rice cultivation, they did not have the knowledge of plough and wheel, and their cattle were not used for traction, carriage, or milking (Furer-Haimendorf 1947; 1980). They used to produce a surplus of grain for barter with neighbouring tribes. Their economy was non-monetised. Besides speaking their own language and a few languages of their neighbours, they did not know any other national language or any other language of wider communication. Knowledge of Assamese could have helped them in communicating with the wider world.

In view of the Apa Tani's geographical and cultural isolation, it may be assumed that they would have greater obstacles in the path of their development and modernisation compared to the tribes of Central India, like the Gond, who have been in touch with advanced and modern societies (Furer-Haimendorf 1948; 1982; 1983: 1-25). But this has not been so.

Apa Tani have made tremendous progress in the direction of modernisation. Despite the literacy rate of 14.04 per cent in Arunachal Pradesh (Census 1981), they have done extremely well in seeking modern education. By the beginning of 1980, there were forty-five Apa Tani with university degrees. Many of them were studying in the universities of Guwahati, Dibrugarh, Shillong and even Delhi. Most of these University graduates had entered government employment, out of which in 1978, there were no less than fifteen serving in gazetted and 342 in non-gazetted posts.

Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 296-297), who had been studying these people from 1944, in his field work in the early 1980s, found some fully qualified doctors and a pilot officer in the Indian Air Force amongst them.

The gains of this development are cumulative? over generations even more Apa Tani will take advantage of modern education, entering bureaucratic jobs. With these changes, however, the Apa Tani have been able to keep their cultural identity intact. There have been negligible changes in their religious and ritual life. Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 299) says that in traditional ritual practices, "even the most educated participate with undiminished dedication". Similarly, their marriage rules and family life have undergone fewer changes.

For Furer-Haimendorf, this has been a case of rapid modernisation in material, technological and social life, without the loss of distinct ethnic identity. In their modernisation, geographic isolation protected by the governmental measures of not allowing the outsiders to take advantages of the local resources and opportunities, has been the crucial factor. Furer-Haimendorf writes, "One of the causes of the rapid economic and educational development of the Apa Tani is their freedom from oppression and exploitation by more advanced communities."

The North-East India, beyond the present-day Assam, was always protected from the entry of the outsiders by the Inner Line Policy. Even today, Indians from other states have to seek Inner Line permit to enter certain states of the North-East like Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh etc. The outsiders are not permitted to establish their own business enterprises. In the model of indigenous development, only the locals are eligible for obtaining contracts of developmental works and business. Thus, the North-East was saved from the uneven, even devastating, influences of cultural contact as in Central India, where the outsiders played havoc with the local resources. They usurped the land of the tribals, the proud owners who were reduced to the state of serfdom (Furer-Haimendorf 1983: 5-7).

In addition to the Inner Line Policy, Christian missions played a responsible role in modernising the people, especially in Nagaland and Mizo hills, Khasi and Jaintia hills, and NEFA (Sema 1986). Modern educational institutions were introduced. English became the language of instruction. Western dress and culture came along (Furer Haimendorf 1976).

But these missions did not uproot the people from their traditional moorings. The local tribal languages were not replaced by English. They were treated with respect. Each one came to have its own script, with Roman alphabet along with accent marks. For facilitating an **exogenous** religion, Christianity in this context, to reach grass-root levels, the religious scriptures and holy books, regulating the daily life of the people, were translated (and subsequently published) in local languages. Dictionaries of the local languages were compiled (for example, the English-Khasi Dictionary by V. Nissor Singh was published in 1906). Gradually, the local people were trained to take up the role of religious functionaries. With this, the effects of modernisation were visible in all aspects of the society.

We saw in the case of the Apa Tani that in spite of developments and modernisation, they have been able to retain their distinct cultural identity. And such can be said about other tribes of the North-East. The Naga, for example, are one of the modernised tribes of India. But this exterior facade of modern values, dress and mannerism has not mitigated their sentiments of belonging to the same society, the

Naga (Horam 1977: 94-108). In these cases, one may notice continuity in change; modernisation has not diluted the traditional bonds of social cohesion.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) Name, in one line, the districts of Madhya Pradesh, where the Baiga tribe is mainly found.
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- ii) Has the cultural system of the Baiga undergone visible changes? Use three lines for your answer.
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- iii) Has geographical and cultural isolation of the Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh posed any obstacle in the path of its modernisation? Use two lines for your answer.
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- iv) Did the Christian missions in the North-East try to uproot the tribal groups from their traditional culture?
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28.3.3 Rabari

The Rabari are a lesser studied community, spreading from Western Rajasthan to the Kutch region of Gujarat. Their settlements (locally called *dhani*) are also found in some villages of Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Numbering more than 400,000 members, these people have been differently designated in the states of their predominance for the grant of preferential treatment, in Gujarat, they are one of the Scheduled Tribes while in Rajasthan they are included in the lists of other Backward Classes (OBCs) and the Semi-nomadic Tribes. Some confusion also entails from their nomenclature: in Gujarat, they call themselves Rabari (or Rahbari) while in Rajasthan, the term used is Raika. The Rabari are pastoralists. They domesticate camels, sheep, cows, buffaloes and goats. As the grazing areas have drastically reduced, and the areas they have been traditionally inhabiting have a harsh climate with a measely rainfall, these people are constrained to migrate with their flocks to other regions rich in fodder (Saizman 1986: 49-61). They have permanent villages, which for the most part of the year are inhabited by the women, old, and infirm people, as the men are away with their cattle.

At one time, the Rabari of Western Raiasthan were patronised by the princely lineages. They looked after the imperial camels, took them out for grazing, looked after their diseases, trained them for various tasks, and more important, these camel-riding Rabari were entrusted with the job of carrying confidential mail from one part to the other. Once these imperial lineages declined, and the importance of camel reduced, there was a subsequent decline in the position of the Rabari.

Actually, the term Raika used for the Rabari was an occupational one: it designated a 'camel riding messenger' (Westphal-Hellbusch 1975:126).

Living in hamlets which were outside the main boundary of the village and leading an isolated existence, the Rabari were less affected by the development plans (Srivastava 1987: 317-334). Only in recent years, they have started taking advantage of modern education. Some of the Rabari have taken up teaching profession. The other educated people are working in government offices, police, camel and sheep breeding farms, and private and public sector. And the Raika teachers and other professionals are making every effort to inspire the new generation to take education as an important source of mobility.

The Rabari of Gujarat have changed much more than their counterparts in Rajasthan. In Gujarat, they identified themselves with the dominant pastoral caste, the Bharawad, and were able to enter milk-cooperatives as dairymen, thus their economic status improved (Salzman 1987: 44-50). There was a Rajya Sabha M.P. from the Rabari of Gujarat. For taking up the issues of their community, the Rabari have founded an Association, and it publishes some periodicals titled *Gopalbandhu* (from Gujarat) and *Raika Jagriti* (from Haryana). They provide a forum where the problems of their community are identified and the efforts to modernise it are discussed.

28.3.4 Toda

The Toda are well known in anthropological literature for having been pastoralists with a 'sacred complex of buffalos'; for practising fraternal polyandry where the fatherhood of a child was established through a ritual ceremony called 'bow-and-arrow'; and for participating in a complex network of economic, social and ritual relationships with three other groups of Nilgiri Hills, Kota, Badaga and Kurumba (Mandelbaum 1970). Though the Toda society is still rooted in tradition, it "at the same time is branching out into modernity" (Walker 1986: 286).

The **sympiotic** relations between the Toda and other Nilgiri communities were initially based on an exchange of services. Now each economy has replaced barter exchanges. The network of relations among the Toda has become open. They now have social and business relations with other immigrants from surrounding plains and beyond. Their contacts with a great many government agencies like Nilgiri Collectorate, Agricultural Department, Veterinary, Health and Medical Offices, Police Department etc, have increased. Further the Toda hamlets-especially those close to Ootacamund-attract tourists and travellers from various parts of the world. These contacts along with a number of others that the Toda have with other communities and immigrants have influenced the spread of modernity among them.

One of the changes that modernisation has brought in small communities, which at one time were relatively isolated, pertains to the domain of religion. Once their isolation was broken, they developed contact with communities that preserved the great tradition of a religion. The Toda, as an example of this process of change, have become oriented to South Indian Hinduism. In the markets of Ootacamund, which they frequent quite regularly, they hear of the religious merit of pilgrimages to the Hindu shrines in the Nilgiris and far beyond. Pictorial representations of Hindu gods and goddesses have found an honourable place in many Toda households. This fact of their drawing closer to popular Hinduism has not shown

a decline in their indigenous rituals. The modern Toda, Walker (1986: 288) writes, has accepted the “efficacy of two parallel ritual systems: his own and that of popular South Indian Hinduism”.

Education has been, as is the case with other tribal societies, another factor of change. But compared to market and temple, the schools took longer time to bring about desired effects. In the Indian context, modernisation, has reinforced both English and the regional language. In Kohima district, for example, both English and Angami are equally strong; in Meghalaya, both English and Khasi have been developed, similarly among the Toda, Tamil and English have been equally accepted. Having been educated in Tamil and English, some of the Toda have taken up white-collar occupation, unheard of by their ancestors.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) Name, in one line, the animals the Rabari tribals domesticate.
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- ii) Indicate how education has become a source of mobility for the Rabari. Use two lines for your answer.
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- iii) Name in two lines the agencies, which have spread modernity among the Toda.
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- iv) Has coming closer to South Indian Hinduism meant a decline in the practice of Toda rituals? Use two lines for your answer.
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28.3.5 Santal Tribe in Transition

Through the Santal case, we would try to explicitly show various steps in the process of modernisation of a tribe. A summary of this case may be presented at the outset.

- i) The first exposure of the Santal to exogenously introduced changes was when the outsiders? money lenders, *zamindars*, missionaries? started encroaching upon their area. Their land was forcibly annexed by some of them, and the Santal were subjugated to the state of serfdom.
- ii) Against such an exploitative and oppressive state, the Santal Uprising (also called Santal Rebellion) 1855-1857 took place, and was brutally crushed.
- iii) The building of steel mill and company city at Jamshedpur had an important bearing on the Santal, where both the educated and illiterate could find suitable work.

- iv) Having close interaction with caste Hindus, the Santal, especially of upper classes, imbibed Hindu religion, caste practices, and claimed the status of Kshatriya.
- v) As a result of the revival movement, mainly to save the Santal from a steady loss of land, exploitative and oppressive interests of the outsiders, the Santal leaders rejected the Hindu model.
- vi) With Jharkhanda Party, the Santal acquired an important political organ for mobilising their interests.
- vii) Industrialisation especially in Jamshedpur had important consequences: the Santal became aware of new sources of upward mobility; importance of education was realised, and the political path of raising one's status became clear to them. In other words, industrialisation and education were crucial to the modernisation of the Santal.

Here we will examine under the following six sub-headings various changes in the life of the Santal tribals.

i) **Rejection of Hinduism and the Reference Groups of Upper Castes**

All this is rooted in the revivalistic movement, which began in mid-nineteenth century. Despite little political cohesion among the Santal. There is considerable cultural similarity, thanks to the revivalistic movement, and a strong feeling that the Santal are different from the Hindus. The Sanskritic values emulated by the Santal, when they were attracted to Kshatriya or Brahmin model, are being given up under the tremendous impact of the cultural identity movement. Jharkhanda movement's role has been crucial in this regard. Martin Orans' (1965: 108) observation is worth quoting here: "Once I saw a young party activist who had grown up in the Jharkhanda movement persuading an older Santal with a few years of education that he must take up beef-eating again if he wished to preserve the Santal caste". The rejection of Hinduism or Hindu identity and the most sacred Hindu element (sacredness of cow being one) is not only for returning to the chaste Santal identity, it is also because their exploiters? money lenders, land lords, etc. who were all Hindus.

ii) **Santal Uprising: 1855-1857**

The first event to take the Santal on the inroads of a conscious cultural identity was their uprising of 1855-1857. On 30th June 1855, a massive rally of Santal, over ten thousand, protested against their exploitation and oppression. The rally, led by Sidho and Kano, took an oath to end the oppressive rule of the British, *Zamindars*, and money lenders, and it decided to set up an independent *Santali Raj*. The money lenders and *zamindars* had flocked into the Santali areas, the legal procedures and financial institutions they imposed were patronised by the colonial government. The crops of the Santal were forcibly seized, the interest charged on loans varied from fifty to five hundred per cent. Once the complaints of people fell on deaf ear, they decided to rise in arms. It is estimated that fifteen to twenty-five thousand Santal were killed in this uprising. The courage of the Santal against the oppressive rule is still commemorated in the local folk songs and traditions.

There have also been other revolts in which the cultural identity of the Santal was reasserted. In 1917, the Santal of Mayurbhanj revolted against their recruitment to serve in Egypt during the First World War (Mahapatra 1986: 16).

iii) Influence of Christianity

For a very long time, the Santal had been living with the non-tribals. The latter became prosperous by fleecing the Santal of their land and property. Those of the upper classes took over to Sanskritic practices? like worship of Hindu deities, abstaining from eating beef, offering liquor on festive occasion, observance of the norms of purity and pollution? so that they could be identified with higher *varna* categories. But the Hindu model was essentially traditionalistic. Sanskritisation offered ritual mobility in the caste system. It did not provide them an opportunity to modernise.

Christianity was a prime mover initiating modern changes among the Santal. In their area, Scandinavian and American Missions made efforts to convert the local people. These missionaries as elsewhere in India opened educational institutions preparing people to enter new occupations. Christianity gave the people a ready-made great tradition. The institutions like hospital and school that came with the missions introduced them to the wider world, beyond the interaction they had within themselves and with other non-tribals. Notwithstanding the introduction of the Santal to modernity through the missions their identity was eroded because of Christianity. If their immediate exploiters were Hindus, those who patronised these cases of exploitation were Christians. Thus, any movement for a reassertion of the cultural identity required a rejection of both Hindu and Christian models of change.

iv) Impact of Industrialisation

The installation of industries in Santal dominated areas was another very important factor of change and modernisation. These industries provided jobs to both educated and illiterate and offered a new source of mobility.

Moreover, these industries were free from one or another religious domination. They promoted caste-free and class-free occupation. A large number of Santal found jobs in them. These industries, having recruited local tribals, provided an opportunity to the people to further cement their traditional linkages: in fact, these industries were the 'world of kinsmen'. Santal identity was further strengthened by the tribal-workers.

v) Cultural Identity Movement

The educated Santal played a central role in the cultural identity movement. As said earlier, for launching any kind of political pressure, the cultural identity needs to be revitalised and preserved. The educated Santal worked in this direction. Protest was launched against the enumeration of Santal as Hindu in pre-1951 census. A cult was founded, in which the traditional concept of sarna was given a pivotal place. It was called *Sarna Dharm Samelet*, Sacred Grove Religious Organisation. Santali script (*Ol Chiki*) was devised. A long epic heroic play was written, having maxims and precepts for the Santal.

The new ritual complex emphasised worship of traditional tribal deities in the sacred grove, with the offerings of liquor, sacrifice of cow, and dancing was promoted on all religious occasions. The underlying theme in all of them was rejection of Hinduism, and also to show that the Santal were not pre-literate as were made out to be.

They had their own script, epic, a whole set of rituals, and cosmology, which were lost somewhere, and needed to be discovered. Mahapatra (1986: 24) writes, “The Santal identity is thus part of the process of Santalisation, a cultural phenomenon which is demonstrated through marriage, ritual, food habit, occupation and belief, value-system and ideals”.

vi) **Cultural Identity and Political Action**

The articulation of cultural identity into political term was facilitated once the Jharkhanda Party was founded. This Party demanded creation of a tribal state. For the Santal in the industrial belt, most of the traditional customs and practices have been weakened, but the tribal identity is reinforced through Jharkhanda movement remains primary. The Santal in the city are akin to other city dwellers. They too have individualism and aspirations of social mobility. The ethnic ties as expressed politically continue to exist. With modernisation, they are not weakening. Every Santal feels attached to *Ol Chiki*, the *Sarna Dharm*, the parables of mythological origin, and to Jharkhanda Party. At the same time, he aspires to take up modern education, a good job which opens avenues for upward mobility.

Having discussed the Santal tribe in transition, let us now also review, in general, different aspects of modernisation in relation to the tribal societies in India.

Activity 1

Read sub-section 28.3.5 once more and write a short note of 300 words on changes in Santal social life.

28.4 DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF MODERNISATION IN RELATION TO THE TRIBAL SOCIETIES

The cases, discussed in section 28.3, are chosen from different parts of India. They amply demonstrate that modernisation in the tribes can be traced back to their contact with the agencies spreading the values of modernity like open-networks, achievement, competition, equality, caste-and class-free occupations, etc. The entry of missionaries in some areas (as in the North-East) initiated modernisation. Incorporation of a community into milk-cooperatives (as in Gujarat) created situations bringing the local people in contact with developed sections of the society. Encroachment of commercial frontiers and modern markets has contributed a lot to the modernisation of tribals. In some parts of India, especially, the central, installation of heavy industries and creation of urban centres were instrumental in spreading modernity. Let us examine the two factors of change, namely, industrialisation and education.

28.4.1 Industrialisation

During the last four decades and particularly during the Plan periods, there has been an acceleration of mining and manufacturing industries. Forest resources have been gradually exploited, leading eventually to deforestation, in the hilly and forested belts of tribal India. Most of these industries came to be established in or around tribal areas because they were rich in mineral and other resources. Close to these industries grew small towns housing mainly the industrial workers.

As the exploitation of mineral and forest resources was chiefly confined to Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa, there was a rapid increase of urban population in these states. Demographer Bose (1962: 26) writes that with a concentration of industries in these states, there was a relative shift of urban population from Indo-Gangetic plain to the hilly and plateau areas which offered new industrial and natural resources.

It was not only industrialisation that was responsible for the migration ? promoted by 'pull', 'push', or 'forced' factors ? of tribals from their homesteads but also other economic institutions. In certain states like Assam and of South India, tea, coffee and rubber estates were formed. The tribals were dispossessed of their land, and were made to work as plantation labourers (Jain 1988). Out-migration from Chotanagpur plateau and other neighbouring regions occurred phenomenally to these estates. The tribes were forcibly migrated to other countries, like the Kol who were sent to Mauritius as labourers. Kondha of Orissa were taken to Mesopotamia to serve in World War I. A large number of Bhil were recruited for military service (Pathy 1986: 74).

Industrialisation in the tribal areas offered new jobs. But the tribals, unskilled in initial stages, could only get the jobs at the lower rungs. At one time owners of land were now depressed into the class of industrial proletariat. This happened because of a number of factors. Firstly, their land had been usurped by the non-tribal *Zamindars* in many areas, and they were looking for some alternatives. Secondly, installation of big industrial and developmental projects in tribal zones required the displacement of the native population, often to unknown areas (Vidyarthi 1968: 13-29, Fernandes 1998). In these cases of uprooting local tribals and non-tribals were equally affected, but as the tribals outnumbered the non-tribals in these areas, they suffered the maximum. Finally, as a result of over-exploitation of forest resources by the outsiders, the tribal economics, which is to a large extent were forest-based, dwindled. Thus, a combination of local impoverishment and availability of new opportunities sent these tribals to seek jobs in heavy industries, tea plantations, construction sites, etc.

These tribals now-turned labourers have changed a lot. The traditional dresses have been replaced by those that came with modernity. Their occupational structure has changed, and it has important implications. A sense of mobility is gradually instilled in the community. Mobility becomes inter-generational as the children of tribal workers aspire to do better in life than their parents, by taking hold of opportunities offered by modernity.

In this process, some of the traditional institutions weaken. For example, in his study of tribals working in Bokaro Steel Plant, Vidyarthi (1968: 21), says that their village institutions like the '*jajmani* system', the cycle of festivals and rituals, the caste-affiliations etc., have completely been disintegrated, and all round depression and despair seems to have affected the life of the uprooted villages. This, however, does not mean that there is also a subsequent decline in the feeling of oneness amongst the tribals in a new set-up. Industrialisation has fostered a new sense of solidarity between the co-workers. Once there already exist ethnic and social ties between the tribals, the relations in the industry cement them further. Trade unions on the lines of tribal-workers crystallise (Bhowmik 1982: 461-473). The feeling of ethnicity becomes strong and they begin exerting pressure on the state and the centre.

28.4.2 Education

Having been exposed to industrialisation for almost four decades, having migrated to various industrial towns, and having imbibed the spirit of upward mobility, the tribals have realised the importance of modern education.

The missionaries have played an outstanding role in spreading Western education. The Government is also committed to the idea that one of the avenues to speedy development is education. For diversifying the tribals to different occupations, they must be educationally equipped to face the challenges. Besides the fact that education promotes social mobility and enhances the ability of the people to think about their amelioration, it can save them from being exploited by money lenders who have been taking advantage of the illiterate tribals by forging and tempering with the promissory notes.

According to Census 1981, literacy rate in India was 36.23 per cent; among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, it was 21.38 and 16.33 per cent respectively. The North-Eastern states had done exceptionally well: the highest literacy is in Mizoram (59.63 per cent), followed by Nagaland (40.31 per cent), Manipur (39.74 per cent), and Meghalaya (31.55 per cent). The literacy rates in India in 1991 and 2001 were 52.21 and 63.38 percent respectively. As per the 1991 Census the literacy rates of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were 37.41 and 29.60 percent respectively. The literacy rate of the tribals in 1991 was 23.63 per cent. This is lower than not only of the general population figures but also of the SC population figures. The literacy rate of the rural tribal women was recorded in 1991 to be 12.74, which was the lowest of all social groups in India. Literacy rate for STs was lowest in Andhra Pradesh (17.16 percent) and highest was in Mizoram (82 percent).

Ashram schools, especially meant for tribal children living in remote and isolated villages, have been opened up. While a separate school for each tribal hamlet is not feasible, the nearest regular school for all children with no specification is too far away, for them to attend it and return home the same day. That is why the Ashram schools are residential, providing free board and lodging to the pupils. In terms of their curriculum, they are supposed to impart craft-based education, thus linking learning with productive activities. Once the students finish the school, they are sufficiently prepared to take up any of the craft-based occupations. In this way, diversification of tribals in different jobs is expected to result.

But the evaluative studies of these schools speak otherwise. The curriculum is more tilted towards literacy-based education. Half-hearted attempts are made to impart craft-oriented education. And the specific character of Ashram schools is relegated to the background. They start resembling the regular schools.

A study of the patterns of tribal education in India raises two important issues. The dropout rate of the tribal children is very high, and as one moves to secondary and higher levels, this rate increases exponentially. According to Census 1981, the dropout rate in primary, middle and secondary stages was 75 per cent (boys 71.57, girls 78.43), 84.99 per cent and 91.65 per cent respectively. Secondly, the number of tribal students reaching professional and university courses is very low. Writing about the Gond of Andhra Pradesh, Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 130) concludes that, "in thirty-six years of tribal education only five Gond and two

Pradhan have been awarded university degrees". The representation of tribals in professional courses, according to the figures of 1978-79, given in the Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, 1986-88 (Twenty-eighth Report: 522-523) it is clear that very few tribal students reach post-graduate courses in professional disciplines. Therefore, their distribution in higher professional positions is almost negligible.

This Report shows also that the Scheduled Tribes have done well as compared to the Scheduled Castes. But, the figures from North-Eastern Hill University (NEHU), Shillong, a central university, have in fact tilted the graph in favour of the Scheduled Tribes. In this University, there are five Professors, nine Readers, forty-six Lecturers, and five Research Associates from various tribal communities. Thus all the five Professors and all the nine readers in central universities are from NEHU. Out of a total of 50 Scheduled Tribe Lecturers, 46 are from this university. When we take the figures from NEHU, thinking that Meghalaya is predominantly a tribal state with Khasi and Garo having a long tradition of education, we find that in none of the teaching and research positions does the percentage of Scheduled Tribes reach fifty. There are only 10.20 per cent Professors, 10.71 per cent Readers, 31.72 per cent Lecturers and 45.45 per cent Research Associates from tribal communities in NEHU. In other words, even in tribal states the non-tribals are holding a majority of the higher positions. Some tribes like Meena of Rajasthan have been quite successful. A large number of them have taken up jobs in administration (Civil Services), private sector, financial institutions and colleges.

Certainly there has been an increase in tribal literacy. But the number of students continuing to stay in schools till higher classes and then entering the portals of college is very low. Dropout rate, as said earlier, is very high, and for girls, it is much higher. In mixed areas, where small tribes live with larger ones, the dropout rate among the former is higher. In the schools of Baiga Chak, we saw that the Baiga students generally failed to stay in schools after the primary, while the Gond continued to study till higher classes. Education is one of the crucial factors of modernisation, but when the tribals fail to seek its advantages, the degree of modernity, mobility and diversification of occupations among them is sharply reduced.

There are several reasons accounting for high dropout rate. The curriculum in most cases is not relevant to the conditions in which the tribals live. They find education a kind of onerous burden. Low standard of teaching and facilities in tribal schools is another factor. It has also been found that teachers in these schools are generally from non-tribal communities and they take posting in tribal areas as a kind of punishment. Thus, they are able to evince little interest.

Domestic duties of the tribal children, especially the girls, are another factor. From young age, they are entrusted with household chores, fetching water to looking after the younger brothers and sisters. Absence of feedback from the family, inspiring the children to take their study seriously, is an important factor. The economic status of tribal households, in most cases, cannot afford to keep the children as consuming, rather than producing members for a long time. Table 28.1 gives percentage distribution of persons aged seven years and above at different levels of education by social group for 1999-2000.

Table 28.1: Percentage Distribution of Persons Aged 7 Years and Above At Varying Levels of Education by Social Group: 1999-2000

Social Group	Rural India			Urban India		
	Note Literate	Upto Middle Level Schooling	Educated Persons	Not Literate	Upto Middle Level Schooling	Educated Persons
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Scheduled Castes	53.4	40.3	6.3	33.8	50.4	15.8
Scheduled Tribes	57.8	37.0	5.2	30.0	47.5	22.5
OBCs	45.2	45.1	9.7	24.7	51.0	24.3
Others	32.2	50.8	17.0	13.5	44.3	42.2
All Groups	44.0	45.2	10.8	20.2	47.3	32.5

Source: NSS Report No. 473 (55/1.0/11), September 2001, pp. 20.24.

In some cases, the medium of instruction poses grave problems. If the Kond are taught in Oriya instead of their own dialect, they may find learning an uphill task (Mahapatra, 1984: 376). Moreover, the objectives of educational departments in imparting teaching to students are not clear. Their chief interest lies in raising literacy, rather than making education a productive activity, guaranteeing social mobility and ameliorating the local people in their traditional milieu.

Check Your Progress 5

- i) Read the following statements and write T against True and F against False statements:
 - a) The relations in industry affect negatively the ethnic and social ties among the tribals.
 - b) Industrialisation in tribal areas offered new job opportunities.
 - c) The process of industrialisation weakens traditional institutions.
- ii) Who has played an outstanding role in spreading education among the tribal groups of India? Use three lines for your answer.

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- iii) What is the literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes? Use one line for your answer.

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- iv) Give, in five lines, the reasons for high dropout rate among tribal students.

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28.4.3 Adverse Effects of Modernity

The aim of modernisation is to bring the society on the path of progress, to diversify its occupational structure, to provide the people with efficient technology which vouchsafes higher production, to give them avenues of social mobility and to bring them on par with other developed sections of the society. But the results are not encouraging in all cases. With an introduction of development plans, some societies have found themselves disintegrated. Modernity has given rise to adverse effects.

Take the case of industrialisation. As we saw earlier, the establishment of heavy industries, construction of dams and launching of development plans in tribal zones has necessitated displacement of the local population. Thousands of tribal families were displaced from their traditional habitats. Compensation was supposed to be provided to them in terms of money and alternative land, but not all of them got an alternative place to live.

The report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for 1962-1963 informed that in Ranchi district of Bihar, 14,461 tribal families were displaced from an area of 62,494 acres, and only 3,479 of them were allotted alternative land. The compensation provided to them in cash was recklessly spent. The tribals not fully conversant with cash economy squandered the money on various attractions that were available in nearby industrial towns. Soon their funds had depleted. With their land gone for developmental activities and left with no training, equipment or aptitude for skilled or semi-skilled jobs, they had no option but to enter the town as unskilled labourers, taking up various 'marginal jobs' of domestic servants, rickshaw pullers, vendors, hawkers, etc. They could enter the industrial sector at the lowest level, and their chances of moving up were meagre as they remained untrained for industrial jobs requiring technical know-how. Eventually they were proletarianised. Furer-Haimendorf (1982: 321) writes, "...in the streets of Ranchi one can still see Munda and Oraon rickshaw-pullers who not long ago were independent cultivators tilling their own land".

Contact situations with the outsiders have been equally detrimental. Destruction of the forests as a consequence of felling of trees for industrial purposes has threatened the small communities of hunters and food-gatherers. Modern diseases unknown to tribals have been introduced with the entry of outsiders in tribal areas. The tribal population in Andaman Islands has greatly declined because of high mortality rate. Measles and influenza, the killer diseases for those who had not developed any resistance to them, played havoc with the Andaman tribals.

Similarly, at the time of Independence, the Toda population had fallen to under 500. The chief cause of their decline was the prevalence of venereal diseases (Walker 1986: 283). In most cases, depopulation of a tribe was mainly because of rapid ecological changes that created imbalances in their habitats. For new schemes, either of medical treatment or development, the people were not fully prepared to accept them. Hence, they reacted in a lukewarm manner to all those institutions that could have changed and modernised them.

Modernisation created economic disparities in various sections of the society. Those who could take advantages of new economic and educational frontiers were able to better their lot, while a large sections of the tribals, not adequately prepared to deal with new challenges, gradually depressed into poorer sections of the society. Against economic and social disparities, they have raised a collective voice. Modernisation, in other words, has given rise to a new consciousness amongst the people. The already existing solidarity between them has become strengthened.

Activity 2

On the basis of sub-section 28.4.3, try to work out adverse effects of modernity on your own community and write a note of 250 words on Negative Impact of Modernity on My Community.

28.4.4 Tribal Movements

In the latter half of the last century, the tribals, especially in central India, had reacted against their exploiters. These movements were directed towards freeing their land from all those who exploited them economically and culturally. At the same time, each of these movements put emphasis on revitalisation of their culture, their traditional culture which was swayed under the impact of the outsiders.

The Tana Bhagat movement, for example, derived its name from the ritual of ‘expelling from the Oraon land foreign spirits, nefarious powers and ghosts’, borrowed from the Munda. Along with this, they also sought to drive away the ‘evil powers of modern innovations’ like steam boat, motor car, bicycle, etc. These modern innovations that were being introduced into their land were seen as the means of exploitation. Exorcising the ‘ghost of modernity’, they desired to revert to their original religion, the *Kurukh Dharma* (Roy 1915). The charismatic leaders of Oraon, Santal and Munda were believed to free the people not only from the webs of evil supernatural powers, but also from the ‘iron clutches’ of the non-tribal exploiters and oppressors (Roy 1915; 1928; Singh 1983). Another such movement occurred in 1922 among the tribals of South Gujarat where under supernatural command of the female goddess, Devi, they stopped consuming liquor, and later on it took nationalist turn (Hardiman 1987).

The rebellion of 1855-1857 was a great event in history of the Santal. This event is still remembered in their folk songs and talks. It was an attempt to recover the tribal land, which was steadily lost to the outsiders, and to wipe out the non-tribals from their territory (Mahapatra 1986: 8-29). In the Santal myths of the nineteenth century, there was a description of the ancient days of independence and glory, and all this was swept away once the outsiders with modern weaponry started infiltrating into their areas. Martin Orans (1965: 35) writes, “The Santal are thus pictured as independent, powerful and constituted exactly in the image of an ideal Hindu Kingdom”. The movement had the aim of reverting to their traditional religion *Sarna Dharam*, and social structure.

As a response to modernity, and the fact that traditional institutions of the people disintegrate under its impact, there have been conscious attempts to revive traditional ways of living. Cultural identity is cemented, because it can be instrumental in achieving political goals. Consciously the tribals have tried to introspect into their cultures to single out and eradicate their ‘evil customs and practices’. For regulating the behaviour of people, so that the feeling of collectivity remains intact, rules have been collectively arrived at. Nonconformity to any one of them may call for an imposition of fine. Modernity has made people conscious of their culture.

For example, the Sahariya of Morena district (Madhya Pradesh) have founded their association called *Adivasi Jati Sudhar Sangha*. For ‘purifying’ their people, it has identified twelve principles like regular bath, education for the children, abstaining from eating ‘dirty’ animals (like swine, sambur, etc.), respect for the educated people, etc. (Joshi 1987: 308-317). Similarly, the Rabari have formed

Akhil Bhartiya Rawari Rayaka Samaj Mahasabha, where measures for uplifting the community and eradicating its evils have been collectively arrived at. In the same way, one of the major aims of the Toda Uplift Society is “to strive for the eradication of bad habits”, and by ‘bad habits’ they mean “polyandry, wife-capture, drunkenness and the excessive sacrifice of buffaloes at funeral ceremonies” (Walker 1986: 289).

These tribal associations serve two purposes. They endeavour their best to keep the whole group united. For such a unity, the traditional styles of living, except those, which are ‘bad’ cannot be given up. They must be revived. Such a unity is needed for demanding better deal from the government. The ethnic interests of the tribals, thus, merge with political demands for separate states and are voiced and sustained.

One of the best studied cases is of Jharkhanda movement. The Jharkhanda Party, founded by Jai Pal Singh, an Oxford educated Christian of the Munda tribe, demanded carving out of a new state, spreading from Palamau in Bihar to Keonjhar in Orissa and from Surguja in Madhya Pradesh to Midnapur in West Bengal, of the Indian union of which tribal people would be numerically dominant. The basic issues behind this movement were land and forest alienation, training and job deprivation due to influx of the outsiders, cultural submergence, and imbalanced development (Munda 1988: 31). As you already know, Jharkhand has now achieved the status of a state. Coming to the North-East, the Bodo and the Naga movements are good examples of how ethnic identity takes up political route for realising their interests. Uneven development and modernisation, concentration of gains in some areas and their non-dispersal to the others, and urban-oriented models of growth are the chief causes in all these separatist movements.

Check Your Progress 6

- i) What were the tribal movements in Central India? Use two lines for your answer.

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- ii) What was the main aim of the Santal movement of 1855-57? Use one line for your answer.

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- iii) What purposes are served by tribal associations, such as, *Adivasi Jati Sudhar Sangha* of the Sahariya of Morena, Madhya Pradesh, *Akhil Bharatiya Rawari Rayaka Samaj Mahasabha* of the Rabari and the Toda Uplift Society? Use four lines for your answer.

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28.5 LET US SUM UP

To summarise, modernisation is a process of spreading the values, institutions and technical aspects of 'modern society'. The tribals, living mostly in hilly terrains and forested belts, and having autonomy in every sphere of their social existence, remained by and large untouched by modern developments till their territories were opened up for strategic reasons. These reasons involved exploitation of forest and mineral resources. At the same time the need for manual labour was also important. Once these tribals were exposed to the wider world, they underwent traumatic experiences of losing their rights and land, and being incorporated into a system that they knew little about.

The impact of modernisation of tribals is varied. Some tribals (like of the North-East) have benefited a lot from modernisation, while others (like those of Central India) have been losers. Further, modernisation does not lead to a total change in the society. Certain aspects of culture, especially pertaining to economic and technical domain, change at a faster pace. Social institutions do not show such a qualitative change. Religious and ritual life may continue to survive essentially in a traditional mould. Modernisation reinforces traditional links and bonds. Thus, the consciousness of belonging to a tribe, or tribalism, is accentuated, and this may transform a tribe into a strong ethnic and pressure group.

The separatist movements coming to settle in some large tribes may be curbed if the benefits of modernisation and development are equally distributed. The effects of modernisation should be visible in all institutions of society. Since the historical experiences of a society shape the incoming modernity, the concepts derived from the experiences of other society, particularly western, are not applicable for a complete understanding of modernity in the tribal societies of India.

28.6 KEYWORDS

Bewar	The Baiga term, referring to the type of tillage in which the axe and not the plough is the primary instrument
Cosmology	is the science of universe.
Ethno-centric	This is used to describe the attitude that one's group is superior.
Exogenous	This adjective is used to describe that which originates from external causes.
Fossil	remnant; preserved in strata of earth; recognisable as remains or impressions of past; belonging to the past
Occiput	The back part of the head or skull
Reference group	Those groups of people whose attitudes, beliefs and actions are taken as appropriate. People do not have to be members of the groups to which they refer. Also, attitudes can be formed by both a positive identification with a reference group and negative comparisons or rejections of it.

Shaman	refers to a priest who uses magic for curing the sick, divining the invisible and controlling events.
Symbiotic	It is used to describe living together of two dissimilar elements in a mutually advantageous relationship.

28.7 FURTHER READING

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28.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) Examples:
- The Chenchu are the hunters and food gatherers,
 - The Rabari are pastoralists,
 - The Maler are shifting cultivators,
 - Santal, Gond, Bhil and Munda are plough cultivators.
- ii) The tribes of Andaman Islands, namely, Jarwa, Onge, Great Andamanese, Shopmen, Sentinel and Toda of South India are called 'minor' tribes.
- iii) In 2001 there are seventy five 'Primitive Tribes' in India.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) It is not possible for a tribe to be completely isolated. Some or the other type of relationship always exists between a tribe and its neighbouring communities. Such communities may be other tribal groups or non-tribal

groups. The relationship may be of friendly exchanges of economic goods or of hostility, involving even warfare.

- ii) The fact of inter-tribal relations does not substantially affect the ethnic and cultural identity of a tribe. For example, the Oraon and the Munda have lived side by side and interacted socially in many areas of life, yet both the groups have maintained their separate cultural and ethnic identities.
- iii) Coming into contact with the neighbouring Hindus did not mark the beginning of tribal groups' modernisation. This process, in fact, began when these groups came in contact with the wider world which itself had experienced many changes because of the colonial rule.
- iv) The two elements of the British policy towards the tribals were that (i) it favoured isolation of the tribal areas from the mainstream and (ii) at the level of reform, the British administration was interested in 'civilising' the tribals.
- v) Chotanagpur plateau and the North-Eastern India were the main areas for the Christian mission activities and corresponding modernisation.
- vi) The classical ethnographic studies of the tribal societies in India recorded as meticulously as possible the traditions of the people and provided the administration with the cultural background of the people they were to rule.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) The Baiga tribe is mainly found in the districts of Mandla, Shahdol, Sidhi, Balaghat, Bilaspur and Surguja.
- ii) The cultural system of the Baiga has not undergone any appreciable changes. The details of their culture as recorded in 1932-39 are not very different from what is found today.
- iii) Geographical and cultural isolation of the Apa Tani of Arunachal Pradesh has not posed any obstacle in the tribe's modernisation. Rapid modernisation in material, technological and social life has not however meant the loss of the tribe's distinct ethnic identity.
- iv) The Christian missions have played a responsible role in modernising the tribals. They did not uproot the people from their culture. The local tribal languages were treated with respect and not replaced by English. This helped the people to retain their culture.

Check Your Progress 4

- i) The Rabari tribals domesticated camels, sheep, cows, buffaloes and goats.
- ii) In recent years taking advantages of modern education, some of the Rabari have become teachers. Other educated Rabari work in government offices, camel and sheep breeding farms, and private and public sectors. They make efforts to also inspire the younger generation to take education as a means of raising their social status.
- iii) The contacts with government agencies like Nilgiri Collectorate, Agricultural Department, Veterinary, Health and Medical Offices, Police Department etc. have helped the spread of modernity among the Toda.

- iv) The Toda came into contact with South Indian Hinduism. As a result, they have begun to worship Hindu gods and goddesses. But this does not mean that they have any less respect for their traditional rituals, they simply accept and practice both.

Check Your Progress 5

- i) a) False
b) True
c) True
- ii) The Christian missionaries have played an outstanding role in spreading education among the tribals of India. The government is also committed to provide education to these groups.
- iii) Literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribes, according to Census 1991, is 23.63 per cent.
- iv) The high dropout rate among the tribal students can be related to the following factors:
- a) the curriculum is often not relevant to the tribal society,
 - b) low standard of teaching and lack of facilities in tribal schools,
 - c) domestic duties of tribal children,
 - d) absence of encouragement to students from the family to take their studies seriously,
 - e) medium of instruction,
 - f) education is often aimed to raise literacy rather than to promote social mobility.

Check Your Progress 6

- i) The tribal movements in central India were mainly against the exploiters of the tribals.
- ii) The Santal movement of 1855-57 was aimed at reverting to the Santal religion.
- iii) Tribal associations, named here, serve two purposes? a) they try to keep the group united and b) they form an interest group to demand better deal from the government. For the first purpose, they ask their people to preserve the traditional

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