



# BHARATHIDASAN UNIVERSITY

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI-620 024

TAMIL NADU, INDIA

**Programme: MSW**

**Course Title : Tribal Community Development**

**Course Code : CC-12a**

**UNIT 2**

**Tribal Community Development**

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## **Tribal Community Development**

- **Unit – II**
- **Social System of Tribes:** Socio-economic conditions; Cultural and religious aspects; status of women: dress, food, & marriage-polygamy, polyandry, Dormitory marriage; Status of Children; Tribal leadership and Political Participation -Local, State, and National levels.

# Socio-Economic Conditions of Indian Tribes

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## 1. Economic Activities:

1. Tribes primarily depend on **agriculture, hunting, gathering, and forest-based livelihoods**.
2. Many tribal communities practice shifting cultivation or subsistence farming.
3. Increasing exposure to modernization has led some tribes to engage in wage labor, mining, and plantation work.

## 2. Poverty and Marginalization:

1. Tribes face high levels of **poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality**.
2. Despite government initiatives, access to education, healthcare, and basic amenities remains limited.

## 3. Government Policies and Interventions:

1. Various schemes like **Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana, PESA Act, and Forest Rights Act** aim to uplift tribal communities.
2. Reservation policies in education and employment are in place but are often hindered by implementation challenges.

## 4. Land and Resource Issues:

1. Tribes are frequently displaced due to industrial projects, mining, and deforestation.
2. Loss of land and access to traditional resources further exacerbates their socio-economic struggles.

# Cultural and Religious Aspects of Indian Tribes

## 1. Diversity in Traditions:

1. Tribes have unique cultural identities, languages, and traditions.
2. Artistic expressions include **dance, music, crafts, and tattoos**.
3. Each tribe has distinct rituals related to birth, marriage, death, and harvest.

## 2. Religious Beliefs:

1. Most tribes practice **animism**, worshipping nature, ancestors, and spirits.
2. Common practices include reverence for sacred groves, animals, and rivers.
3. Many tribes are transitioning to mainstream religions like Hinduism, Christianity, or Islam while retaining their traditional beliefs.

## 3. Festivals and Celebrations:

1. Tribes celebrate festivals linked to agricultural cycles, hunting, and seasonal changes.
2. Examples include the **Hornbill Festival** (Nagas), **Karam Festival** (Santhals), and **Pongal** (South Indian tribes).

## 4. Community Life:

1. Tribal communities are closely knit, with a strong sense of **collectivism**.
2. Decision-making is often communal, guided by elders or traditional leaders.

## Status of Women in Tribal Communities

- **Status of Women in Tribal Communities**

### **1. Role in Society:**

1. Tribal women often play a significant role in the **economy, family, and rituals**.
2. They contribute to agriculture, gathering, household management, and cultural practices.
3. In many tribes, women enjoy greater freedom and autonomy compared to their counterparts in non-tribal societies.

### **2. Challenges Faced:**

1. Despite their vital roles, tribal women face challenges like **poverty, limited education, and healthcare access**.
2. Issues like early marriage and domestic violence persist in some tribal communities.

## Dress of Tribal Women

- **Dress of Tribal Women**

### 1. Traditional Attire:

1. Tribal women wear clothing made from **locally available materials** like cotton, wool, or bark.
2. Attire is often colorful and adorned with **handmade embroidery, beads, and ornaments**.
3. Examples:
  1. **Toda women** (Tamil Nadu): Wear a distinctive white and red embroidered shawl called "Puthukuli."
  2. **Santhal women** (Jharkhand): Prefer colorful sarees with bold patterns.

### 2. Ornaments and Accessories:

1. Tribal women wear **necklaces, bangles, earrings, and anklets**, often made from beads, shells, or metals.
2. Tattoos are also a significant part of tribal adornment in many regions.

## Food of Tribal Communities

- **Food of Tribal Communities**

### 1. Staple Diet:

1. Tribal diets are based on **locally available resources**, emphasizing simplicity and nutrition.
2. Staples include **millets, rice, tubers**, and **forest produce** like fruits, roots, and leaves.

### 2. Non-Vegetarian Practices:

1. Many tribes consume **meat, fish, and insects**, often as a source of protein.
2. Hunting and fishing form a crucial part of their sustenance activities.

### 3. Special Dishes:

1. Tribes have unique cooking styles and traditional recipes.
  1. Example: **Mahua liquor** (Central Indian tribes) and **Bamboo shoot curry** (North-Eastern tribes).

### 4. Social Aspects of Food:

1. Food is often prepared and consumed collectively, reflecting the communal nature of tribal societies.

# Marriage Practices in Tribal Communities

- **Marriage Practices in Tribal Communities**

- Tribal marriage customs are unique and vary widely among different tribes. Some notable practices include:

1. **Polygamy:**

1. **Definition:** A man marries multiple women simultaneously.
2. **Prevalence:** Common in tribes like **Gonds** and **Baigas** (Central India).
3. **Reason:** Often associated with economic factors, where additional wives contribute to agricultural or domestic work.

2. **Polyandry:**

1. **Definition:** A woman marries multiple men, often brothers (fraternal polyandry).
2. **Prevalence:** Practiced by tribes like **Toda** (Tamil Nadu) and **Kinnaura** (Himachal Pradesh).
3. **Reason:** Helps in resource sharing, especially in regions with scarce agricultural land.

3. **Dormitory Marriage:**

1. **Definition:** Common among tribes like **Santhals** and **Murias**, where boys and girls live in separate youth dormitories.
2. **Purpose:**
  1. These dormitories serve as centers for socialization, education, and interaction.
  2. Relationships formed here often lead to marriage.

4. **Other Unique Practices:**

1. **Bride Price:** In many tribes, the groom's family gives a bride price to the bride's family (e.g., Nagas and Santhals).
2. **Love Marriages:** Tribes like the **Gond** often allow love marriages, showcasing progressive attitudes.



## Status of Children in Tribal Communities

- **Status of Children in Tribal Communities**

### 1. Role in Family and Community:

1. Children are considered a **blessing** and are integral to family life.
2. They participate in household chores, agricultural activities, and cultural practices from a young age.

### 2. Education:

1. Education levels among tribal children are **low**, with high dropout rates due to economic pressures and lack of access.
2. Government initiatives like **Eklavya Model Residential Schools** aim to improve literacy and education.

### 3. Health and Nutrition:

1. Tribal children face issues like **malnutrition, infant mortality, and limited healthcare access**.
2. Their diet is primarily based on locally available resources, which may not always meet nutritional needs.

### 4. Cultural Involvement:

1. Children are actively involved in **festivals, rituals, and community celebrations**, helping preserve tribal heritage.

### 5. Challenges:

1. Child labor is prevalent in economically challenged tribes.
2. Early marriage is common in some tribes, limiting opportunities for girls.

# Traditional Tribal Leadership

- **Traditional Tribal Leadership**

- 1. Role and Structure:**

1. Tribal leadership traditionally rests with **chiefs, elders, or councils**.
2. Leaders resolve disputes, oversee resource management, and maintain social and cultural norms.

- 2. Community Governance:**

1. Decision-making is often **consensus-based** and rooted in tribal customs.
2. Many tribes still rely on their indigenous systems for internal governance.

- 3. Transition to Modern Governance:**

1. Traditional leadership coexists with constitutional governance, creating dual systems in some tribal areas.

# Local-Level Political Participation

- **Local-Level Political Participation**

- 1. Panchayati Raj System:**

1. The **Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA)** empowers tribal communities in Scheduled Areas to self-govern.
2. Tribes have the authority to manage natural resources and approve development plans.

- 2. Participation in Local Governance:**

1. Tribes actively participate in **Gram Sabhas** and elect representatives to Panchayats.
2. Tribal women are encouraged to participate through **reservation policies**.

- 3. Challenges:**

1. Limited awareness of rights and policies often restricts effective participation.
2. Traditional leaders sometimes clash with elected representatives.

# State-Level Political Participation

- **State-Level Political Participation**

- 1. Representation in Legislative Assemblies:**

1. Seats are reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in State Legislative Assemblies under the Constitution.
2. Tribal leaders advocate for policies addressing their community's needs, such as education, healthcare, and land rights.

- 2. Role of Tribal Leaders:**

1. Many tribal leaders have emerged as influential politicians at the state level, bridging the gap between tribal communities and mainstream politics.

- 3. Challenges:**

1. Tribes in non-Scheduled Areas often lack political representation.
2. Corruption and external influences sometimes undermine their leadership.

## National-Level Political Participation

- **National-Level Political Participation**

- 1. Representation in Parliament:**

1. Reserved seats for Scheduled Tribes exist in the **Lok Sabha** and **Rajya Sabha**, ensuring tribal voices are heard at the national level.
2. Prominent tribal leaders like **Jaipal Singh Munda** (a key figure in framing the Constitution) have significantly contributed to national politics.

- 2. Tribal Development Policies:**

1. Tribal representatives advocate for policies like the **Forest Rights Act**, **PESA**, and educational reforms.
2. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs collaborates with tribal MPs to address community-specific issues.

- 3. Representation in National Movements:**

1. Tribes have contributed to independence and social justice movements, with leaders like **Birsa Munda** becoming icons of resistance.

## Key Challenges

- Key Challenges in Political Participation
- Lack of Awareness
- Many tribal communities remain unaware of their political rights and the importance of participation.
- Language and Cultural Barriers: Communication gaps often hinder interaction with mainstream political systems.
- Marginalization
- Tribes in remote areas struggle to influence policies that impact their lives.
- Way Forward Capacity Building
- Programs to educate and empower tribal leaders and communities about their rights and governance structures.
- Increased Representation
- Strengthening tribal representation in decision-making bodies at all levels.
- Preservation of Traditional Leadership
- Integrating traditional leadership into modern governance systems to ensure cultural continuity.