

TRIBAL SOCIETY

A tribe can be defined as a community living in hilly forest or well demarcated areas having its own culture, religion, language, and strong ethnic identity. Anthropologists have explained tribe as a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous in nature; with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal chiefs, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, conscious of their ethnic and territorial homogeneity.

Characteristics of Tribal Society

From the above definition, we may list the following characteristics of tribal society.

- i) They have usually a well-demarcated geographical territory.
- ii) Generally they live in forests or hilly areas.
- iii) Their territory is relatively isolated or semi-isolated compared to other social group
- iv) They have their own culture, folklore, cosmology and belief system.
- v) Economically they are self-sufficient, i.e. their economy is based on subsistence level where there is no concept of surplus. They cling to primitive technology. They lack monetary economy. Their economy is dependent on barter exchange.
- vi) They are more interested in earning their today's need and do not bother about their future requirements.
- vii) They have their own language; generally do not have any script.
- viii) They have their own political system, i.e. both stateless and state. Earlier they had stateless system, i.e. without any tribal chief. They manage their law and order system through family and kinship ties. Later on, came the state system, when tribals nominated or elected their own chiefs. Today, of course this autonomy has been lost and they have become part of the local administration.
- ix) Tribal societies are known as simple societies because their social relationships are primarily based on family and kinship ties. Besides they do not have any rigid social stratification.
- x) They have their own religion, i.e. having their own deities(gods and goddesses) and belief system. Their forms of religion are known as animism (worshipping the soul or ancestors), animatism (worshipping any non-living body like stone or wood), totemism (worshipping a tree or any animal as the