



## Tribals in India

**Policies on Scheduled Tribes**

*Harsh Chouhan*

**Healthcare Challenges**

*Dr H Sudarshan, Dr Tanya Seshadri*

**The North Eastern Milieu**

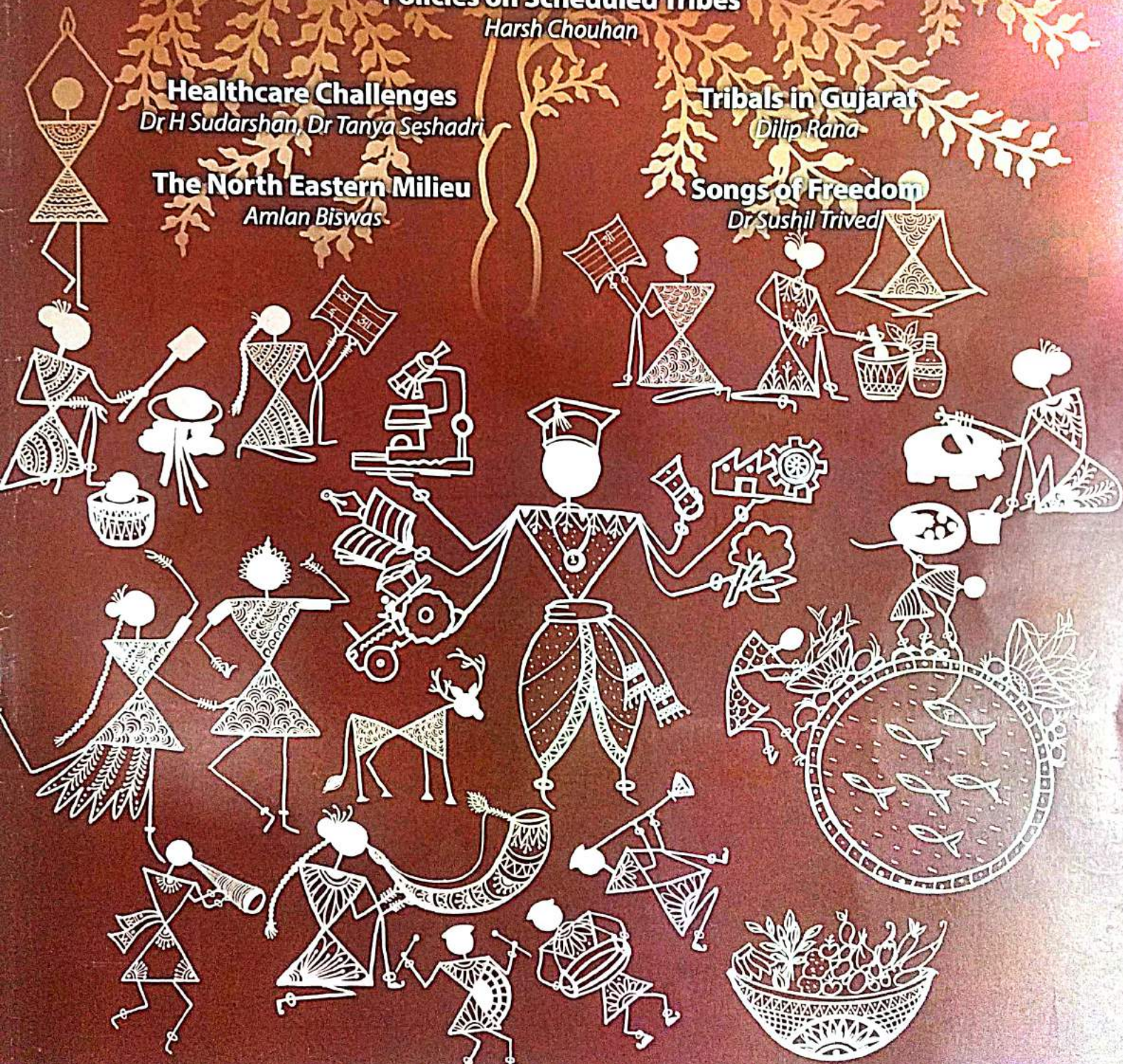
*Amlan Biswas*

**Tribals in Gujarat**

*Dilip Rana*

**Songs of Freedom**

*Dr Sushil Trivedi*







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Let noble thoughts come to us from all sides.  
Rig Veda

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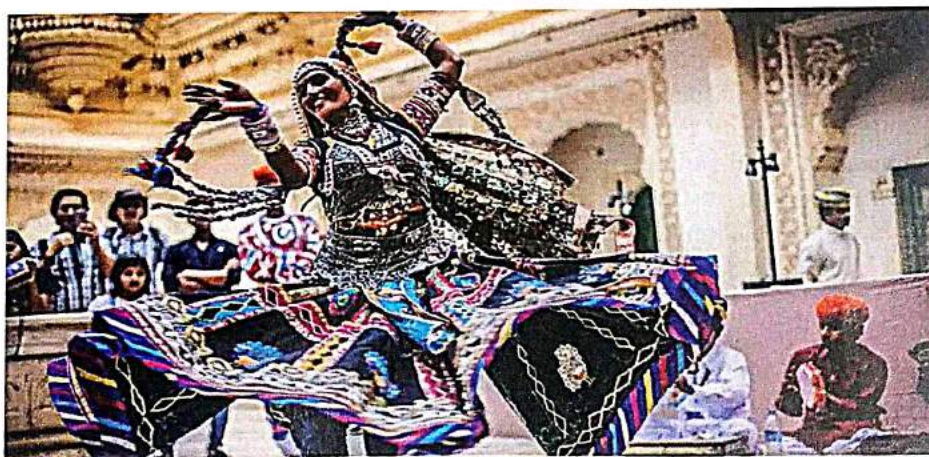
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YOJANA is published in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.





## Universal Basic Income

I am one of your regular readers. I have gone through the May 2022 issue of your prestigious magazine.

The editorial has highlighted the issue of safeguarding the interests of the people in healthcare, old age, unemployment, etc. There is an urgent need to formulate and implement Universal Basic Income Scheme a top priority across the country through the Central Government, to cover all the segments of society for achieving the objective of self reliance and sustainability.

– Ravi Bhushan

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## Collectible Issue on Fintech

Yojana is close to my heart. Since my college days, I have been regularly reading this popular magazine without fail in which honesty and impartiality are the hallmark traits. It is a storehouse of knowledge. April 2022 Yojana is a collectible issue consisting of articles like “Digital Identity”, “Quality Education”, “Fintech Revolution” and “Fintech Beyond Boundaries” that are excellent pieces of writing. They are instructive and informative. The editorial is also heart touching. I sincerely thank Yojana team for their honest effort and dedication.

– Prabhudutt Dash

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prabhuduttdash@gmail.com

## Article on Agriculture

“Safety Net for Farmers” by Jagdeep Saxena is an enlightening article with details that must reach the field-level farmers through Gram Panchayats, most of whom are unaware of the various schemes.

– Rajiv N Magal

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rajivmagal2016@gmail.com

## Reflections

I purchased April 2022 issue of Yojana and was thrilled to read varied excellent articles on Fintech, Digital Identity, Quality Education, in a magazine at an affordable price of Rs 22 only. It may be noted that while going through the article on “Quality Education” by Shailendra Sharma and Dr Saneel Thakur, the authors have mentioned NEP 2022 as New Educational Policy which is National Education Policy (NEP) 2022.

– Dr Banwari Lal Gupta

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## In-sync with UPSC Syllabus

I am a regular reader of this monthly journal. I am a huge fan of Yojana because it covers relevant topics and expresses them in easy language to make it comprehensive for all to read. It has helped in securing success in many exams. I thank Yojana for being the best helper in my preparation. It is helping me a lot to remain determined, consistent, and inspired during the course, especially with the articles that are helpful as per the syllabus. Thanks to the Yojana team for the help you provided during my entire UPSC journey.

– Gajavalli Kalyani

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## Broad Spectrum of Views

The issue on Union Budget 2022 was quite insightful. I must appreciate the broad spectrum of views covered under the theme. Promoting technology-enabled development, energy transition and climate action remained at the heart of this year's budget. In other words, the Government is aiming at a long-term vision of achieving sustainable growth. My best regards to the team of Yojana.

– Zahinuddin

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# Tribals: Sustaining the Roots

The tribal communities of India are deep-rooted with the nature, indigenous livelihood, oral traditions, folk culture and are mostly confined to their own people. The word 'tribe' was originally a latin word *tribus*, meaning 'the poor', later used to specify the masses. Living in bucolic simplicity, in the colonial ethnography and anthropology, they offer invaluable heritage to our country, along with historical significance through their participation in India's struggle for freedom. These self-reliant communities enjoyed the autonomy of governance over the territory they inhabited until the colonial rulers started merging them with the dominant population. The spirit of Swaraj has been expressed very poignantly in the two-lined rhyme of the folk song 'Dadariya' in Chhattisgarhi:

*Diya mange bati, bati mange tel  
Su-raj lebo angrej, katka debe jail?*

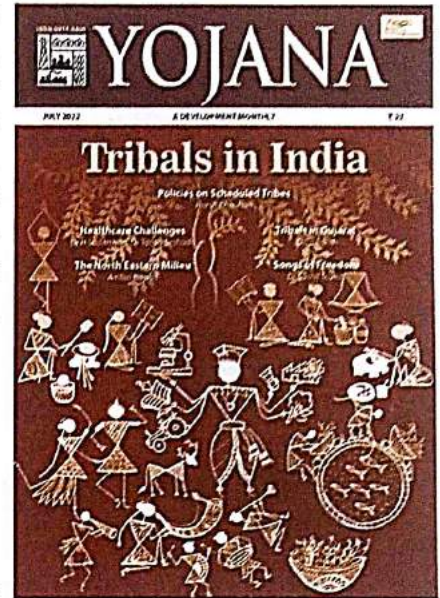
The lamp needs a wick, and the wick needs oil.  
Oh, British! We will take Swaraj (self-rule)  
no matter how many times you put us in jail.

Tribals with their organic lifestyle and beliefs challenge the modern way of reckless living and development needs. Their sustainable living provides lessons to the world struggling with pressing issues like climate change and environmental issues.

From time to time, the tribals have faced displacement and deprivation to facilitate various developmental projects such as setting up of industrial operations, construction of dams, etc., leading to deforestation, and further pushing them towards the periphery of the social construct. The common expectation from them to follow the mainstream culture for their own growth, hinders with their beliefs and practices, thus erasing their identities under pre-established systems. Therefore, it becomes challenging and at the same time necessary that they are recognised for who they are and attributed a certain unique position in the society. The Article 46 of the Constitution aims that 'the State shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people, and, in particular, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation'.

Thereafter, the Government strengthened these rights with Articles 15 and 16- further protecting the STs. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 'to prevent the commission of offenses or atrocities against the members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and to provide relief and rehabilitation for the victims of atrocities' was passed by the Parliament, realising the significance and urgency to preserve these communities. Several Schemes and policies are being introduced to be inclusive of the tribal communities and recognising their vulnerable situation which prevents them from receiving egalitarian privileges and social status. Recently, the birth anniversary of the renowned tribal leader Birsa Munda on 15<sup>th</sup> November has been announced as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas' to commemorate the struggles and sacrifices of tribal freedom fighters during the independence movement.

In contemporary India, the tribal communities continue to outshine in various fields such as education, sports, various art forms (dance, music, painting, etc.), and add to the cultural presence of India. Our country is making efforts towards restoring the legacy of the tribal communities, their identity and inheritance, paying homage to them being an indispensable part of our society. It is imperative that the policymakers continue to safeguard the tribal rights so as to ensure inclusive development of the society. □





## Policies on Scheduled Tribes

Harsh Chouhan

*The framers of the Constitution took note of the fact that certain communities in the country were suffering from extreme social, educational and economic backwardness on account of the primitive agricultural practices, lack of infrastructure facilities and geographical isolation. In order to uplift such communities, a provision was made in the Constitution of India, in the form of reservation for them in education, employment and in the governing bodies, as Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). The Constitution of India in Article 366 (25) prescribes that the Scheduled Tribes mean 'such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 of the Constitution to be Scheduled Tribes'.<sup>1</sup> STs are notified in 30 States/UTs and the number of individual ethnic groups, etc., notified as STs is 705.*

**T**raditionally, Scheduled Tribes enjoyed total autonomy over the governance of their affairs. This system of autonomy was dismantled during the British Raj in India. Tribal communities in India were viewed with derision by the British and various legislations were brought to alienate them from their ancestral rights and further criminalised upon demanding their rights. The Constitution makers adopted specific measures to protect the rights of STs. Article 46 of the Constitution provides that 'the State shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people, and, in particular, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Articles 15 and 16 empowered the Government for making special provisions for the Scheduled Tribes. In addition to the constitutional provisions, the Parliament has passed the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 'to prevent the commission of offenses or atrocities against the members of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and to provide relief and rehabilitation for the victims of atrocities'.<sup>2</sup> The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 'recognises and vests forest rights and occupation on forest land to Scheduled Tribes'.<sup>3</sup>

It is important that the constitutional rights given to Scheduled Tribes are protected and special emphasis is given to them in the planning process. For the purpose of protecting these rights, the makers of the Constitution created the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) which is duty-bound to act

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आज़ादी का  
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BIRSA  
MUNDA



A peerless protagonist of tribal rights,  
he made the Munda people unite for  
their political emancipation and infused  
in them the spirit of nationalism.

#AmritMahotsav

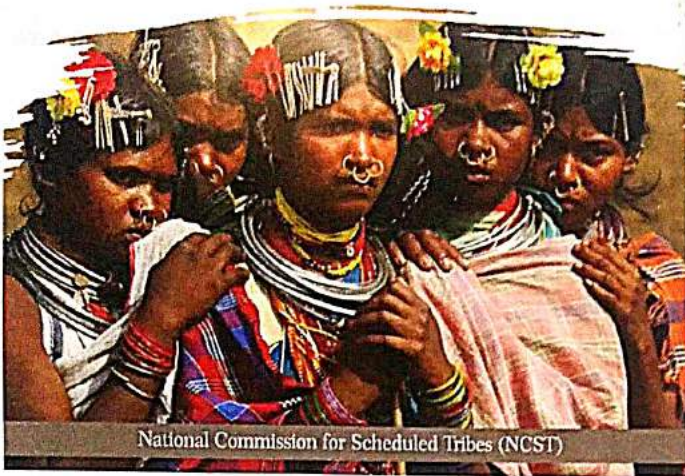
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NCST prevents crimes and atrocities against Scheduled Tribes.



as a watchdog and think tank for the STs. NCST has a constitutional duty to protect the rights of the tribal people and ensure the responsibilities of different institutions for their welfare.

NCST is a constitutional body established under Article 338A of the Constitution of India. Its organisational structure comprises a Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, and three Members, appointed by the President of India. The Commission has a permanent Secretariat in New Delhi, six regional offices across the country, and has the powers of a Civil Court.

A tribal person is usually not a *hitagraahi*, i.e., self-centered or individualistic one; he/she is generally a *aparmaarathi* (altruist). The tribal people accord priority to the community before pursuing individual gains. The community is the repository of knowledge and resources. Their vulnerability is the result of the apathy of other communities towards them.

The issues of Janjati, i.e., tribal communities in India are unique in nature, owing to their distinct cultural pattern and value systems across different regions. Wherever they live, they have been following a developmental approach ensuring ecological balance along with economic development, which is termed as Sustainable Development in the modern world. Considering this perspective, specific needs were identified and NCST had been given a special constitutional status which is envisaged as follows:

**Article 46 of the Constitution provides that 'the State shall promote with special care, the educational and economic interest of the weaker section of the people, and, in particular, the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation'.**

- to investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Tribes;
- to inquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the Scheduled Tribes;
- to participate and advise on the planning process of socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State;
- to make such reports and recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or any State for the effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes;
- to discharge other such functions in relation to the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the Scheduled Tribes, and
- to present to the President, annually and at such other times, as the Commission may deem fit, reports upon the working of those safeguards. The Union and every State Government shall consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting Scheduled Tribes.

While investigating the matters referred to in sub-clause (a) or inquiring into any complaint referred to in sub-clause (b) of Clause 5, the Commission has all the powers of a Civil Court trying a suit and in particular in respect of the following matters<sup>4</sup>, namely:

- Summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath;
- Requiring the discovery and production of any documents;
- Receiving evidence on affidavits;
- Requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office;
- Issuing summons communications for the examination of witnesses and documents;
- Any other matters which the President may by rule determine.

In accordance with Clause 9 of Article 338A of the Constitution, 'the Union and every State Government shall consult the Commission on all major policy matters affecting the Scheduled Tribes'.<sup>5</sup>



NCST has identified ten areas for policy implementation and investigation, which raise primary concerns related to the tribal communities, such as— forest rights (CFR & PESA)<sup>6</sup>, R&R<sup>7</sup>, mining-related issues (DMF & MMDRR)<sup>8</sup>, financial issues and implementation of development schemes, atrocities, grievances, inclusion and exclusion, health and nutrition, education, legal and constitutional issues, Scheduled Tribes Component in welfare schemes. Within these ten areas, the Commission performs 'grievance redressal and planning'. It derives its power for grievance redressal from 5(a) and (b) of Article 338A whereas 5(c) and (e) mandate participation in the planning process.<sup>5</sup>

### Grievance Redressal

NCST as a constitutional body, has played a key role in the advancement and in securing the rights of STs in India. It receives a number of representations from individuals, civil societies, and non-governmental organisations regarding injustice being meted out to persons belonging to STs. The print and electronic media also highlight the issues relating to atrocities, exploitation and social injustice on people belonging to these tribes. As soon as the matters get the attention of the Commission, every effort is made for providing justice to persons belonging to the STs. In order to achieve this, the Commission enjoys cooperation and assistance from all organs of the state. To reach out

The issues of Janjati, i.e., tribal communities in India are unique in nature, owing to their distinct cultural pattern and value systems across different regions. Wherever they live, they have been following a development approach ensuring ecological balance along with economic development, which is termed as Sustainable Development in the modern world.

to the people in the field, members of the Commission visit different locations in the country. On such occasions, tribal communities get opportunities for redressal of their grievances in their respective places. NCST has also launched an e-portal [www.ncstgrams.gov.in](http://www.ncstgrams.gov.in) for the public to register their complaints.

### Planning

Planning and effective implementation of appropriate schemes of development are imperative so that the tribal communities can realise their full potential. The Commission is

committed to associate itself with the planning process to fulfill the responsibility entrusted by the Constitution of India.

Studies conducted by anthropologists have brought to light, the changes that have taken place among the tribal communities in the backdrop of the processes of acculturation, modernisation and globalisation. Their studies reveal that the basic principles of life and culture of the tribal communities in India, broadly center around the values, such as:

1. Identification with nature; their inseparability with nature in body, mind and spirit.
2. Coexistence, amity and empathy with other living beings.
3. Collective living or collective subsistence and the principle of 'sharing'— sharing the food, land and forest resources, sharing the seeds, labour and hardship, sharing the misfortunes and risks in living in mountains and forests, and so on.
4. Non-accumulation of personal property or wealth or in other words, sustainable and simple living.
5. Restraint and resolving disputes by withdrawal. The tribal people never encroach; rather they generally withdraw, and avoid conflicts. □

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Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

**JATRA BHAGAT**

The founder of Bhagat Movement in Chota Nagpur (Jharkhand), Jatra guided his fellow mates to disobey regulations imposed by the British rulers. His followers are called 'Tana Bhagats'. Around 1921, they also took part in the Non-Cooperation Movement.

#AmritMahotsav

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## Healthcare Challenges

*Dr H Sudarshan  
Dr Tanya Seshadri*

*The United Nation's State of the World's Indigenous Peoples Report states that "for indigenous peoples, health is equivalent to the harmonious co-existence of human beings with nature, with themselves and with others, aimed at integral well-being, in spiritual, individual, and social wholeness and tranquillity." It goes on to declare that when it comes to appropriate health systems for the indigenous context, "models of healthcare must take into account the indigenous concept of health and preserve and strengthen indigenous health systems as a strategy to increase access and coverage of health care. This will demand the establishment of clear mechanisms of cooperation among relevant healthcare personnel, communities, traditional healers, policy makers, and government officials in order to ensure that the human resources respond to the epidemiological profile and socio-cultural context of indigenous communities." However globally, most health systems struggle at different degrees to reach adequate and appropriate healthcare to their indigenous people.*

**I**n India, region to region, one tribal community to another, we recognise challenges both in terms of reaching care, and in moving beyond disease-centred healthcare to integrated approaches to health and development of the tribal people.

While the distinct socio-cultural-political context of each tribe dictates a focused understanding on their health status and planning for appropriate health services, in India, little data is available to allow such reflection. The main sources for health data for tribal people in India are the demographic health surveys conducted periodically by the government. However, their methodologies do not allow for reliable estimates or disaggregation at the local levels. The routine health information systems of the government also do not capture the tribal identity of those interacting with government health services and so, while much detailed data on services utilisation and programme implementation are available, they do not allow for disaggregation of data based on tribal status, and thereby the various health problems

and health system deficiencies in reaching tribal people remains hidden for many years till the census or national survey reveals the significant gaps. Research among tribal populations in India are often limited to cross-sectional surveys focusing on specific diseases like malaria on pregnancy and related outcomes, and seldom focus on the



*World No Tobacco Day awareness programme*

Dr H Sudarshan is a recipient of the Padma Shri award and has been associated with the health, education, and welfare of tribal people for over four decades in Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, and West Bengal while also contributing to various state- and national-level expert committees/task forces on tribal health. Email: [drhsudarshan@gmail.com](mailto:drhsudarshan@gmail.com)

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*Mobile clinics in remote tribal hamlet*

larger socio-political issues that underlie the poor reach and access to health services for many tribal people. Much of the neglect of tribal health could be attributed to the paucity of available and accurate information at the hamlet or tribal population levels. This in turn leads to lack of understanding and responsiveness of local health systems to tribal-specific health problems.

Currently, the efforts of gathering and visualising information on tribal health is undertaken by large government taskforces like the Tribal Health Report published by the expert committee in 2018, or through local civil society initiatives focusing on a particular condition or an event/landscape. These snapshots often do not provide a comprehensive assessment of the situation on ground and generally do not attempt to answer the 'why' or 'how' questions related to the health of tribal people in a particular region or landscape.

The most significant limitation is that the different conversations on health seldom acknowledge the impact of various critical social determinants of health and the people's struggle with forest rights that impact these determinants significantly. A tribal family that does not yet have legitimate ownership over ancestrally cultivated and owned lands, lives in a state of perpetual food and livelihood insecurity, possibly prioritising child health and education lesser than more pressing daily living needs. These stark living conditions and chronic lifelong stress hardly reflect in conventional measures of morbidity and mortality; they affect the family's utilisation and the way they engage with health services, even if these services are available and geographically accessible. Unfortunately, assessments of many key social determinants by health researchers are few.

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**Research among tribal populations in India are often limited to cross-sectional surveys. Mental health illnesses and substance abuse are poorly studied in these communities; the latter is emerging to be a serious social concern in many tribal communities across the country, and seldom focus on the larger socio-political issues that underlie the poor reach and access to health services for many tribal people.**

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## Health Status

Despite decades of focus on reproductive and child health across the country, there still remains severe deficiencies for access to antenatal, delivery and postnatal services across all tribal communities irrespective of the region they belong to. While the programmatic outputs still remain poorer for other communities, in most areas these programmes are not adapted to local geographical or socio-cultural contexts, thereby worsening utilisation and quality of services provided. A uniform family welfare approach across the country prevents adaptation to family welfare needs of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) and other tribal communities; restrictions currently apply for some groups hindering their reproductive rights, while others are in need of infertility care and/or safe abortion services. Appropriate treatment for childhood illnesses in tribal children is poor when compared to their non-tribal counterparts; infant mortalities and under-five mortalities are higher among tribal children in most States. Very little information exists on how to deliver adolescent reproductive and sexual health in tribal areas.

Tribal nutritional intake varies from one region to another; sub-optimal protein, calorie and micronutrient intake is a problem in several tribal communities. Prevalence of undernutrition among school children is generally poorer than non-tribal counterparts. Anaemia and other nutritional deficiency disorders are higher among tribal women and children, contributing to adverse pregnancy outcomes and increased vulnerability of tribal children. Food security schemes have lesser coverage and poor quality in most tribal areas (cf. ICDS).

Incidences of infectious diseases such as malaria are more frequent and have higher morbidity and mortality in most tribal areas. Malaria takes a higher toll in these areas than elsewhere; access to awareness material, preventive measures and appropriate treatment is lacking. Prevalence of HIV/AIDS is comparatively higher in the northeast Indian tribal areas. Disease surveillance and epidemiological data on infectious diseases are inadequate. Focus on infectious diseases control in tribal areas has not been accompanied by a systematic approach to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in tribal areas; very few organisations work on NCDs' care. Certain tribal communities are reported to have significantly high prevalence of NCDs (such as hypertension among tribes of Assam working in tea-gardens); the epidemiological features of these conditions among tribal communities appear to be different from other areas.



Mental health illnesses and substance abuse are poorly studied in these communities; the latter is emerging to be a serious social concern in many tribal communities across the country.

Environmental health is a neglected area in general but in these communities, it is a key social determinant of health. Tribal areas are undergoing rapid transition due to pressures of mining, resource extraction and often adverse impacts of other policies (cf. Forest conservation laws); however tribal health systems are not prepared to deal with health problems arising out of such transitions. Relatively, rare hereditary and genetic diseases are prevalent in higher proportions among tribal communities (cf. Haemoglobinopathies); however health services in tribal areas lack specific programmes and guidelines to organise care and referral for these conditions.

### Health Systems

A health system lens as advocated by the World Health Organization helps us provide an understanding of the health system in terms of financing, resource utilisation, and governance, but we recognise that even this is insufficient. We believe that there is a need to explore the inter-linkages of health with other dimensions of human development like education, land tenure, and empowerment, and that these can no longer be neglected particularly in relation with tribal communities across India. Hence, in order to address some of the challenges in health, we need to acknowledge and address the underlying reasons that influence the wider social determinants.

Poor governance in tribal districts accounts for various deficiencies in delivery of health programmes, schemes and services. Tribal health services are severely underfinanced and need higher allocations to improve equitable growth; uniform per capita across tribal and non-tribal areas contributes to poor performance. There is a disproportionate

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**Tribal nutritional intake varies from one region to another; sub-optimal protein, calorie and micronutrient intake is a problem in several tribal communities. Prevalence of undernutrition among school children is generally poorer than non-tribal counterparts.**

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shortage of health workers in tribal areas; moreover, tribal representation in the health workforce is considerably inadequate, further hampering adaptation and implementation of health programmes in these areas. Restrictive norms and guidelines hinder health worker retention and performance in tribal areas. Shortages in healthcare infrastructure and equipment as well as poor access and quality of health services are widespread in the tribal

areas. Rich traditional health knowledge exists in tribal communities, however the health systems do not harness the potential of positive traditional health practices. At the same time, specific interventions are needed in some areas to curb adverse cultural practices. Several social determinants severely affect tribal health such as geographical isolation, migration, displacement and armed conflict requiring targeted approaches.

On the other hand, research on tribal health is fragmented while disaggregated data on health services' performance, utilisation and coverage are not available. Comprehensive information on tribal health is deficient across all levels be it at district, state or national levels. Tribal health has no special or additional focus in the overall national and State health plans thereby it finds no explicit focus in the corresponding policies and programmes.

Civil society and non-profit NGOs play a key role in delivering services in several tribal areas, and often advocating for tribal specific issues. Typically, these organisations utilise a community-based programme or a facility-based charitable service model to strengthen the health and welfare of the tribal people in a particular geographical region.

### Need for a Special Focus

The term Scheduled Tribes (STs) is a broad category that has over 700 communities with wide differences in



*Community meetings for Covid-19 awareness*





*Street plays for Covid-19 vaccination in tribal hamlets*

genetic, ethnic, cultural and social differences between them. While this categorisation is useful for identifying the group for affirmative action, it does not help to recognise the differences in approaches needed to reach the different tribal people and the significant differences in health outcomes from one tribe to another, from one geographical region to the other. However, despite all these differences, the health indicators in nearly every State for its ST people, lags significantly behind the other people of the State.

The persistent poor health outcomes of tribal people, their particular socio-economic and political scenario and decades of marginalisation from the social, economic, political and cultural mainstream, necessitate a special approach towards our tribal people, especially their health. Such a focus needs to emerge from the grassroots, meaning that districts and local bodies at block levels ought to be sensitised to the need for inclusive processes with respect

to tribal health (or for that matter in education, governance or any other public policy-making initiatives). A national level synthesis of tribal health can only highlight recurring themes and gaps in tribal health, and identify few areas or region-specific problems to be taken up in national and state policies. However, the diversity of landscapes and socio-political environment within which tribal people live, necessitates the need for inclusive governance and local-level planning and sensitisation at the level of health centres and local governments at district levels and below. Clubbing these communities in the lowest economic quintile and expecting larger economic reforms to adequately cater to their needs and problems does not suffice.

The historical behaviour of these communities and their close relationship with the environment in addition, allowed for a few distinct health problems to appear that need special attention. From genetic diseases like haemoglobinopathies to insect/animal-related bites or injuries, many of these communities need screening and care beyond what the local public services are equipped to provide. As seen, the challenges faced by these communities are far beyond the availability of health services. The need of the hour is to go beyond describing problems in health services, and focusing on collaborative partnerships with civil society and community-based organisations to customise and implement local health reforms in partnership with the communities. □



## The North Eastern Milieu

Amlan Biswas

*The word 'tribe' has a Roman origin that was derived from latin word 'tribus', meaning 'the poor'. It was used to specify the masses in the Roman society. In the sixteenth century, it gained popularity in English usage to denote a community in claim of descent from an ancestor. Subsequently, it was used to designate the 'isolated noble savage community' which lived in bucolic simplicity, in the colonial ethnography and anthropology. Tribal communities in India inhabit all parts of the country except the States of Punjab, Haryana and Delhi, and the Union Territories of Chandigarh and Puducherry. They constitute 8.6 per cent of India's total population and are classified into about seven hundred communities which includes both 'major tribes' and 'sub-tribes'.*

**A**round 12 per cent of the total tribal population in India lives in the North Eastern States. But unlike central Indian States, where the tribal population is a minority, tribal communities constitute more than eighty per cent of the State population in Mizoram, Meghalaya and Nagaland. Indeed, NER (North Eastern Region) distinguishes itself in being home to at least 133 Scheduled Tribe groups, out of a total 659 such distinct groups presently identified in India.<sup>1</sup> However, it can be observed that tribal population in Tripura declined from 56 per cent in 1951 to less than 30 per cent in 2001. In Arunachal Pradesh, the tribal population declined from 90 per cent in 1951 to less than 64 per cent in 1991. Bodos, a plain land tribal community of Assam have become a minority in many areas of Bodoland Territorial Region.

### Ecology and Inhabitants

It is widely known that being disturbed by scuffled history and geo-politics, NER has remained backward and less-developed region of the Indian subcontinent though it covers 7.9 per cent geographical area of the country. The region with magnificent hills, deep gorges, wandering rivers and rivulets, undulating land, fertile valleys and varied flora & fauna presents a splendid landscape. Remarkably, it shares as much as 4200 km of international boundary with four nations— Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, and Myanmar. At the same time, it is joined with the rest of India by means of a narrow route

popularly known as the Siliguri corridor or the 'Chicken's Neck'. The region consists of hills as well as plains. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Sikkim could be described as hilly, whereas Assam is largely a plain. The topography and climate have always worked as powerful constraints and kept the North East India a distant geographical region in the country.

In other words, the North Eastern tribal economies are distant and remote from the mainstream national economy. Agriculture being the main occupation and source of livelihood for the farmers, had been and used to be, induced for mono-cropping due to the colonial policy of plunders through encouragement of only plantation crops, the natural factor of high intensity of the rainfall and the socio-economic structures of tribal kinship, in this wet, humid and hilly terrain.



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**RANI GAIDINLIU**

A Naga political leader, Rani Gaidinliu joined the freedom movement at the age of 13. She was arrested during Salt Satyagraha in 1932 and was sentenced to life imprisonment. From 1933-1947, she stayed in different jails and was released only after Independence in 1947 after spending 14 years in jail.

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The intensive cultivation of crops and wide range of crop diversification in agriculture has not been the history in the region. The monsoon paddy has been the dominant field crop. The forest products have been the source of food and fuel. Two distinct types of agricultural practice in NER may be observed (i) settled agriculture in the plains, valleys and gentler slopes and (ii) slash and burn cultivation (called *jhum* cultivation) elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, *jhum* cultivation is the dominant agricultural practice in the hilly states of Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland despite restrictions. Nowadays, agriculture in the form of plantation has been developed instead of *jhum* cultivation in certain States.

In the lowland areas of the Brahmaputra and Barak valleys, three agricultural systems of rice are followed, namely *Sali kheti*, *Ahu kheti*, and *Bao kheti*. These are practised over different seasons of the same year, showing strategic year-round cultivation in the flood zone.<sup>3</sup>

### Culture and Tradition

Each system mentioned above has its own techniques and methods. It depends upon the conditions of environment and climate wherein the farmer's traditional knowledge plays an important role in the selection of land, seeds, time of sowing, transplanting the seedlings, harvesting, storing, and preserving seeds for the next season. This knowledge has been transmitted to them from their forefathers through oral traditions. That is why the North East can be regarded as repository of traditional knowledge systems.

NER is often described as the cultural mosaic of India being receptacle of diverse tribal communities, linguistic, and ethnic identities. The tribal communities of North East India have their own traditional system of governance. Among these, chieftainship is prevalent, while others prefer to be ruled by the village council.

NER is often described as the cultural mosaic of India being receptacle of diverse tribal communities, linguistic, and ethnic identities. On the basis of one or the other factor like socio-cultural similarity, linguistic affinity, ethnic affiliation and common territory, these tribal communities may conveniently be put under certain groups like the Boro, the Khasi, the Naga, the Lushei Kuki, the Arunachali and others. The tribal communities of the North East have their own traditional system of governance. Among these, chieftainship is prevalent, while others prefer to be ruled by the village council.

Tradition was the name given to those cultural features which, in situation of change, were to be continued to be handed on, thought about, not lost.<sup>4</sup> Each society has its own cultural tradition, social system, set of values, custom and different colourful mode of festivities which are mostly related to agriculture. Few of them may be mentioned as Moh-Mol (Tangsa), Mopin & Solung (Adi), Oriah (Wancho), Nyokum (Nyishi), Reh (Mishmi), Lossar (Monpa), Boori-Boot (Hill Miris) in Arunachal Pradesh; Magh Bihu, Bohag Bihu, Ali-Ai-Ligang (Mishing), Baikho (Rabha) and Baishagu (Dimas) and others in Assam; Moatsu (Ao), Ngada (Rengma), Monyu (Phom), Naknyulum (Chang), Sekrenyi (Angami) and Suhkruhye (Chakhensang) in Nagaland; Lai Haraoba dance, Thabal Chongba dance and Raslila and others in Manipur; Chapchar Kut, Mim Kut and Cheraw (the Bamboo Dance) in Mizoram; Kharchi Puja, Garia Puja, Ker Puja and others in Tripura and Wangala Festival (Garo), Shad Suk Mynsieur (Khasi) and Behdienkhlam (Jaintia), apart from others in Meghalaya.

In socio-political life of tribal communities, monarchy and democracy co-exist in principle. The members of the tribes are united by the kinship and marriage, thus it becomes difficult to differentiate between the political and domestic matters. Lineage segmentation is the chief principle of the political structure of the tribal communities. Tribal communities everywhere have been known for far more egalitarian gender relations in their

societies compared to their non-tribal counterparts. The situation in NER is broadly in harmony with this larger picture.

### Recent Changes

But the socio-cultural elements of the tribal communities are not static; rather they are changing for various reasons. They are being exposed to changing environment of varied nature. Accordingly, they take measures to adapt themselves to the new, changed situation, which is very much evident from the eagerness of participation



Table 1: Select Socio-economic Indicators of North East

States	Demographic		Health		Education
	Sex Ratio (2011) <sup>1</sup>	Rural Population (%) (2011) <sup>1</sup>	Infant mortality rate (%) (2013) <sup>2</sup>	Sanitation Facilities (%) (2011) <sup>3</sup>	Literacy rate (%) (2011) <sup>1</sup>
Arunachal Pradesh	938	77.33	32	61.97	65.38
Assam	958	85.92	54	64.89	72.19
Manipur	992	69.79	10	89.30	79.21
Meghalaya	989	79.92	47	62.91	74.43
Mizoram	976	48.49	35	91.91	91.33
Nagaland	931	71.03	18	76.52	79.55
Sikkim	890	75.03	22	87.20	81.42
Tripura	960	73.03	26	86.04	87.22
Overall Country Indicators	940	68.84	40	46.92	74.04

Sources: 1. Government of India, 2011; 2. SRS, 2014; 3. Measured in Percentage of Households, Govt of India (2008-09) Housing Condition and Amenities in India (65<sup>th</sup> Round, NSSO Report No. 535).

to the new global order. That is apparent from the socio economic indicators like sex ratio, education, infant mortality rate or sanitation that reveals some notion of aspiration to tear away the grasp of backwardness or less development (Table 1). Moreover, recent data from standard sample surveys<sup>5</sup> find that women's participation in decision making was higher even than the Southern States.<sup>6</sup>

As per 2011 Census, sex ratio is highest in Manipur (992), followed by Meghalaya (989) and Mizoram (976), and lowest in Sikkim (890). The percentage of population living in rural area is highest in Assam (85.92) and lowest in Mizoram (48.49). Infant Mortality Rate was recorded highest in Assam (54), followed by Meghalaya (47) and Mizoram (35). It is the lowest in Manipur (10).

Figures for sanitation facilities in their dwellings also reflect better position than the overall country indicators. The dependence on rural area is also evident from the figures in Table 1.

Another indicator for holistic development of the area, whether it is District or State, indicating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been made available from 2018. NITI Aayog has been publishing the SDG India Index annually since 2018. The third edition of the NITI Aayog SDG India Index (2020-21) computes goal-wise scores on the 16 SDGs for each State and UT, and a qualitative assessment on Goal 17, covering 17 parameters.

Overall State and UT scores are generated from goal-wise scores to measure aggregate performance of the sub-national unit based on its performance across the 16 SDGs. These scores range between 0-100, with States/UTs being categorised as Aspirant (score 0-49), Performer (score 50-64), Front Runner (65-99), and Achiever (score 100) based on their score. Amongst States, additions to the Front Runner category in 2020-21 included Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Punjab, Haryana, and Tripura. Surprisingly, two States from North Eastern Region, namely Mizoram and Tripura credited their position in the highest rank, i.e., Front Runner category in 2020-21.

Special attention is being paid to achievement of SDGs in the North East, with a North Eastern Region (NER) District SDG Index 2021-22 developed by NITI

Aayog. The Index is constructed from 84 indicators and covers 15 global goals, 50 SDG targets, and 103 districts in the eight States of NER. The index will facilitate in identifying crucial gaps and inform interventions to fast-track progress towards achieving the SDGs in the region. We can observe the district-wise overall performance in the NITI Aayog NER District SDG Index, 2021-22. The score for the 103 districts range from 75.87 in East Sikkim to 53 in Kiphire (Nagaland). There are 64 districts in the Front Runner category and 39 districts in the Performer category. All districts of Sikkim and Tripura fall in the Front Runner category.

**Globalisation imposes a homogeneous consumerist culture and value system on each society. The law of dynamics is universally applied to every society and tribal society is no exception. Thus, the tribal communities' exposure to the forces of change, both indigenous and exogenous, has serious implications on the lifestyle and culture of the tribal communities consequently.**



Globalisation has serious implications on culture of the tribal communities. It imposes a homogeneous consumerist culture and value system on each society. The law of dynamics is universally applied to every society and tribal society is no exception. Thus, the tribal communities' exposure to the forces of change, both indigenous and exogenous, has serious implications on the lifestyle and culture of the tribal communities consequently.

Though agriculture, shifting cultivation in particular, continues to be a prominent means of livelihood for many, their means of livelihood tends to change from subsistence agricultural income towards diversified modern market-oriented employment and economy. Sources of income have been diversified in terms of different occupation that happens to be made available as a result of various development initiatives. Modern education plays a vital role in changing the means of livelihood. This change is associated with an increase of per capita income and educational level systematically. Above all, having no further scope of further details, germination of renouncing statement about the term 'backward and less developed' may be perceived with all humility, though its effect and impact on the tribal communities of the NER may be keenly observed. □

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## Tribals in Gujarat

Dilip Rana

*Scheduled Tribes (STs) have their own distinctive culture, are indigenous, geographically isolated, and low in socio-economic conditions. For centuries, the tribal groups have remained outside the realm of the general development process due to their habitation in forests and hilly tracts. The state government has undertaken various initiatives under Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana to achieve its vision of integrated socio-economic development of tribal community of Gujarat.*

**A**s per the 2011 Census, the total population in the State was 604.39 lakh of which the tribal population, accounting for 14.76% of the total population, was 89.17 lakh. Since 2001, the literacy rate has improved for the tribal communities. The gap reduced from 21.4% to 15.4%. It is imperative to increase literacy rate amongst STs, particularly female population amongst them. There are 26 Scheduled Tribe groups in the State. The major tribal communities are—Bhil, Garasia and Dholi Bhils; Talavia, Halpati; Dhodia; Rathwa; Naikda or Nayaka and Gamit, Gamata.

Tribal communities including Kathodi, Padhar, Siddi, Kolgha, and Kotwalia belong to the Primitive Tribal Groups. In Gujarat, STs are mostly concentrated in the areas along the State's eastern border.

1. **Gamit:** Gamit or Mavchi live in South Gujarat. According to the 2011 Census, the population is 4.24% (3,78,445), in which 1,87,673 males and 1,90,772 females live in 85,331 families. Gamit is believed to be a sub-caste of the original Bhil. The Bhils who settled in the village, in one place are considered to be called Gamit.
2. **Halpati:** Halpati tribes live in Surat, Tapi, Navsari, Valsad, and Bharuch districts of South Gujarat. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 7.21%, which is 6,43,120. A total of 1,48,512 families are divided into a twenty sub-castes. They have sub-castes including Talavia, Rachoria, Voria, Damaria, Valsadia, Olpadia, Mandvi, and Ubi.
3. **Rathwa:** It is mentioned in the Mumbai Gazetteer that the Rathwas came from Alirajpur near Madhya Pradesh. In Gujarat, they mainly inhabit Chhotaudepur, Panchmahal, Dahod districts. According to the 2011

Census, their population is 7.2% (6,42,348). Of these, 3,25,550 are males and 3,16,798 are females, who live in 1,14,073 families. Their occupations include farming, animal husbandry, poultry farming, forestry and labour.

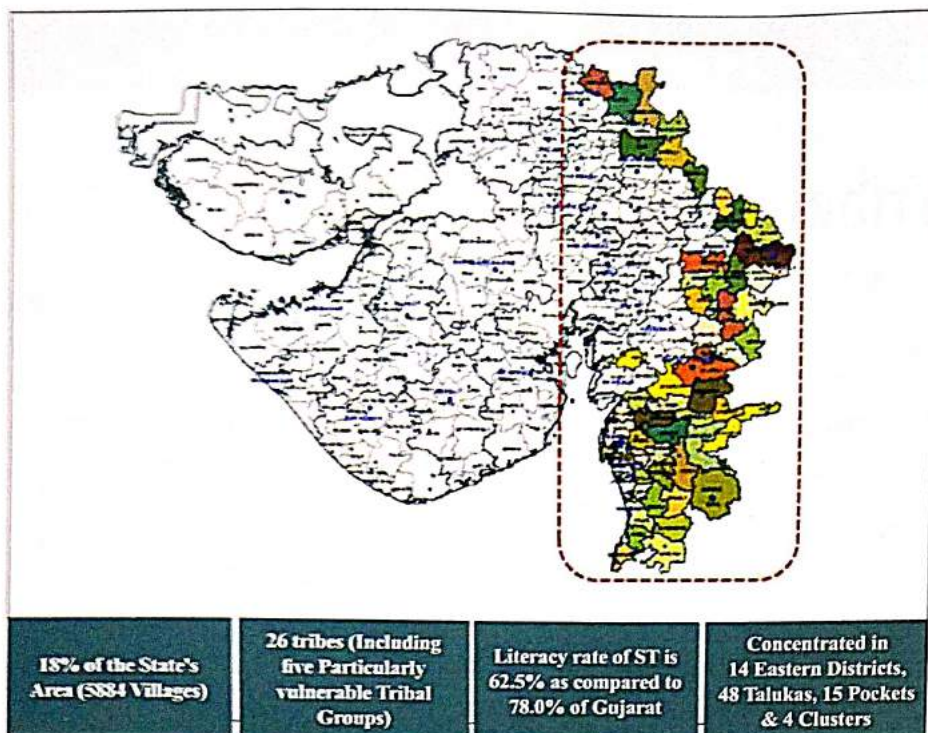
4. **Dhodia:** This tribe is found in Dang, Navsari, Surat, Valsad, Tapi districts of South Gujarat. According to the 2011 Census, the total population is 7.13% (6,35,695). In Bhili dialect, the roof is called Dhuda and its inhabitants are known as Dhundia or 'Dhodia' or Dhodi. They work for a living on farms, fishing, collecting secondary forest products.



The Rathwa tribe

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Panchmahal, Dahod, Dang, Bharuch, Narmada, Tapi, Surat, etc.

7. **Kokna/Kukna:** They came from the Konkan region of India. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 4.05% (3,78,445), living in 72,090 families. They mainly live in the districts of Surat, Navsari, Valsad, Tapi and Dang districts. Their houses consist of cone-shaped roofs made of manure and silt, wooden and palm leaves, and work in agriculture, farm labour, animal husbandry, fishing, marpa farming.

8. **Warli:** Warli comes from the word 'waral'— which means a small piece of land. Warli is a community cultivating small plots of land. According to some, this group is considered to be a sub-caste of Bhil. Four sub-castes are found in

5. **Nayak-Naikda:** According to the 2011 Census, this tribe has a population of 5.16% (4,59,908), in which 2,32,965 men and 2,26,943 women live in 87,297 families. They are mostly found in Panchmahal, Dahod, Kheda, Sabarkantha, Mahisagar, Navsari, Valsad, Surat, Tapi districts. In this group, there are sub-castes like Patel Nayaka, Choliwala Nayaka, Kapadia Nayaka, Mota Nayaka, Nana Nayaka.

6. **Bhil:** The word Bhil comes from the Dravidian word *Billu*— which means bow to shoot arrows. The Bhils have been carrying arrows with them since ancient times, due to which they are believed to be known as Bhils. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this community is 48.28% (42,15,603)— which is inhabited in 7,58,046 families. There are 21,33,216 males and 20,82,387 females. The population of Bhil tribe lives in Banaskantha, Sabarkantha, Aravalli,

the region— Shudra, Mude, Davar and Nihir along with twenty four clans. Warli painting is made on the walls of dung marti with soaked rice water, using acacia and bamboo sticks. These paintings portray socio-cultural beliefs and style of work as the subject matter.

9. **Chaudhri:** Chaudhri community living in the districts of South Gujarat considers itself to be of the Rajput descent. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 3.40% (3,02,958) in which 1,50,446 males and 1,52,512 females live in 68,639 families.

10. **Dhanka:** This caste is found in Bharuch, Chhotaudepur, Dahod, and Panchmahal. According to the folklore, they were originally Chauhan Rajputs. Among them, there are three sub-castes— (1) Tadavi (2) Valvi and (3) Tetaria. The 2011 Census indicates that the population of this tribe is 3.15% (2,80,949), in which 1,44,948 males and 1,36,001 females live in 59,650 families.

11. **Patelia:** After the fall of Patai Rawal in Pavagadh, those Rajputs and Kshatriyas who settled in different forest areas of Dahod, Limkheda, Santrampur, etc., were known as Patelia. They became leaders of the village and were managing village affairs, thus becoming 'Patel' of a village. The 'Patel' in long run was converted into 'Patelia'. The whole tribe is now known as 'Patelia'. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 1.28% (1,14,414), in which 58,290 males and 56,124 females live in 21,378 families.

12. **Pomla:** Based on the Census of Baroda, it can be said that this tribe might have migrated from Madras (Tamil Nadu) to this place about 200 years ago. Their language



The Bhil tribe



has Telugu accent. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.07% (687), in which 358 males and 329 females live in 134 families.

13. **Parghi:** These tribes mainly live in Surat, Valsad, Bharuch, Panchmahal, Vadodara, Sabarkantha, Dang, Kheda, Gandhinagar, Bhavnagar, Amreli, Junagadh, Jamnagar, Kutch, Rajkot, Surendranagar and Banaskantha districts. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.04% (3,450), in which 1,831 males and 1,619 females live in 779 families.
14. **Charan:** This tribe is found in the Ness area of Gir Somnath and Junagadh districts. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.03% (2890) of which 1,483 males and 1,407 females live in 493 families.
15. **Bharwad:** In the Ness Area of Gir, Barda and Alech, the population of Bharwad is included in the Scheduled Tribes. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.02% (1,672), in which 853 males and 819 females live in 636 families.
16. **Rabari:** According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.62% (59,995), in which 30,804 males and 29,191 females live in 9,927 families.
17. **Barda:** According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.01% (748), in which there are 408 males and 340 females. Also known as Baria Bhil, Khandeshi Bhil, Linia or Lahilia Bhil, these tribes live in raw and lined houses in Kutch, Ahmedabad, Gandhinagar, Porbandar, Junagadh, Surat, Vadodara, etc., districts.

**Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY)** focuses on the integrated, holistic and inclusive development of tribal communities in core areas of livelihood, education, health, housing, drinking water, irrigation and access to basic facilities.

18. **Bawcha:** Bawcha might have their origin in Yadav dynasty or Pandav dynasty. According to the oral culture, Bawcha migrated from Maharashtra for socio-political conditions and settled in Gujarat. They were active during the rule of Maharaja Chhatrapati Shivaji and were recruited in Shivaji's army.



19. **Gond:** Gond people speak Gondi dialects which are derived from a mix of Tamil, Kanada and Telugu. It could therefore be presumed that they might have come from South India to Madhya Pradesh. A Gond dynasty is said to have ruled for several centuries in Chandama. There, they could have developed contacts with Telugu people and acquired 'Gond' name. With this name and identity, it is speculated that they migrated towards east. In Gujarat, they are mainly settled in the districts of Surat, Bharuch, Vadodara and Panchmahal. According to the 2011 Census, the population this tribe has is 0.03% in which 1,593 males and 1,372 females lived in 670 families.

20. **Kunbi:** Kunbi Tribe is mostly found in Dang district. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.68% (60,646), in which 30,376 males and 30,270 females live in 12,409 families.

#### Primitive Tribes

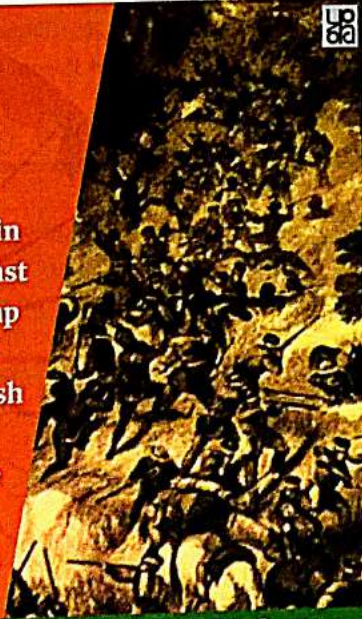
There are total 5 PVTGs (Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups) in Gujarat:

1. **Siddi:** Siddis reside across many States of India, especially in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Kerala. Besides, they are also based in Karnataka in Ankola, Solapur and Mangrol taluka. In Gujarat, they are mostly concentrated in Taluka of Junagadh. They also habitate in the districts of Amreli, Junagadh, Rajkot, Bhavnagar and Porbandar. The African tribe of Anglo-Indian descent who migrated and settled in urban and rural areas of other Indian States are Siddis. They are included in the primitive group. As the 2011 Census states, the population this tribe is 0.10% (8661), in which 4,273 males and 4,388 females live in 1,726 families. They are popularly known for their Dhamal Dance.
2. **Padhar:** In Gujarat, Padhar Primitive Tribal Group is found in Ahmedabad and Surendranagar districts. According to the 2011 Census, the population is 0.35% (30,932) in which 15,911 males and 15,021 females live in 5,566 families. They live in houses made of clay, grass, and wood known as kuba.
3. **Kotwalia:** This tribe is found in the Jagal area of Surat, Navsari, Narmada, Bharuch, Valsad and Putra districts. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.27% (24,249), in which 12,155 males and 12,094 females live in 5,674 families. Since bamboo







## NANA JAGTAP

A Bhil tribal leader, he took a prominent part in the 1857 uprising against British rule. Nana Jagtap led his followers in the battle against the British forces at Beejagarh. He was captured by the British and was martyred at Khargone, Madhya Pradesh.



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is a traditional occupation, it is considered as kalpavriksha.

4. **Kathodi:** Kathodi are also known as Katkari. This name has been derived from their occupation of preparing Catechu. There are two sub-tribes— Son Kathodi and Dhor Kathodi or Son Katkari and Dhor Katkari. Son Kathodi do not consume beef unlike the Dhor Kathodi. Considering their dialects, appearance and other customs, they are considered to be a sub-tribe of Bhils. However, Kathodis believe themselves to be heirs of the deity Hanuman. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.15% (13,632), in which 6,787 males and 6,845 females live in 2,981 families.
5. **Kolgha:** The Kolgha is a primitive tribe living in Valsad, Bharuch, Dang, Vadodara, Navsari districts of South Gujarat. They are originally from Maharashtra, also known as Koli Dhor, Tokre Koli, Kolcha. According to the 2011 Census, the population of this tribe is 0.75% (67,119), in which 34,009 males and 33,110 females live in 14,222 families.

#### Tribal Culture

**Art– Pithora and Warli Paintings:** The Rathwa tribes of Central Gujarat have their bamboo walls plastered with clay and the local deity Pithoradev is painted on the wall to celebrate a joyous occasion. It is the most colourful wall decoration found amongst tribals today.

Paintings of Warlis of South Gujarat are ritual decorations during weddings. The village women draw patterns on the walls of the bride's house with rice-powder after clay-plastering.

**Tribal Wear:** Tribal wear differs from tribe to tribe and from place to place. In the South Gujarat, the Bhils put on langoti. The females of Narmada area put chaniya (a skirt), while in South, the women wear a Sari. The women of the North-East, the Bhils, Rathwas, Patellyas, Nayakadas use multi-plated Chaniyas (skirts) and Julri on the upper half of the body.

In the North Gujarat, the tribal man puts on a dhoti, shirt and faliya (headscarf). In the Panch Mahals, the tribal man puts on a jacket and lungi. The Rathwa men put on loincloth, Khamish (shirt) and head hajuriya (head-wear). The women put on coloured chaniya (skirt), coloured Kabja (jacket, blouse), Odhni (headcloth). In the North, the Bhil women put on baloyas (kind of bangles) from wrist to elbow, and pijaniyas (heavy anklet) of brass on legs. In the Panch Mahals, women put on brass or silver kadas or bangdis, and or baloyas (kinds of bangles) from wrist to shoulder and



Warli painting is made on the walls of dung murti with soaked rice water, using acacia and bamboo sticks.

brass or silver ornaments from heels to kneel.

In South Gujarat, the men of Chaudhari, Gamit, Dhodhiya, and Kukna tribes put on dhoti or half pant and trousers, Khamish (shirt) and Fento (turban) or a cap. The women wear thick textured bright saris of Kachhora style and kabjo (blouse). Gamit women put stone ornaments on their necks. North-Eastern Bhil men always have bow and arrows, gun, sword, and dhariya-gadonsa (wooden long-handled dagger) in their hand. Northern parts bear Rajasthani influence and the southern parts bear Maharashtrian influence in lives including their dresses. Different tribal groups use

different types of apparel.

**Tribal Healing System– Bhagat Bhava:** These are found in the tribal belts of Gujarat, especially Dang, Narmada, Valsad forest dominated areas of Dahod, Panchmahal, Sabarkantha, and Banaskantham. They play an important part in religion, health and society of the tribals.

The Government has successfully undertaken various initiatives under Vanbandhu Kalyan Yojana (VKY) to achieve its vision of integrated socio-economic development of tribal community of Gujarat. VKY focuses on the integrated, holistic and inclusive development of tribal communities in core areas of livelihood, education, health, housing, drinking water, irrigation and access to basic facilities. The approach is need-based, outcome-oriented and done in mission mode implementation of schemes and various interventions. □

#### Endnotes

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## Tribal Songs of Chhattisgarh

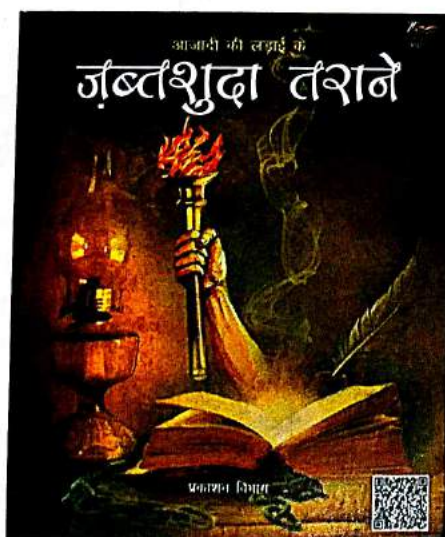
Dr Sushil Trivedi

*Traditional songs and music form the identity of the tribal culture. They reflect their natural spirit, unconditional love, and innate energy at every stage of their life. The tribal area of Chhattisgarh always resonated with the sound of traditional tribal songs and music. The forest areas and tribal settlements of Chhattisgarh, began the revolt against the British at the very beginning of the freedom struggle, even before the urban areas. Initially, the tribal songs in their dialects, reverberated with the rebellion of their area, and then with the movement that was prevalent in the country.*

**T**he signs of an impending storm to liberate India from the shackles of British rule were visible from 1853 itself. The history of the freedom movement in India conveys the pain of subjugation and exploitation, however, at the same time, it also brings forth the newly awakened consciousness of national pride in the people of India during the struggle for freedom.

During that period, a different genre of literature was created in the primary language of every State of the country which inspired the national consciousness among the citizens. Established writers of major languages, through their patriotic writings, described subjugation as the biggest curse and inspired the struggle for independence and self-sacrifice. Along with the country's primary languages, songs that awakened national consciousness were composed in folk and tribal languages and dialects. It would seem fair to say that the reach of compositions in major languages was limited to the elite class. In contrast, songs composed in folk and tribal languages, and dialects became the common man's songs. Folk songs were sung in every household to celebrate every season, festival and rite; praising the freedom struggle, inspiring people to rebel, and honouring the martyrs, became the ritual of the then national sentiments.

Traditional songs and music form the identity of the tribal culture. They reflect tribals' natural spirit, unconditional love, and innate energy at every stage of their life. The tribal area of Chhattisgarh always resonated with the sound of traditional tribal songs and music. The forest areas and tribal settlements of Chhattisgarh, began the revolt against the British at the very beginning of the freedom struggle, much before the urban areas. Initially, the tribal songs in their dialects, reverberated with the rebellion of their area, and then with the movement that was prevalent in the country. These tribal songs, on one hand, glorified their hero and on the other, inspired their fellow tribesmen to participate in the freedom struggle.



A book on Songs of Freedom by  
Publications Division

The national awareness of the tribal communities emerges in the songs of different dialects— Halbi, Bhatari, Muria, Gondi, Oraon, Korku, Baiga, etc. The themes of these songs are incidents of tribal revolts and the national freedom struggle. The two biggest incidents of tribal revolt in Chhattisgarh emerge with the most poignant details in these songs. The first incident is related to Sonakhan's landlord, Veer Narayan Singh, taking an army of tribal farmers to war with the British army and his public hanging in 1857. The second one is related to the great upsurge 'Bhumkal' in Bastar in 1910, under the leadership of Gundadhur.

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A Korku man playing traditional flute called Bhugadu

The glorification of Narayan Singh in Chhattisgarhi is as follows:

*Chhattisgarh har thokis tal, attharah sau sattavan saal  
Garjis Veer Narayan Singh-Lekhis sabai firangi heen  
Kar bharat ma ke jaikar, pahirin fansi ke galhar  
Katko kareen bir balidan, un shaheed man la parnam*

The song means that in the year 1857, Chhattisgarh defied the British. Veer Narayan Singh rebelled ferociously, which terrified the British. He wore the noose of the gallows like a necklace while chanting *Bharat Mata ki Jai* (long live Mother India). Many brave-hearted warriors have sacrificed their lives for the freedom of India—salute to all of them.

After 1920, when Mahatma Gandhi led the freedom movement, it spread across India. The spirit of Swaraj has been expressed very poignantly in the two-lined rhyme of the folk song 'Dadariya' in Chhattisgarhi:

*Diya mange bati, bati mange tel  
Su-raj lebo angrej, katka debe jail?*

The lamp needs a wick, and the wick needs oil.

Oh, British! We will take Swarajya (self-rule)  
no matter how many times you put us in jail.

In Chhattisgarhi, *Rashtriya Alha*, *Alha su-raj*, and many others were popular songs.

### Bhumkal Song in Bhatri Dialect

Among all the tribal dialects of Bastar, Bhatri is one of the most illustrative. In this dialect, 'Bhumkal Geet'—i.e., 'Upsurge song' is a witness to the freedom struggle of Bastar. Some lines of this song are as follows:

*Suna Sujan hey, San-Sian hey!  
Bhumkal-geet, gai sunaibi.  
Kirpa karo moke hey bhagvan!  
Kai ke na jani, peela lok mui.  
Suna tami- baap - bhai.  
Kayeri kuchar, pangan-nasan*

*Karle aache kaay labh.  
Roje diner ateyachar ne chet cheghla.*

This song describes the entire Bhumkal rebellion. In the opening lines, the singer says—O gentleman! O young and old! I will sing you the Bhumkal song. Oh God! Have mercy, I am innocent. You are the father, you are the brother. What is gained from jealousy, hatred, and *maran-mantra* (a mantra for killing an adversary)! Atrocities committed day-after-day, have aroused the consciousness of the villagers.

And after this, the sequence of events of the Bhumkal rebellion is sung throughout the song.

### Halbi Song

In the Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, the Halba tribe is considered very hardworking and advanced. Various songs in the Halbi dialect of this tribe echo the freedom struggle.

*Swatantra ralo aamcho bharat, ek hazar barakh aage.  
Harik padim desh thay ralo, tebele kahani jage.  
Sat dharam le lor rala, rajo dharam cho chhap.  
Sarsun ne goti dhan ne pol, nikarte rala paap.*

This Halbi folk song is a great treasure of the tribal folk tradition. It is a lengthy composition in which the history of the entire freedom struggle is described while praising India. At the beginning of this song, it is said that, 1000 years ago, India was a free country where truth and dharma reigned. It used to rain timely and produced crops in abundance. The people here did not know of hunger and misery.

The description of the first freedom struggle is as follows:

*Attharah sau sattavan barakh ili, des na shumuk holi.  
Mara-mari puja-puji, thane thane goli  
Kitro saheb mare gela, kitro bayley pila.  
Mara peta dhara jhama, marte marte dila.  
Hindu Pathan milan sangi, sulam bhumuk hola.  
tope, talwar, banduk bhala, marla goli gola.*

75  
Azadi Ka  
Amrit Mahotsav

**Narayan  
Singh**

One of the earliest known tribal leaders, Singh is considered the first known hero of the War of Independence in Chhattisgarh. He was arrested in 1856 by the British authorities for looting a trader's grain stocks and distributing it amongst the poor during famine. He escaped from prison in 1857 and formed an army of 500 gunmen and fought with tremendous courage against the British.





A man performing Baiga tribal dance

And after that, the whole history emerges in the traditional tune of Halbi folk song.

### Gondi Songs

In Chhattisgarh, the Gond tribe has been predominant and many songs composed in their Gondi dialect became a part of community life in the tribal area. Some examples of these songs are:

*Bharat bhaiya, angrez se karo re ladai .  
Kun dhare tangiya, kun dhare balua,  
kun dhare teer gulela.  
Mard to dhare tore angiya re tangiya,  
Nari dharin tore farsa  
Jangal ke rehne vale Baiga re bhaiya,  
va dhare teer gulela  
Gond bhaiya dhare tore lapki bandukia.  
Aur ma bhare jahar ke goliyan.*

In this Gondi song, the singer says— O friend, we will have to fight the British now. It has to be decided who will use *tangiya* (axe), *ballam* (spear) and, *teer* (arrow), *gulela* (slingshot). In this fight for freedom, men will carry an axe on their shoulders and women, a shovel in their hands. Baigas, who are forest dwellers, will support by shooting arrows and slingshots. All the Gonds will keep new and sharpshooting guns. Guns are filled with such poisonous bullets from which no enemy can escape.

Another song states:

*Ham Bharat ke Gond-Baiga, azadi khyar  
Angrezan la mar bhagao, Bharat le re  
Ham bhaiya chhati adhao,  
ham to khoon bahao, Bharat khyar  
Angrejan la mar bhagao, Bharat le re.  
Ham Bharat ke bhai-bahine, milke karvo raksha,  
Angrejan la mar bhagao, karvo apna raksha,  
bhaiya Bharat khyar.  
Angrejan la mar bhagao, Bharat le re.  
Ham Bharat ke Gond-Baiga, kar devo jaan nichhavar;  
bhaiya Bharat khyar.  
Angrejan la mar bhagao, Bharat le re.*

‘We are the Gond and Baiga tribals living in India. We also cherish a desire to be free, therefore, even if we have to take the bullets to our chest and shed blood, we as brothers and sisters, will protect India. We request all Gond-Baiga

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brothers that the opportunity has arrived to lay down their lives for the country. Today, the biggest need is to drive the British away with unity and courage. And no Gond or Baiga will back down from this.'

### Baiga Song

The Baiga tribe, living in the central part of Chhattisgarh, is a unique tribe. It has its own distinct cultural identity and its folk songs and dances are highly impressive. The spirit of the freedom movement in the Baiga region is expressed in their dialect as follows:

*Desh la kaam avo baiy, desh la jitabho re.  
Dongri pahar re, Gandhi sang jabo re.  
Firangi la bhagabo baiy, desh la jitabho re.  
Dongri pahar re, Gandhi sang jabo re.  
Subhas sang jabo re, Gandhi sang jabo baiy.  
Desh la kaam avo baiy, desh la jitabho re.  
In la na rahan debo baiy, desh la bachao re.  
Dongri pahar re, Gandhi sang jabo re.*

'O brother, I want the country to win even if I have to sacrifice my life. I want to go with Gandhiji to the forests and mountains. The British have to be driven out of the country and the country has to be liberated. For this, I will go to the forests and mountains with Gandhiji. Whether I go to Subhas Chandra Bose or Gandhiji, I will liberate the country at any cost, even if I have to sacrifice

my life. I will not allow these Britishers to stay in my country anymore. We have to save our country, and for that, we have to go to the forests and mountains with Gandhiji.'

### Oraon Song

Oraon is a dominant tribe in the north of Chhattisgarh. Many songs were composed in the Oraon dialect of this tribe, which motivated the national movement of the entire region. One such song is as follows:

*Chiyan chiyan baba Rajinim chiyan baba  
Deshenim chiyan baba kilsanim chiyan baba  
Raja angrez, hakim angrez, jarichar Nanababa  
Rajinim chiyan baba deshenim chiyan baba*

In this song, the people of Oraon tribe invoke their presiding deity, Chiyan Baba and request him to remove the British and bring people's rule.

These songs, resonating in the countryside settlements and tribal areas are a poignant expression of the tribals' consciousness of freedom and their struggle for the country's liberation. They are also an invaluable heritage of our oral tradition. They also tell that the seeds of India's freedom struggle were sowed in the folk culture. We remember and salute the vast contribution of the tribals in the freedom struggle by reminiscing these folk songs on the Amrit Mahotsav of India's independence. □

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# Rich Heritage of Gonds

Dr Shamrao Koreti

*Heritage is a fundamental source of individual and group identity, vitality, and solidarity. Indian tribal community has been a subject of great interest. Everything which the ancestors bequeath may be called heritage—social structure, religious beliefs, cultural aspects, etc. It is imperative to highlight the socio-cultural nuances of the tribes of India with a special emphasis on the cultural aspects of the Gonds of Central India. According to the 2011 Census, the tribals account for 109 million and represent 8.6 per cent of country's total population. The Gonds are the largest in number among other tribes of the country.*

**T**here are many sub-tribes under the Gonds, but they share common ethnic origins. Various theories have been advanced to account for the origin of the Gonds as a race. However, Haimendorf was of the opinion that the name 'Gond' was given to them by other communities. They do not call themselves by that name, instead, they called and still call themselves 'Koi' or 'Koithur' (plu. Koitur).

## Social Life

The social structure of the Gonds is one of the oldest and most unique systems established by their chief preceptor Pahandi Pari Kupa Lingo. This system is still prevalent with its uniqueness despite many interventions by the non-natives. The community as a whole has marched a long way from its primitive stage of social development, while some of its sections have reached a fairly advanced stage of civilisation. They have 750 paadings (clans) and 2250 paadi (totems) and initially 12 saga divisions, which have reduced to four only.

## Family

The Gond family is the smallest social unit. An aggregate of families constitutes the clan. The family is a unilateral social group consisting mainly of parents and their children, both male and female. Only unmarried daughters are regarded as members of the family. They form a part of their husbands' family post-marriage. The Gond family is patrilineal and patrilocal.

## Pari (Clan)

The social group wider than next to the family in the social structure of the Gond community is the clan. The

Gonds use the term '*pari*' to express their group. The clan among the Gonds is a unilateral group consisted of family members of which bear the same clan-name. The members of the clan believed that they have been descended from a common ancestor. The clan being patrilineal— a man passes on his clan name to his children. It is only the male who automatically takes the patronymic on birth, preserves it till death and it is carried forward by his children.

## Sub-Castes

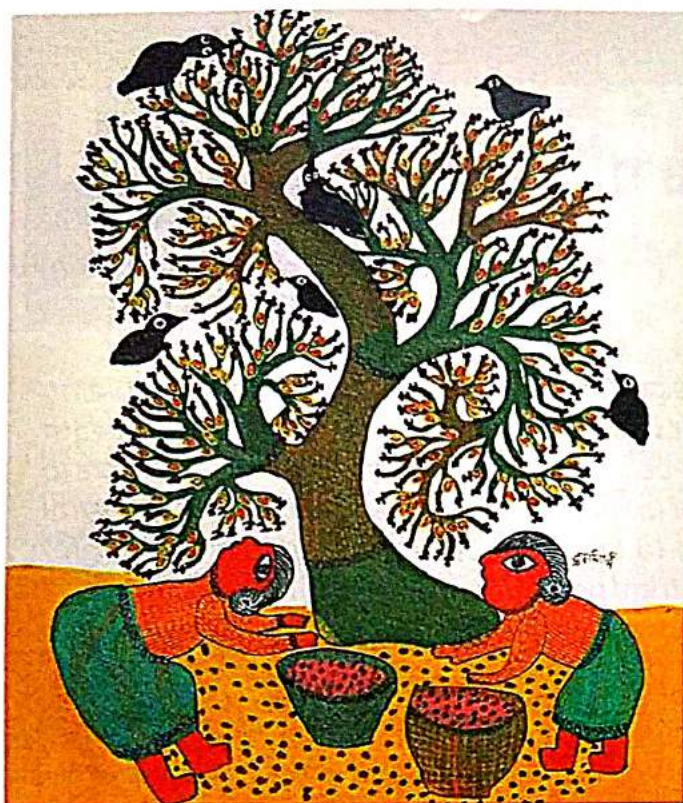
There are numerous sub-castes known by different names among the Gonds. The Pardhans, Ojhas, Nagarchis, Dholis and others consist of individuals born in a particular sub-caste. The Raj Gonds, Khatola Gonds, Madia Gonds, Dhur Gonds, Dadve Gonds, Mokashi Gonds, Gaita Gonds, Koyas, etc., are all integral in the composed community, the Gond. They seem separate but are selected from one and the same social source of Gonds from the ancient past. They are the limbs of the same body inhaling



Members of the Gond community

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*The Gond wall paintings and floral designs depict geometric and stylistic figures of plants and animals.*

the same breath of faith, culture and custom of the Gondi tradition.

### Kinship

The order of kinship determined the social relation of an individual to another, and an individual to group members, which regulated their mutual rights and duties. The system of kinship however, did not change as rapidly as the type of family and the form of marriage.

### Status of Women

In a customary Gond society, most of the domestic work is centered around a woman. She looks after the children, rears livestock, cooks food for the family, etc. In all the major conflicts within the family, the husband consults his wife and often honours her opinions. A woman is excluded from certain ritual observances. However, with the changing times, there have been some changes in their status in the Gond society.

### Marriage

There existed various types of marriages in the traditional Gond society. Among the Gonds, marriage is forbidden between blood relatives. Marriages among the children of maternal uncles and paternal aunts are favoured. Apart

from the wishes of the boy and girl, receiving the consent of the father and mother is paramount. The Raj Gonds, the ruling Gonds, or are married according to Hindu customs, while in the common Gonds, the marriage ceremonies are conducted by *doshi*, or *Baiga*. Widow marriage is allowed in the Gond society. Many of these practices are still prevalent even today.

### Religious Life

In a Gond society, religious beliefs are important. Some of the important components that form the basis of the Gond religious belief system are: myths, spirits, belief in life after death, ancestor worship, sacrifice, sacred plants and trees, animals and birds. However, this belief system has undergone a change as a result of the influence of external religions. The Gonds are firm believers in omens and myths. In important decisions, they pay attention to inauspicious omens and delay the execution of a plan for a more auspicious time. The diviner is called by different names among different sub-groups of Gonds. He is called as Pujar, Bhagat, Baiga, Gunia, or Panda, etc.

### Festivals

There are several religious festivals of the Gonds such as Akhari, Jiwati, Pola, Diwali Nawo tindana, Dussera, and Phag or Shimga. Many of these are connected with agricultural season. The Gond festivals are collective rituals. They are celebrated with great zeal and enthusiasm.

### Sacrifices

The Gonds are also accustomed to sacrifices to their deities. They offer buffaloes, cows, pigs, goats, and fowls to propitiate the Gods. The reason for sacrifice is to cure a person from sickness, which is supposed to be caused by the spirits. The sacrifices are made to ward off the evil spirits from harming the village community.

### Death

The Gonds have their own concept of death. Death is a natural phenomenon with supernatural implications, and the animistic religion of the Gonds gradually found both diseases and death to be under the influence of powerful spirits. The funeral rites are part of the metaphysical significance that the death occupies an important occurrence in the birth-life-death cycle. Initially, burial was only practiced by the Gonds, however the ruling classes had started cremation and since then both burial and cremation are being practiced.

### Cultural Aspects

The Gonds had evolved their own cultural practices in the process of their social formation, without much

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The clan among the Gonds is a unilateral group of family members of which bear the same clan-name. The members of the clan believed that they have been descended from a common ancestor. The clan being patrilineal— a man passes on his clan name to his children. A woman kept her father's clan-name till she is married.

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interaction with the other culture. Their cultural practices are simple and have been translated through generation to generation by means of oral tradition.

### Food

The food habits of the ordinary Gond is somewhat uniform. The technique of cooking a meal includes frying, boiling, baking and roasting. Their staple food is the gruel of millet and rice, boiled in water. Another common dish is the broth or juice of millet. Sometimes, dried flowers of 'mahuwa' are mixed into the gruel. More than 18 dishes are prepared out of mahuwa. The preparation of cakes of millet flour and wheat is very popular. They are generally meat eaters but avoid totem animal.

### Liquor

Gonds are very fond of liquor. They generally prefer liquor distilled from mahuwa flowers. It is not only a welcome stimulant, but also an important part of their religious and social ritual. It is essential for every offering; it is consumed during weddings and funeral feasts; it is also indispensable at caste dinners.

### Dresses and Ornaments

The male members of the Gond society used to wear dhotis up to their knees, a vest, and shawl over the shoulder and a turban on their head. They wore silver bangles on their wrists, wearing bangles is a sign of good fortune, a locket around their neck and earrings. The women wore six-to-eight-yard saris reaching to the knees and tied with a belt. The women love jewellery. The ornaments are not only meant for aesthetic purpose but they are also believed to be protective. They also tattooed their bodies. Tattoos are seen as true jewellery that remained with the women even after they died and are said to please the Gods. However, introduction of the modernity has changed the dressing habits of the Gonds.

### Songs & Dances

The Gond songs are narrations of their life. There are different ragas for different seasons and occasions. Lots of information and knowledge are embedded in these songs. The main dances are Karma, Ri-na, Ri-lo, Re-la, Sela-Danda (stick), Mandari, Hulki, and Suwa, etc. these songs and dances are accompanied by various musical instruments like drums, kikir, flute, cymbals and others. It is through the songs and dances, the Gonds sought to satisfy their inner

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**The traditional Gotul institutions of the Gonds used to inculcate a sense of discipline and co-operative endeavour among its members. The members used to share stories, local idioms, wisdom saying, paheli, talks on ecology and forestry, medicines and herbals, hunting and fishing.**

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urge for revealing their soul. The dance movements are very fast in many forms which keep them physically fit. Even the rhythm played on instruments is of high note which regulates their activities in a faster motion. Their songs have rare beauty and deep simplicity. Music and dance have been a tradition since time immemorial. These dances have not been influenced even a bit by outside traditions and have retained their charm and uniqueness for many centuries.

### Art & Craft

The Gonds are expert in arts and crafts. They also have an expertise in beautiful wall paintings and floral designs that depict geometric designs and stylistic figures of plants and animals on the walls of their houses. They are masters in the art of personal decoration. Thus, those are of the values in Gond culture, which are worth preserving. The geometric and symbolic designs carved on wall and door, on comb and tobacco-case are thousands of years old, going back to the ancient civilisation of the Indus Valley.

### Gotul

The traditional Gotul institutions of the Gonds used to inculcate a sense of discipline and co-operative endeavour among its members. It was not just a club for meeting the boys and girls at night, as it was depicted by some scholars. It was the centre of learning and had a religious affiliation to it. When there were no educational institutions, the Gotul used to be an educational and cultural centre. It inculcated integrity and unity among all the members of the Gotul. The members used to share stories, local idioms, wisdom saying, paheli, talks on ecology and forestry, medicines and herbals, hunting and fishing. They also use to play various games.

Thus, they were mentally tough and physically fit. However, with time, the Gotul system had lost its originality.

### Gondi Language

The language spoken by the Gonds in their daily life, Gondi, a pre-Dravidian language as purported by linguistics such as Caldwell, Joule Blonch and Grierson. The intergroup communication of Gonds is purely in their own mother tongue. But when they communicate with outsiders, they use mixed type of colloquial Hindi, called as Chhattisgarhi.

The Gonds had developed a high level of norms and civilisation. The Gonds were also the ruling class of middle India. The remains of the Gond kingdoms, palaces, ponds, baolis and artifacts still exist in Central India. □



## Tribals in Jharkhand

Vivek Vaibhav

*The State may be merely two decades old, but Jharkhand, the land of the Chhotanagpur plateau, has been there forever. An early mention of the term 'Jharkhand' was found in the Sanskrit scriptures of India. An undated Sanskrit shloka, 'Aah Patra payam panam, Sal patra cha bhojanam, Shayanam kharjura patraar, Jharkhand vidyate' describes Jharkhand as a place where people drink from metal vessels, eat on Sal leaves, and sleep on date-palm leaves. Jharkhand was also shown by Abul Fazl in his Ain-i-Akbari, as the land between present Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. Interestingly, the Britishers never used the term 'Jharkhand' in administrative parlance. Even the word has not been part of the vocabulary of the ethnic tribals. It was in the resistance movements for the grant of Diwani to the East India Company that the colonial power was forced to demarcate the region as a separate administrative system, which gave birth to a separate identity of the region.*

**T**he mineral-rich plateau is inhabited by different tribal populations, of which Santhals, Hos, Kharias, Mundas and Oraons are greater in number. Whereas, Oraons, the most populous tribal groups in north-east India, are considered to be related to proto-Australoid<sup>1</sup> and have been inhabiting the land since the pre-Dravidian era. On the other hand, the Santhal society has the most primitive caste system among the oldest tribes of India. They are also one of the largest tribal groups in India. Many of the agricultural implements mentioned in Vedic literature viz. *langala*, or *hala* (plough) and *kuddala* (spade), are of the etymological origin of the Munda tribe, which is the agriculturist tribal group. Thus, culturally and economically, the tribal societies of the country represent and signify the formative times of our socio-economic milieu and call for documentation and conservation of their rituals, practices, and knowledge for the benefit of mankind. Another way of looking at it would be that, in the ancient era, when the population was sparse, tribal societies were more predominant than village or city dwellings, and they were socially and economically significant, if not equivalent to those living in the villages and cities. B S Guha has preferred the term "Nisadic" for tribal groups. As per Guha, the term was given to the aboriginal groups of India by the Vedic Aryans. The Sanskrit term, 'Nishada', refers to the name of a kingdom mentioned in the Indian

religious scripture Mahabharata and is also used to denote aboriginal communities practising fishing and hunting as their main occupation. In the ancient references, the areas where the 'Nishadas' lived were considered to be small independent kingdoms that were socially close-networked



*A Santhal woman in Jharkhand*

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and economically self-sufficient. It is also of immense significance that Jharkhand and other tribal heartlands, the abode of the 'Nishadas', were rich in iron ore, the most vital element in use of production activities for the last 2500 years.

The pitch for a separate identity continued even after the freedom, and the Jharkhand movement became one of the first such movements aimed at seeking greater autonomy in independent India. It is precisely for this reason that it was later bifurcated from Bihar for administrative ease. The status of the people of Jharkhand has thereafter improved to a great extent. Despite the rich heritage, bountiful resources, and scope and avenues for large-scale commercial activities, the region at present lags behind in comparison to the other States of the country, and there exists an enormous scope for improvement.

Seventy-six per cent of Jharkhand households are in the rural areas of the State and on average there are about 4.5 persons in each such household. Seventeen per cent of the households belong to the Scheduled Castes, twenty-eight per cent to the Scheduled Tribes, and forty-three per cent to Other Backward Classes. The majority of them, around 52% of households are of nuclear families. Less than half of the total households, i.e., 43% are pucca houses. Nearly 97% of households have electricity. 82% of households have basic drinking facilities and 13% of households have piped water supply. Around eighteen per cent of families are headed by female heads and such families constitute fifteen per cent of the population. In terms of sex ratio, Jharkhand is much better with a 1050 sex ratio for all ages. However, in the age group of 0-6 years, the sex ratio is seen to be on the lower side of 909.

To compare the socio-economic status of tribal households vis-à-vis other households, some of the indicators of social and economic progress such as availability of toilet facilities within the house, pre-schooling of children, school attendance of school-going children, number of children in a family, health facilities for mother and child, and nutritional status of children of Jharkhand have been used. The non-existence of proper toilet facilities in the houses is reflective of their socio-economic situation. Similarly, the number of households sending their children to pre-schools and regular schools also tells a lot about their socio-economic status. Further, the number of children in the family also



*A Munda tribe woman at work*

defines the socio-economic status of the family. Nutrition and health are the other indicators. Scheduled Tribes' Households lag in all respect vis-à-vis SCs, OBCs, and other households of Jharkhand. Non-availability of toilets and low pre-schooling turnout of children show the sub-standard status of the community. Even the school attendance of children of various households indicates lesser turnout among the children of Scheduled

Tribes' households. It is the families of STs that have maximum cases of third and fourth children reported in the National Family Health Survey (NFHS), which indicate disadvantaged socio-economic conditions. Health facilities are also scarcely accessible to the families of STs— further adding to the situation. Barring the genetic reasons for poor anthropometric measures in cases of STs, it also signals more cases of malnourishment and lack of proper diet in children.

Based on the data reproduced from NFHS-5, it may be said that in the majority of the cases, the socio-economic condition of families of STs in Jharkhand is not at par with that of other families and there remains a gap to be filled which needs critical attention of the government for furthering the welfare of the STs of Jharkhand. At the same time, it is also noteworthy that even though the data shows weak socio-economic situations of tribal households, the figures of ST households are not very far behind the figures of other communities.

### **Tribal Research and Development**

Jharkhand has a dedicated tribal research institute in Ranchi, namely, Dr Ram Dayal Munda Tribal Research Institute, offering courses in tribal research under Ranchi University. The State is soon to get its State-run varsity for tribal research in the form of Pandit Raghunath Murmu Tribal University. The Jharkhand Assembly has already given its nod to the creation of the varsity. It will be the first tribal research varsity in Eastern India. Although there is a privately-run tribal research varsity existing in Odisha, a State-run varsity is yet to be set up in the States of Odisha, Bengal, Jharkhand, or Chhattisgarh— which have significant tribal populations.

Furthermore, to engage the tribals in income generation activities and to improve their economic conditions, the Central Government has formed the National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation.

Socio-economic backwardness is because of multiple reasons that

**Culturally and economically, the tribal societies of the country represent and signify the formative times of our socio-economic milieu and call for documentation and conservation of their rituals, practices, and knowledge for the benefit of mankind.**



Sector	Criteria		National Average (in %)	Jharkhand's Average (in %)	Remarks
Agriculture	Agriculture	Government seed centres	16.81	17.78	Above average
		Warehouse for Food Grain Storage	13.76	14.98	
	Land improvement and minor irrigation	Soil testing centres	6.69	9.18	Above average
		Fertiliser Shop	25.76	23.47	Below average
Roads	Roads	Connected to all-weather Road	84.17	83.14	Below average
		Railway Station	4.88	13.63	Above average
Maintenance of Common Assets	CSC	Co-Located With Panchayat Bhawan	25.72	49.37	Above average
		Separately Located	20.57	21.98	Above average
		Not Available	53.71	28.65	Availability is better than the national average
	Panchayat Bhawan		76.64	90.32	Above average
	Public Information Board	Not available	38.51	55.17	Availability is less in Jharkhand, even if available, they are not updated
		Available and updated	46.41	23.12	
		Available but not updated	15.08	21.70	
Financial and Communication Infrastructure	Bank		22.27	38.91	Above average
	ATM		14.44	21.56	Above average
	Internet/Broadband		46.36	38.91	Below average
	Telephone	Landline	0.98	2.06	Above average
		Mobile	66.17	79.72	Above average
		Both	26.14	13.95	Availability of either of the two is more in Jharkhand
		None	6.72	4.27	
	Post-Office		41.86	54.46	Above average
Education	Education	Govt. Degree College	5.93	11.29	Better avenues of formal, vocational, and skill education
		Vocational Educational Centres/ITI/RSETI/DDU-GKY	6.95	10.87	
		Adult Education Centres	11.59	13.44	
		Library	18.39	11.86	Below average
Health	Jan Aushadhi Kendra		11.79	17.48	Above average
	PHC/CHC/Sub Centre	CHC	6.23	12.20	Better health infrastructure in Jharkhand
		PHC	15.11	17.48	
		Sub-centre	22.88	29.69	
		Not available	55.78	40.63	Availability is better than the national average
Others	Public Distribution System(PDS)		76.41	85.50	Above average
	Anganwadi Centres		93.70	98.37	Above average
	Veterinary Hospital/Clinic		21.84	17.66	Below average
	Extension facilities for Aquaculture		10.61	22.02	Above average



could also be situational or environmental. To understand the dynamics of backwardness of tribals of Jharkhand, a critical gap analysis has been attempted using the data of Mission Antyodaya 2019 surveys, by drawing a comparison between the village Panchayats of Jharkhand with the rest of the country.

### Gap Analysis of Services and Facilities in Villages

For undertaking the gap analysis, data has been obtained from the Mission Antyodaya 2019 surveys, conducted coterminous with the People's Plan Campaign by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj in the year 2019, titled 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas', with the purpose to lend support to the process of participatory planning of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP).

The parameters taken into consideration in the said surveys are (i) Government Seed Centres, Ware Houses, Soil Testing Centres, Fertiliser shops for Agriculture; (ii) all-weather roads and roads going to Railway Stations in the State; (iii) Availability of Common Service Centres and Public Information Boards for understanding the maintenance of common assets in the villages; (iv) Availability of Banks, ATMs, Broadband, Telephone Services for Financial and Communication Infrastructure; (v) Availability of Degree Colleges, Libraries, Vocational Education Centres, Adult Education for Education; (vi) Availability of Jan Aushadhi Kendras, Common Health Centres, Primary Health Centres, etc., for Health, and (vii) Availability of Public Distribution Systems, Anganwadi Kendras, Veterinary Hospitals and facilities for Aquaculture towards understanding the gap between the villages with tribal population in the State vis-à-vis the national average.

The majority of the tribal population lives in villages in the State of Jharkhand and it has been perceived that basic amenities, government facilities, avenues for education and good health and livelihood opportunities are lacking in villages compared to towns and cities. The status of the Gram Panchayats of all States, including Jharkhand, was surveyed in 2019 vis-à-vis the national average, and the



*Tribal people at work*

data was made available in the Government of India's portal <https://missionantyodaya.nic.in>.

The comparative for the gap analysis has been drawn as a percentage of Gram Panchayats which have the facilities, services, or amenities. The findings of gap analysis as per the criteria mentioned show that the State of Jharkhand fares better than the national average in the majority of counts. The data shows that the State has an excellent road network, a very good

number of Panchayat Bhawans compared to the national average, and a good network of PDS offices and Anganwadi Kendras across all districts. Another very interesting fact that was discovered is that the State has around 80% Gram Panchayats with Mobile network infrastructure, which is much better than many other States of the country. In the fields of health and education also, the State of Jharkhand is above the national average.

It may be deduced from the above gap analysis that the villages of Jharkhand are above the national average in terms of amenities, facilities, and services available that are provided by the Government. Some of the critical gaps found are barely significant to adversely impact the socio-economic development of the tribals. In corollary, the scope of development of tribal communities in Jharkhand is better than the national average, which implies, that the scope of development of tribal communities in Jharkhand is better than most of the States of the country. However, the social and economic development of tribals of Jharkhand has suffered over some time, yet again due to some other

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**The State of Jharkhand fares better than the national average in the majority of counts. The data shows that the State has an excellent road network, a very good number of Panchayat Bhawans compared to the national average, and a good network of PDS offices and Anganwadi Kendras across all districts.**

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situational or environmental factors which have not been discussed in the analysis. Factors like Naxalism, law and order related issues, issues of unrest due to multiple factors like land acquisition, and issues related to under-development of the region before the new State were carved out, and political stability, among others, may have more profound roles in shaping the socio-economic realities of the State.

### Conclusion

The growth and development of entities like communities, societies,



and civilisations is usually carried out with a function of various factors including situational and environmental factors. While, for a country like India, the tribal communities are similarly placed in their aspiration to join the mainstream, situational and environmental factors, thus creating greater hindrances to the growth and development of the tribals of Jharkhand. Despite that, the socio-economic condition of Jharkhand tribals is not lagging much as compared to other segments of the population of Jharkhand which is a fair indication because the efforts of the Government are showing expected results. Jharkhand villages and their panchayats are well-equipped and are as good as any other village panchayats of the country, in terms of their structures and resources. This gives a level playing field to all communities in Jharkhand.

Major situational factors which impact the overall growth and development of the people and communities are in favour of all communities in Jharkhand. In recent times, the Government of India has given greater emphasis on enabling the tribals, including those of the North East through various new schemes, as well as through its remarkable interventions like celebrating the tribal way of life, their art, culture and assuring newfound respect in the society by commemorating their contributions in freedom struggle and contributions to the society. The remaining gap between the tribals and non-tribals will surely be bridged and all communities will be at par with each other

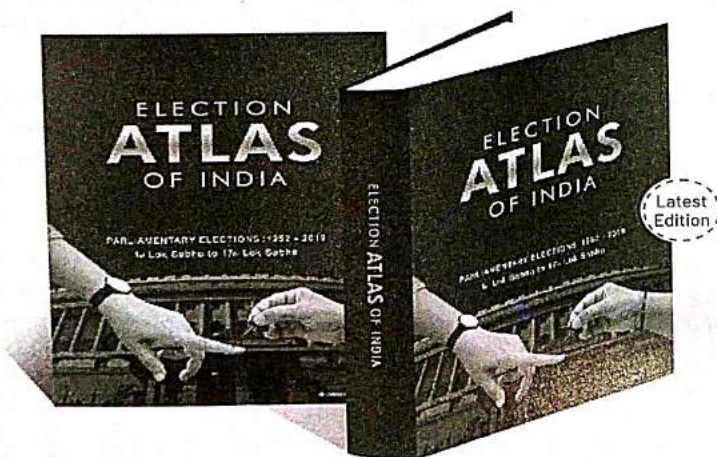
in the mainstream for a rapid and balanced growth and development. □

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## Central Assistance for Welfare of Scheduled Tribes

The Government of India, through various schemes and policy measures, is working for the welfare of the backward communities including the STs. The State Governments also work in a similar fashion from their resources and most of the time in collaboration with the Central Government for the welfare of the backward communities. The Government presently makes the bulk of its contribution for ST welfare through Scheduled Tribe Component (STC) whereby many Ministries under GoI make fund provisions exclusively for tribal welfare.

### Scheduled Tribe Component or Development Action Plan for STs (STC or DAPST)

Before 2017-18, funds from the Central Government were being earmarked by the Ministries/Departments against their plan allocation under the broad strategy of the Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) as per the criteria recommended by a Task Force in 2010, constituted by the erstwhile Planning Commission. The earmarking of funds was differential and against the plan outlay of the Ministries/Departments. Non-Plan funds were kept outside the purview of the TSP. In the new Budgeting System, 2017-18, after the merger of Plan and non-Plan funds, TSP was renamed as 'Development Action Plan for STs' (DAPST), or Scheduled Tribe Component (STC). Around 41 Central Government Ministries/Departments were identified for earmarking of STC.

Some of the important Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored Schemes/Provisions for tribal welfare are:

1. **Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan or Tribal Sub-Scheme of States:** Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub-Plan, is given by the Central Government to States to support their efforts in bridging the gap between the tribal population and other social groups through human resource development, enhanced quality of life, enhanced opportunities and alleviation of poverty.
2. **Grant-in-aid under Article 275(1):** Grants-in-aid from the Union to certain States, charged on the Consolidated Fund of India, are provided to promote the welfare of the STs in that State or raise the level of administration of the Scheduled Tribes' Areas to that of the administration of the remaining area of the State. Such grants are only additive to the State's efforts and are given to plug critical gaps in governance.
3. **Scholarship and Fellowship schemes:** The Central Government has made provisions for scholarships

to Scheduled Tribe students of the country which are available at various levels of education, viz. pre-matric education and post-matric education. Similarly, a scholarship scheme called Top Class Education.

### Special Fund for Protection of PVTG

Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) are those tribal communities with a pre-agriculture level of technological expertise, a stagnant or declining population, an extremely low level of literacy, and a subsistence economy. Around 75 such PVTGs have been identified by the Government of India in 18 States and the priority is to accord protection and improvement in the social indicators like livelihood, health, nutrition, and education to improve their situation.

### For Education of Girl Child

There is a special emphasis by the Central Government to empower women and educate the Girl Child in recent years. To benefit tribals as well, funds were allocated for the schemes for strengthening ST girl child education in Jharkhand.

### National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation:

The Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs extends concessional loans to eligible ST persons for undertaking income generation activities or self-employment as per the norms.

The Government of India has taken up the challenge of educating the tribal population in mission mode. The Centre is giving much emphasis to the development of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRS), for filling the gap in the education of tribal children.

Further, to celebrate the contributions and sacrifices of tribal freedom fighters, the Centre announced to commemorate 15<sup>th</sup> November as 'Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas', which is the birth anniversary of tribal leader Birsa Munda has been dedicated to celebrating the memory of brave tribal freedom fighters.

Understanding the rights of the tribals on forest produce, GoI has recently given stress on the establishment of Agro/Forest/Natural resource-based micro industries. A recently launched scheme to provide a mechanism for marketing of minor forest produce through the development of a value chain through MSP called 'Van Dhan Vikas Karyakram', which essentially imparts training to the tribals in marketing their minor forest produce and in developing value chain components. □



# Sports in Tribal-dominated Areas

Shivendra Chaturvedi

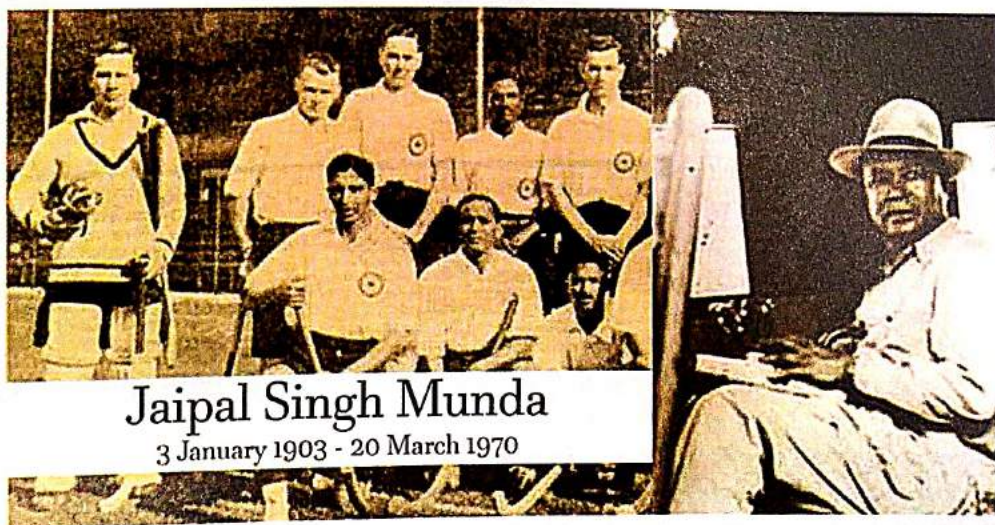
*Many players have emerged from the tribal-dominated belts especially Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, North Eastern States and also Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Gujarat and West Bengal, who have brought laurels to their homeland, in both national- and international-level competitions. These players mostly come from extreme geographical conditions and have relatively limited availability of world-class sports facilities.*

**I**n recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on sports in our country, leading to better results in Olympics, Asian Games, Commonwealth Games, and other international sporting events.

## Hockey

Hockey has occupied a very special place in our country's sports history. It has won 12 medals including 8 gold, 1 silver and 3 bronze medals from the Amsterdam Olympics in 1928 to the Tokyo Olympics in 2021. India has won 35 medals, including 10 gold medals in the Olympic Games, of which Indian players have won 34 per cent only in hockey. In fact, in six consecutive Olympic Games from 1928 to 1956, the Indian hockey team established its supremacy in the world by winning the gold medals. In that golden era of Indian hockey, Jaipal Singh Munda was the captain who got the country's first Olympic gold. Born in 1903, near Ranchi, the capital of present-day Jharkhand, Jaipal Singh was exceptionally talented and was the only international hockey player to be awarded the Oxford Blue title in 1925. Apart from being a sportsperson, he was also a well-known politician, journalist, writer, editor, and educationist. He played a major role in the team's defence on the hockey field and was also a member of the Constituent Assembly of the country, and worked for the welfare of the tribal people throughout his life.

Fifty-two years after the Amsterdam 1928 Olympics, the Indian team won the eighth gold medal in hockey at the Moscow 1980 Olympic Games. Even at that time, an important member of the Indian team was Sylvanus Dung Dung, hailing from Simdega, a tribal-dominated district of Jharkhand. Born on 27 January 1949, Sylvanus joined the Indian Army in 1965, served the country, and became an Olympic gold winner. In 2016, he was honoured with the Dronacharya Award. After a gap of 41 years, the Indian men's hockey team won a bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games last year. The team's vice-captain, Birendra Lakra, was born in Odisha's tribal-dominated district of Sundergarh. Birendra Lakra, who was part of the Asian Games gold and silver medalist Indian team, his entire family is known to be associated with hockey. His elder brother Bimal has also played for India as a midfielder, and his sister Asunta Lakra has led the Indian women's hockey team.

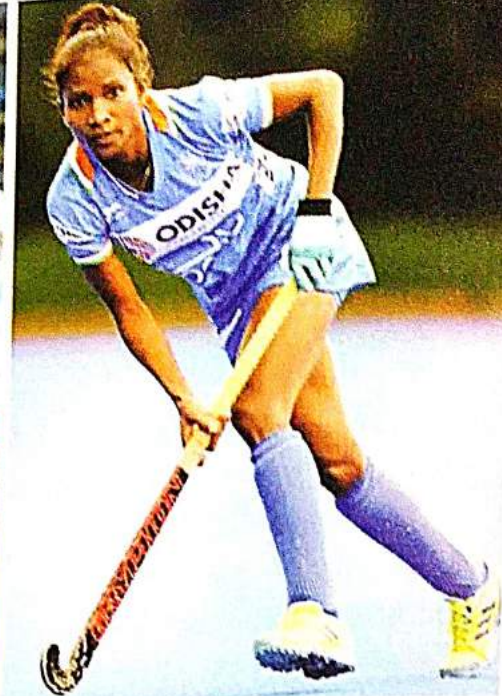
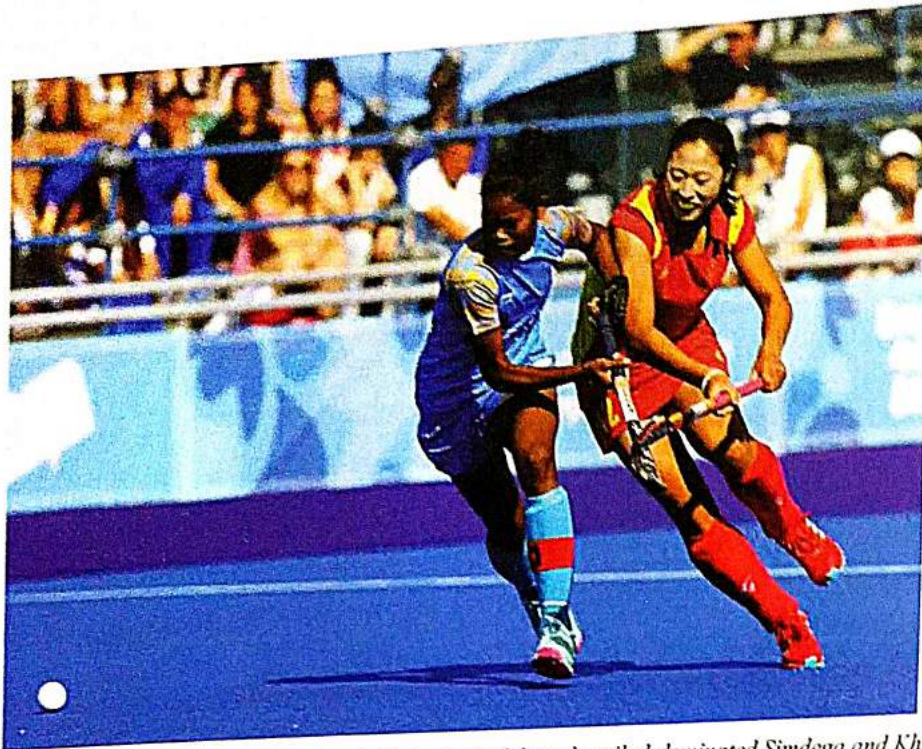


**Jaipal Singh Munda**

3 January 1903 - 20 March 1970

The author is a senior sports commentator. Email: shivendra68@gmail.com





*Salima Tete (left) and Nikki Pradhan (right), who hail from the tribal-dominated Simdega and Khunti districts respectively, were key players of the Indian women's hockey team that gave a historic and spirited performance in Tokyo*

## Hockey Hub

It is a noticeable fact that today, Simdega district is called the nursery of hockey and state-of-the-art facilities as hockey training has been provided in this district located in the tribal-dominated area of the country. Perhaps, this is why young players like Beauty Dungdung, Pramodini Lakra, Mahima Tete, Deepika Soreng, and Kajal Bara are potential players on the Indian women's hockey team. Michael Kindo was another illustrious hockey player who belonged to this land. Arjuna Award winner Michael Kindo, was one of the finest defenders and a member of the Indian hockey team that won the bronze medal at the Munich 1972 Olympics. In the Hockey World Cup of 1971, 1973 and 1975, the Indian team won bronze, silver, and gold medals, and an important part of that team was Simdega's son, Michael Kindo.

The Indian men's hockey team won the bronze medal in Tokyo, however, the Indian women's hockey team missed out on the bronze medal at the Tokyo Olympics. Salima Tete and Nikki Pradhan, who hail from the tribal-dominated Simdega and Khunti districts respectively, were key players of the Indian women's hockey team that gave a historic and spirited performance in Tokyo. Nikki Pradhan, who represented India in the Rio 2016 Olympic Games, was the first woman hockey player from Jharkhand to have the distinction of being a part of this grand international sports event.

**India has won 35 medals, including 10 gold medals in the Olympic Games, of which Indian players have won 34 per cent only in hockey. In fact, in six consecutive Olympic Games from 1928 to 1956, the Indian hockey team established its supremacy in the world by winning the gold medals. In that golden era of Indian hockey, Jaipal Singh Munda was the team captain who got the country's first Olympic gold.**

## Archery

Many talented players have emerged from tribal-dominated areas in the field of Archery. Deepika Kumari is one such player who became the world's number one archer. Padma Shri and Arjuna Awardee Deepika, represented the country in the London 2012, Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2021 Olympic Games.

Other archers hailing from tribal-dominated areas include Gora Ho, popularly known as, the 'Golden Boy,' who was conferred the National Children's Award in 2015. Sanjeeva Kumar Singh's name is also included in the list of famous archers from Jharkhand who has been honoured with the Arjuna Award as a player and the Dronacharya Award as a coach. Apart from these, Rimil

Buriuli, Purnima Mahato, Laxmirani Majhi, Komalika Bari, and Sangita Kumari are archers who emerged from Jharkhand, one of the youngest States in the country, and dominated the international archery scene. Similarly, Limba Ram, Shyam Lal Meena, Rajat Chauhan from Rajasthan, and Sanand Mitra from Chhattisgarh are the archers who have won medals for the nation in international-level competitions.

Most of the players hailing from the tribal-dominated areas of the country either belong to the family of farmers or come from such a background where living is a struggle in itself. An availability of playground and facilities is nothing more than a dream



for such players. However, despite all the adversities, if the players from the tribal areas have earned a name for themselves, it is only due to their hard work, tireless efforts, inherent talent, and an attitude of never giving up.

Continuing efforts are being made by the Central Government and the respective State Governments to identify the talented sportspersons in tribal areas, provide adequate facilities for their promotion and training, and also provide a proper environment for better performance at the international level. In this sequence, a detailed policy was announced by the Chhattisgarh Government's Sports and Youth Welfare Department about 5 years ago. However, only after the formation of Chhattisgarh in November, 2000, the sports policy was announced in the year 2001. Its goal was to create a sports culture in the State and implement various sports schemes and programmes up to the panchayat level. Under the Chhattisgarh Sports Policy 2017, emphasis has been laid on adopting a strategic approach to encourage and develop various sporting activities and players in Chhattisgarh, under which, the identification of outstanding and capable players in various sports in all the districts of the State is included.

Innovative efforts to encourage government, private sector organisations, public sector undertakings, non-government organisations, other national/international institutions, elected public representatives and eminent personalities to adopt one sporting activity and/or one sportsperson are also a part of the sports policy.

Like Chhattisgarh, in Madhya Pradesh, efforts are being made at the government level to promote sports talent in tribal-dominated areas. The first sports policy in the State was formulated in the year 1989, and after

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**Under the Chhattisgarh Sports Policy 2017, emphasis has been laid on adopting a strategic approach to encourage and develop various sporting activities and players in Chhattisgarh, under which, the identification of outstanding and capable players in various sports in all the districts of the State is included.**

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evaluating it five years later, a new sports policy was prepared again in the year 1994.

Keeping in view the performance in the National Games, medals achieved, and the present availability of sports facilities, the focus should be on winning other sports activities as well. These include athletics, such as wrestling, kho-kho, kabaddi, volleyball, swimming, canoeing-kayaking, taekwondo, judo, hockey, basketball, shooting and horse riding. In addition, organising intra-village panchayat competitions in tribal areas in sports like kabaddi, tug

of war, sprinting and high jump, wrestling, and archery is proposed.

Odisha has also occupied a prominent place on the sports map of India. Many top-notch players have emerged from the tribal-dominated areas of Odisha. One of the most familiar names is Dilip Tirkey, the former captain of the Indian hockey team. He has represented the country in three Olympic Games and played over 400 international matches. Born in Odisha's Sundargarh district, Dilip Tirkey was part of the Indian hockey team that won gold medals at the Bangkok Asian Games in 1998 and silver in 2002 at Busan. Dilip's father, Vincent Tirkey, was also a hockey player and his twin brothers, Anup and Ajit Tirkey, were in the Indian Railways hockey team. He is one of the few players who has played in three Olympic games and was conferred the Padma Shri and Arjuna award as well. He was also a member of the Rajya Sabha from 2012 to 2018.

An athlete from the Gumla district of Jharkhand, Supriti Kachhap, can be named one of India's most promising future sportspersons. Coming from a very modest tribal background, Supriti has consistently performed well in athletics and is now preparing for the U-20 World Championship to be held in Augusta, Colombia. The daughters of a mason Kartik Oraon, Mamta and Barkha Rani Bara are also from the Gumla district. Dusting off the hardships in their lives, these two sisters are looking forward to writing their success story on the football ground. Their consistent performance in Khelo India Games and other competitions is indicative of their bright future.

A similar story is of Sumati Kumari, the daughter of a farmer family in Jharkhand. Sumati, who has represented the country in AFC Women's Asia Cup and many international competitions.

Stories of sports talent emerging from the tribal-dominated areas are inspiring. Governments are also making sustained efforts to identify talents from these belts and provide them with proper training, state-of-the-art equipment, and facilities. □



*Birendra Lakra at Tokyo 2020 Olympics*



# Indigenous Culture

Dr Madhura Dutta

*Indigenous communities around the world are bearers of strong traditional culture, art, craft and knowledge of the environment. Recognising their skills to sustainably use local, cultural and natural resources forging a balanced nature-culture relationship, in 2007, the UN General Assembly adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. This Declaration establishes a universal framework of minimum standards for the survival, dignity and well-being of the indigenous peoples of the world, and elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms as they apply to the specific situation of indigenous peoples. It is estimated that there are more than 476 million indigenous people in the world, spread across 90 countries and representing 5000 different cultures. They make up 6.2 per cent of the global population and live in all geographic regions.<sup>1</sup>*

**T**he cultures and diversity of indigenous people in India are fascinating. Roughly 104 million people, which is 8.6 per cent of the national population, live in such communities. Although there are 705 officially recognised ethnic groups, the actual number of indigenous communities is much larger. Some regions having large concentrations of such communities are the North Eastern States, Rajasthan and West Bengal.

With distinct social and cultural traditions that are rooted in their collective ties and ownership of the land through generations, the dependence of these communities on nature is inextricably linked to their identities, cultures, livelihoods, as well as their physical and spiritual well-being. Their traditional knowledge and cultural expressions reflect their scientific living, advanced technologies and high level of human skills. Their intimate knowledge of the local flora and fauna, seeds, medicines, agriculture, fishing, architecture, textile, food, etc., provides the basis for a truly sustainable path of development. A World Bank Report on indigenous peoples states that, "While Indigenous Peoples own, occupy, or use a quarter of the world's surface area, they safeguard 80 per cent of the world's remaining biodiversity. They hold vital ancestral knowledge and expertise on how to adapt, mitigate, and reduce climate and disaster risks."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, these traditional ways of life, livelihoods and practices of indigenous communities in India are increasingly under threat owing to a range of factors, including lack of recognition and protection of their rights, exclusionary public policies, and the impacts of climate change. Illustrating the observations with some of India's native and indigenous cultures can be interesting.

## The Adis of Arunachal Pradesh

The Adis constitute one of the numerous indigenous communities of Arunachal Pradesh. They believe that they travelled from the North to settle down in their current locations of the temperate and sub-tropical regions of



*Adis, like other indigenous communities, are dependent on nature and are fully self-sufficient in their livelihood and lifestyle.*

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*An Adi house has a tall overhanging double roof covering the upper front portion of the house.*

the districts of Siang, East Siang, Upper Siang, West Siang, Lower Dibang Valley, Lohit, Shi Yomi, and Namsai. The literal meaning of Adi is 'hill' or 'mountain top'. Adis speak the Sino-Tibetan language.

They are traditionally nature worshippers and follow the faith of Donyi-Polo. Adis, like most other indigenous communities, are dependent on nature and are fully self-sufficient in their livelihood and lifestyle. All their resources come from the forests which they also protect as their life source. One of the well-known age-old skills is their house-making expertise, and they take just one or two days to build a house, depending on its size and the number of persons involved in the construction.

Adis live in typical raised houses which are usually rectangular and are built on stilts. One can identify an Adi house by its tall overhanging double roof covering the upper front portion of the house. Majority of the Adi men-folk are good craftsmen, and have a unique way of building houses using different types of plant materials. These traditional houses are constructed with different types of bamboos, woods, canes, leaves, etc., and no nails are used in their construction. The walls of the house are made from timbers and bamboos, the floor is made with bamboo, and the roof with thatched leaves. Ropes, used in construction, are made from natural materials, and processed and procured for strength and durability. The season for collecting each building material varies between a few weeks to one and half years and requires pre-processing to ease construction. These are also collected based on the phase of the moon. Materials collected just before the new moon are free from insects, and last long, whereas those that are collected at other times are said to be vulnerable to termites and insects. The size of the house varies according to the number of members in the family. Houses are constructed mostly in an east-west direction that helps to receive maximum sunlight. A traditional Adi house has no windows, instead there are two doors, one at the front and another at the back. Every house has one

or more fireplaces. The entire inner space of the house is without any partition. However, the space is divided into several units, each having specific names and utilities. Once a house is complete, the Adis celebrate it with their traditional rice beer.

### **The Tangsas of Arunachal Pradesh**

The Tangsa community inhabit the Changlang district of eastern Arunachal Pradesh, located in the lap of Patkai hills. The gorgeous Noa-Dehing river cuts through the pristine forests, providing life to the local settlers.

The Tangsas have a rich cultural heritage and are the bearers of traditional knowledge and skills of natural food processing and preservation, sustainable cooking, weaving, architecture and basketry. Among these, one of the most fascinating practices that they actively continue till date is that of indigenous bamboo tea-making. The Tangsas, along with the Singphos, are believed to be the original tea-makers in India, much before the British introduced it commercially.

From a time actually unknown to them, Tangsas are processing tea leaves following their traditional methodology which provides for natural preservation of the roasted dry tea for many years. The process starts with plucking of tea leaves from their village gardens, to drying in fire, roasting inside fresh bamboo tube, and finally producing a solidified form. For making the drink, they cut open the thin layer of bamboo tissue around the solid dry tea, and cut small pieces that are used to brew the tea. Traditionally, the brewing was also done in bamboo tubes but nowadays, kettles are also used. They drink this tea daily as it is supposed to have medicinal values. Bamboo is not only used for traditional tea-making but has an overarching utility in the Tangsa lifestyle too. The staple diet of Tangsas and their traditional cuisine consisting of rice, meat, and fish are all cooked in bamboo tubes directly placed on fire.



*The process of bamboo tea-making starts with plucking of tea leaves from the village gardens, to drying in fire, roasting inside fresh bamboo tube and finally producing a solidified form.*



Owing to their rich traditional knowledge of local vegetation and their integral link to nature, they are experts in using different types of local bamboo and leaves for making their houses and other daily utility items like baskets, utensils, containers, mats, etc., all of which make their living completely sustainable.

### The Kalbelias of Rajasthan

Kalbelia is a unique community of traditional snake-charmers by profession. They belong to the family of Navnaths, a nomadic community from the Yogi sect. Locally, they are also referred to as 'ghoomantar', meaning the ones who wander. A few decades ago, they settled in Chopasni region of Jodhpur in Rajasthan, where around 200 Kalbelias reside. About 100 of them are active performers at regional, national and international levels. The masters or Gurus of Kalbelia song, music and dance, who live in Chopasni are Kalunath Kalbelia, Appanath Kalbelia, Asha Sapera, Suwa Devi, and Samda Sapera. Kalunath is considered a living legend of this folk art form.

The knowledge of their cultural forms and practices are completely oral and are passed down through generations. In the local language, Kal means 'snake' and Belia means 'friendship'. Since the enactment of the Wildlife Act of 1972 and subsequent ban on snake-handling, the Kalbelias have lost their traditional profession and pursued their performing art for their livelihoods. The Kalbelia tradition is rich in indigenous music, songs, dance and handicrafts (embroidery and ethnic jewellery)— all combining together to create this vibrant and colourful folk form. The striking features of their gorgeous costumes with swirling movements of the dancers and snake-like movements make Kalbelia one of the most stunning folk dance forms. Kalbelia dancers are known worldwide for their exuberant and energetic dance. The men play music, their main instrument being the wind instrument called Pungi or Been that is accompanied by percussion instruments, Daffi and to the beats and tunes of which the Kalbelia women dance. They are also known for their extensive knowledge of local flora and fauna, and making of traditional medicines from natural ingredients.

There is a considerably large body of research and films on Kalbelias of Rajasthan and their ancestry. It is believed that their ancestral ties date back to the Romas who had migrated and settled down in America and Europe decades back. Kalbelia is inscribed in the UNESCO 2003 Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. However, the situation of the artists at the villages is very poor, and the



*The striking features of their gorgeous costumes with swirling movements of the dancers and snake-like movements make Kalbelia one of the most stunning folk dance forms.*

numbers of Kalbelia musicians and dancers are decreasing, owing to lack of opportunities and the necessity to adopt other income generating activities.

The Kalbelia artists have been featured in many films like Lamhe, Rudali and many documentaries are being made on the artists. Books have been written on the Kalbelia dance. Their social and economic marginalisation is high, significantly affecting their livelihood and dignity of life. Kalbelia women as dancers play a vital role in taking their cultural tradition forward and enjoy equal participation in the practice of this art form. Their aspects of culture, migration, and way of life influence the social construction of the lives of these women, which is worth documenting.

### The Rajbongshis of West Bengal

Rajbongshi is an indigenous community living in West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and various North Eastern parts of India. They are one of the largest and ancient ethnic groups of North and South Dinajpur of West Bengal. Agriculture is the main pillar of their rural economy, owing to the rich and conducive natural conditions. They also have a rich heritage and culture which had been inherited from the ancient civilisation, including their own dialects, art forms, and way of living. The word 'Rajbongshi'

literally means 'royal community', as they are believed to have hailed from the ancient Koch kingdom. Once, the rulers of their lands suffered loss of land ownership and their sustainable rural economy with the advent of the British and other external entities.

Rajbongshis have a diverse repertoire of indigenous art forms such as Bamboo and Dhokra crafts, performing arts like Gomira Dance (Mukha Nach) and the satirical folk drama, Khon. Traditionally, the

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**The Tangsas, along with the Singphos, are believed to be the original tea-makers in India, much before the British introduced it commercially. They are processing tea leaves following their traditional methodology which provides for natural preservation of the roasted dry tea for many years.**

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The performers of Gomira dance (Mukha Nach) believe that once they put on the mask, it comes alive and takes over the dancer's persona to reflect its own.

community being animists, all these cultural forms relate to nature and spirituality, sustainable practices based on natural resources, and knowledge of local biodiversity.

Gomira dance, locally known as Mukha Nach, is a form of ritualistic dance or musical folk theatre, practised by this community by putting on Gomira wooden masks of different forms of deities. The performers believe that once they put on the mask, it comes alive and takes over the dancer's persona to reflect its own. Instruments include drums, dhak, shehnai and metal gong; costumes include colourful dresses in accordance to the character portrayed. These performances provide the communities with livelihood support, however, minimal.

Gomira mask makers mostly inhabit Kushmandi block in Dakshin Dinajpur and Kaliaganj block in Uttar Dinajpur. Around 250 artists live in these two blocks, mainly concentrated in the villages of Mahishbathan, Sabdalpur, Beldanga, Ushaharan, Madhupur, Berail, Mangaldai, Kaliyaganj, etc.

Every village organises at least one Gomira dance festival customarily during the months of Chaitra-Ashad (April-July), at a central location, which is usually the village temple. Gomira dance is mainly organised to



Dhokra or jute mat weaving is an indigenous tradition practised by the Rajbongshi women in the villages of Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts.

appease the village deity, Goddess Chandi, and usher in her blessings. The masks are also offered to the deities for wish fulfillment of the worshippers. The dance starts with a musical prelude followed by *Vandana*, or the evocation of the Goddess, followed by the main performance. In recent times, the youth in the region are taking a renewed interest in pursuing and promoting the tradition to keep it alive.

Dhokra or jute mat weaving is an indigenous tradition practised by the Rajbongshi women in the villages of Uttar and Dakshin Dinajpur districts. Weaving is done on home-based back strap looms. Jute, which grows locally, is hand processed and hand-woven to produce the natural fibre products, making the process as well as the products highly sustainable. Dhokra weaving is a source of livelihood for the women. They not only sell the mats in local haats but have also started diversifying their products for urban consumers. Dhokra products have already made a distinctive mark in the handicraft and home design space.

The Rajbongshi community also practises a satirical improvisational folk drama called Khon, which is believed to be a nearly 200 years old traditional art form. The word Khon in Rajbongshi, means 'moment'. Stories are based on local incidents which are dramatised with a comical style of presentation. A performance combines dialogues, songs and dance. Khon songs are said to have evolved from Ramayana songs. The uniqueness of Khon is that there is usually no pre-written script. The art form has been integral to local festivals and rituals.

## Conclusion

It is evident that these unique traditional knowledge systems, art and crafts have a deep rooted relationship of interdependency and reverence with nature. From time immemorial, indigenous communities have generated and nurtured oral cultural traditions of songs, theatre, dance, and social customs to help them survive the test of time with faith and hope. When the world is struggling for solutions and success in reaching the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, there are hundreds of indigenous communities across the country which do not have any carbon footprint of their traditional ways of living. These communities are mostly self-sufficient and live with their wisdom of nature and culture that need to be recognised and protected urgently, instead of homogenising with the dominant global culture. A crucial element of conservation of natural and cultural heritage is in understanding and attaining the balance between man, nature, and culture in a conscious way. □

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