

Distinctive features of the Indian Tribes

1. Definite Common Topography:

Tribal people live within a definite topography and it is a common place for all the members of a particular tribe occupying that region.

In the absence of a common but definite living place, the tribals will lose other characteristics of a tribal life, like common language, way of living and community sentiment etc.

2. Sense of Unity:

Unless and until, a group living in a particular area and using that area as a common residence, does not possess the sense of unity, it cannot be called a tribe. Sense of unity is an invariable necessity for a true tribal life. The very existence of a tribe depends upon the tribal's sense of unity during the times of peace and war.

3. 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.

4. Common Dialect:

Members of a tribe exchange their views in a common dialect. This element further strengthens their sense of unity.

5. Ties of Blood-relationship:

Blood-relation is the greatest bond and most powerful force inculcating sense of unity among the tribals.

6. 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 the tribal chief.

7. 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.

8. Common Culture:

Common culture of a tribe springs out from the sense of unity, common language, common religion, common political organisation. Common culture produces a life of homogeneity among the tribals.

9. Importance of Kinship:

Kinship forms the basis of tribal social organization. Most tribes are divided into exogamous clans and lineages. The marriage among tribals is based on the rule of tribal endogamy. Marriage is viewed as a contract and there are no prohibition on divorce and remarriage.

10. 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.

11. 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.

Robert Goodland has given the following characteristics of the tribal people:

- (a) Geographical isolation or semi-isolation;
- (b) Un-aculturated or partially acculturated into national society.
- (c) Largely or entirely independent of the national economic system;
- (d) Ethnic distinctiveness from the national society;
- (e) Economic base tightly dependent on their, specific environment;
- (f) Possessing leadership but no more national representation, and few, if any political rights.