

TRIBAL STUDIES IN INDIA: INTERDISCIPLINARY PERSPECTIVES AND APPROACHES

Lecture1

Lecture 01: Introduction: Understanding the Concept of Tribe- Historicizing the Concept of Tribe

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Good morning everyone. I am very happy and excited to welcome you to the NPTEL online certification course: tribal studies in India: interdisciplinary perspectives and approaches. So the course is offered by me, Dr. Roluahpuia. I am an assistant professor of sociology at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, IIT Roorkee. And I'm offering this course along with my colleague, Dr. Sarbani Banerjee.

She's from the English discipline and both of us are from the same department. So as you can see, the title of our course is indicative of the fact that the course will focus on the study of tribes, particularly in the context of India. Now there is also a reason as to why we put that interdisciplinary perspectives and a process because both of us hail from different disciplines. My colleague Dr. Sarbani is from English, trained in English discipline, and I'm trained as a sociologist. So in this course, we will try to understand the concept of tribe.

How it has been used over a period of time, and then we will look at different ways and approaches, both from sociology and anthropology, as well as from English. To how different disciplines have approached or the methods and theoretical frameworks that are prevalent to the study of tribal communities in India and how we can bridge the two. Now, both of us have worked quite extensively on tribes or tribal communities. And we also bring with us our experience, you know, in terms of working in different regions. My colleague, Dr.

Sarbani Banerjee, has worked extensively on central India, particularly in the states of Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal.

My research has, you know, primarily focused on the tribes of Mizoram, Manipur, and Tripura in the northeastern part of India. So we think that our interdisciplinary focus is not only about bringing two disciplines together, but also about bringing the two regions where we are working together. So, in that way, through this course, we hope that we will be able to bridge the different kinds of differences, the different kinds of approaches in the study of tribes. So, with this, today, I am very happy to again start the course that is Tribal Studies in India. Since this is the first lecture, we will basically look at the concept of tribe.

We will try to understand how the concept has been used over a period of time. Now, needless to say, disciplines like anthropology and sociology in particular have significantly contributed to the study of tribes, not only in the context of India but elsewhere as well. And since, you know, the term has a negative connotation, it is more or less abandoned in the West. But in the context of India, all of us know that the category tribe is not only a social identity, but it is also an official identity in the sense that there are communities who are officially recognized as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution of India. So in that sense, the identity as a tribe or a tribal or a scheduled tribe has been internalized by communities who are recognized as tribes.

Its significance also lies in the fact that, you know, there are a lot of communities in India today who are demanding the recognition as a Scheduled tribe. So, therefore, you know it is important to really understand what is the meaning of tribe, who are tribal communities, who are scheduled tribes, and what is the basis of recognizing a community as Scheduled Tribes in India. So to begin with, you know a little bit about the etymology of the term tribe. Now, the term tribe came from the Latin word *tribus*, which means a division of citizenry, administrative divisions, and voting units of ancient Rome. Now, in this understanding, it was more of a, you know, tributary kind of relationship between a group or a community in the imperial state where gifts and tributes were being exchanged.

Now, however, you know, the way in which we use the term tribe is very, very different and very, very distinct from the way it was used and known in ancient Rome. A significant, you know, aspect or a significant landmark was the entry of

the tribe in the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1911, which first describes the meaning of the word in terms of Roman administration. And it puts, I quote from the quote, its ethnological meaning has come to be any aggregate of families or small communities which are grouped together under one chief or leader observing similar customs and social rules and tracing their descent from one common ancestor. Now I read this out because this, in some sense, has drawn significantly from the way in which it was used in ancient Rome. The entry of the term 'tribe' in the Encyclopedia Britannica has also significantly popularized the term 'tribe' in our everyday vocabulary.

But it was not until the 16th century that the term tribe gained prominence. And this also coincided with the rise of colonial powers or the Euro-American colonial expansion in different parts of the world. Now, the concept, you know, tribe began to be used as a category like race, caste, class. So therefore, it was in a big way that colonial administrators and European settlers, you know, who began to use the term tribe to specifically denote primitive and non-state communities who are governed by the principles of kinship. Now, coming in a more specific way to the Indian context, there are definitely some traces in which these communities, who are today identified and categorized as tribes, are known.

So, pre-colonial depictions of communities now identified as tribes are found in the Sanskrit and Hindu religious texts. they depict tribes as communities living under primitive and barbarous conditions. And tribes, you know, at times they were referred to as daityas, raksasas, and nishads in the Hindu religious texts. However, it was not until the establishment of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 that communities who were recognized as tribes began to be studied in a more systematic manner. Now, when one talks about the study of tribes in India, one cannot ignore the contribution of the colonial state.

Now, for example, there are scholars like Nicholas Dirks who have termed the colonial state, that is the British, in India as an ethnographic state. All of us know that, in a big way, the role of colonialism or the colonial state contributed to the emergence of disciplines such as anthropology. Now, in India as well, it was primarily the colonial agents, whether they were the missionaries, whether they were the administrators, or whether they were the travelers, who were among the first to have really written about tribes. Now even today, to study any tribal communities, whether we like it or not, whether we agree to what has been

written about them by the Britishers, we have to go back to these colonial monographs. Now some of the prominent works include Dalton's descriptive ethnology of Bengal, Risley's Tribes and Castes of Bengal, Russell and Hira Lal's Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India, and Thurston's Castes and Tribes of Southern India.

Now, during the same period, the emerging discipline of anthropology was deeply influenced by the idea of historical progress and social evolution, which, in other words, was the dominance of the evolutionary idea. Every society passes through these distinct stages in history when transitioning from a traditional to a modern society. Now, anthropological discourse relegated tribes to the lowest states in human evolution, in a sense that tribes are not only primitive, but also backward. And unlike modern society, tribes are largely non-modern. Ethnographic work by the colonial writers significantly contributes towards this, in the sense that they begin to identify tribal communities as those who are non-literate, those who are non-industrial, and communities who are predominantly agrarian and predominantly rural.

All these characteristics define or shape the understanding or the notion about tribes in India. So broadly, like I said, the colonial monographs continue to be very instrumental or very pivotal in terms of understanding the tribal communities in India. Needless to say, all of us know that many of the tribal communities in India are largely oral societies, in the sense that most of them don't have a system of writing. So in that sense, the colonial monographs are also important in the sense that they were the first ones to actually document the histories, the cultures, the myths, the belief systems, the traditions, and the customs of tribal communities. Now, so broadly, we can categorize two broad perspectives when it comes to ethnographic writing about tribes in India.

One is the understanding of tribe as a particular type of society based on kinship ties, and the second is tribe as a stage of evolution. Now, in the case of tribe as a particular type of society, it more or less views tribe as a social group with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organization. Now, apart from this, there are some significant characteristics that were observed, such as relative egalitarianism within the group, the absence of complex political structures, strong and functional kinship bonds, cooperation, territorial integrity, cultural and linguistic distinctiveness, and lower levels of

technology. Now, some of the traits of what colonial ethnographers or colonial writers found about Indian society were also significantly shaped by the way in which they understood the larger Indian society. For example, we know that in India, many of the communities predominantly belong to the Hindus, Muslims, and so on, and many communities have

This system of caste, which is more or less a very hierarchical, way of organizing, you know, socially, culturally, and economically. Now, in the context of tribes, you know, many tribal communities don't have these systems of caste or caste systems. Now, therefore, you know, these observations that tribes are more or less egalitarian, you know, is something which is very, very prominent. Likewise, you know, the absence of complex political structures in the sense that many tribal communities are more or less considered to be small in terms of their population. They occupy a relatively small geographical area in the sense that there is some kind of geographical compactness and the absence of a political structure, also in terms of their own independent system of governance, such as chieftainship, and so on and so forth.

So, these are some of the distinct characteristics in which tribal societies were characterized. Now, the other part, which is tribe as a state of evolution, sees tribal communities as primitive societies, in the sense that they lack all the traits that characterize modern society or modern communities, particularly Western society. Like I said, you know, tribal communities lack, you know, non-literacy, they are uncivilized, you know, uncultured, they are non-industrial, they are predominantly agrarian and they are significantly or predominantly rural. So basically, tribal communities are understood in terms of what they do not have and the kind of things that they lack. In that sense, they are still living in a very, very primitive stage of life.

Now, however, this is not to say that these two views are clashing with one another. So there are some complementarities between the two views in the sense that the tribal communities are seen as having primitive social organization, implying that they are at the lower stages in the evolutionary social hierarchy in terms of their socio-cultural characteristics, economy, and political structures, often being described as simple as well as insulated from changes in the larger regional polity. Now, I just wanted to take some time to explain this evolutionary social hierarchy. Now, if some of you may have studied

anthropology and sociology, and all of us know that every sociologist, whether it is the key sociological thinkers like Karl Marx, Max Weber, or Emile Durkheim, has devoted almost their entire life trying to understand how human society changes over a period of time and what the factors contributing to the changes are. But all of them, despite the fact that they have different concepts and different ways of looking at the changes happening in society, they all, in a sense, subscribe to this evolutionary thinking, in a sense that they all believe that society will transition from one stage to another, like from traditional to modern society.

In that sense, the evolutionary social hierarchy in the context of tribes means that tribes are at the lowest rank of these stages of human evolution. Another important thing is that we always see or imagine tribes as static and unchanging communities, primarily because tribal communities are viewed as communities who live in isolation, particularly geographical isolation from other communities, in the sense that they live in the deep interiors of the forest, they live in the deep interiors of the hills, and they're rarely in touch with the outside world. So, in the context of India, this understanding is also primarily important because it has shaped the way in which we understand tribal communities even till today. So, in India today, we have more than 750 communities who are recognized as Scheduled Tribes. And I will cover this, you know, facts in the later part of my slides.

So, however, it is also important to know that the groups identified as Scheduled Tribes, you know, have never associated or have never identified themselves as a tribe as such. In a sense, the general category or the term 'tribe' was absent in the vocabulary of the people who are identified as Scheduled Tribes. Now, for instance, there is no vernacular reference for the term in the language and dialect of several tribes in the northeastern part of India. Now, the northeastern part of India is specifically important because, in terms of the absolute numbers, the tribal population in the northeast may not be very large when we look at the national level. But then if you look at the regional level, you will see that northeast India is quite unique in the sense that most of the states in the northeast are predominantly inhabited by tribal communities.

And it is tribal communities who are the dominant communities in terms of their population in states such as Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Arunachal

Pradesh. And even in states like Assam, Manipur and Tripura, they also have a significant tribal population. So, which is, you know, something that is quite distinct when one looks at the demography of tribal population in, mainly in India. Now, so, despite that no communities in Northeast India who are recognized as Scheduled Tribes have the term 'tribe' in their own or vernacular language. Now, again, it was the colonial administrators who began to introduce and popularize the term tribe to classify diverse groups of people.

A significant point that one has to remember is the diverse groups of people. Now, let me come back to the tribes in North East India. If you look at states like Nagaland, there are somewhere around 16 tribes, 16 Naga tribes within Nagaland. Now, if you look at Manipur, there are more than 30 communities that are recognized as tribes. If you look at Assam also, there are significantly, maybe, you know, around 10 to maybe more than that communities who are recognized as Scheduled Tribes.

Likewise, in Arunachal Pradesh, in Tripura, and in Meghalaya as well. Now, if you look at all these communities who are recognized as scheduled tribes, you will see that, beyond being recognized as a scheduled tribe, there is nothing really which is very, very similar about these communities. In a sense, you know, all these communities, whether they are big or small in terms of their population, more or less have their own distinct culture, their own distinct language, distinct customs, distinct traditions, and different types of economic practices. Now, therefore, it becomes very convenient, you know, for the colonial state or for the Britishers to classify this very, very heterogeneous population, you know, into one category known as tribe. So, like I said, you know, today communities who are identified as tribes vary in terms of their physical traits, language, demographic size, ecology, and regions inhabited.

Now, in terms of demographic size, for example, there are tribal communities that may be fewer than 1000 in terms of their numbers. Now, there may be tribal communities like the Gonds, you know, in Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere, you know, whose numbers can go up to more than 10 lakhs. Now, there are tribal communities again in the northeast, maybe the Mizo community, whose number can be around 8 to 9 lakhs. But at the same time, if you look at some of the tribal communities in states such as Manipur, you will see that many of them number

between 10,000 and 20,000. So, there are a lot of significant variations in terms of their demographic size as well.

Now, in terms of the languages also, most of the tribal communities have their own distinct languages, not only at the community level but also at the village level, where you will see that there are certain distinct languages which are being spoken in one village, two villages, or three villages. So, there is no end to diversity when we talk about tribes. So tribes are also classified based on different stages of social formation, acculturation, and development. This is something that I have spoken about in my previous slides as well. So I'm not going to repeat it here.

So what is important to understand is this point that the communities who are recognized as tribes are mostly identified by what they are not. One, they did not practice Vedic Hinduism. They were not Muslims. They were not integrated into the modern economy and civilization. So, basically, tribes are identified in terms of what they lack from the larger cultural groups or the so-called mainstream society.

Now, today, the use of the term tribe is something that is very, very popular now. But then over a period of time, the term tribe has been used and defined in different ways. And even as, you know, it is an official category of identification today, it was only with the colonial census that the term tribe was officially used to denote or specify certain groups and communities. Now, in the 1901 census. Communities who were practicing Hinduism were viewed as castes, whereas tribes were groups or communities who were known to practice animism.

So basically, one part of the story is that tribes are communities who are outside of the larger Hinduism or the larger caste society. So basically, they are non-caste society. On the other hand, they are communities who predominantly practice what today we call animism. But I think it is still important to understand that the practice of animism is also quite different and distinct across regions and communities. So animism in a way also is a very, very convenient category that was introduced by the British to club together communities and people or groups who have a different set of beliefs, customs, and traditions.

So, the first criterion was more or less, we can say, the use of religion to identify communities, say Hinduism, Muslim, Islam, or Christian, or in the context of tribal

communities who practice animism. So, religious belief, in a sense, was the first criterion that was used to designate communities as tribes. Second, in 1921, a new idea was used, a new reference point. That reference point was geography, in terms of communities who live in the hills and the forests. Now, this idea of tribes, you know, predominantly inhabiting forests, inhabiting the hills, continues to be very, very strong.

And it was an idea that was introduced in the year 1921. Now, in the 1931 census, the communities who are primarily identified as primitive or backward are the ones who are being categorized as tribal or scheduled tribes in the colonial census. Now, this understanding of primitive and backward continues to be one of the most important yardsticks when it comes to categorizing and identifying a community as a tribe. Now, so in some sense the idea of tribe or our notion of tribe is shaped by a sense that tribes are communities who are predominantly backward, predominantly primitive. Predominantly, people who have rejected or who are still not influenced by any form of modernity or modernization.

Now, in 1941, the idea of tribal origin began to be used as the criterion of identification. So, like I said, these classifications were done to simplify and categorize diversity for administrative and classificatory purposes. Now, all of us know that, even today in India, we continue to use census. Now, in census, you know, there are different parameters in which communities or families or groups or regions or states are clubbed together. Now, in that sense, the category tribe was used to simplify this vast heterogeneous people inhabiting this vast geography and clubbing them together under one category becomes very, very convenient for the colonial state.

Because in many ways, they also realize and know that these communities are distinct. But within the communities, tribes themselves, there is a lot of distinctiveness, a lot of diversity. So, the first and foremost thing about the category tribe one has to understand is that it is a very, very useful way to simplify these very, very heterogeneous communities into one single category. So, however, over a period of time, the category tribe began to be significantly incorporated into the everyday colonial language, particularly in the legal domain. So, separate legislations and policies for the colonial subjects and the tribals were created.

Now, in the case of the tribes, Schedule Districts Act of 1874 and Government of India Act of 1935. The Scheduled District Act of 1874 and the Government of India Act of 1935, which categorized regions as excluded and partially excluded areas, continue to occupy a very, very important place when it comes to the understanding of tribes, primarily because they designate certain areas as being inhabited by tribes. Now, in contemporary India, we have two important schedules. One is the Fifth Schedule and the other is the Sixth Schedule. Now, the Fifth Schedule is primarily for mainland India, tribal communities living in mainland India, particularly in central India.

The Sixth Schedule is primarily for the tribal communities living in northeast India. Now, this history goes back to the Government of India Act of 1935, which designated regions as excluded and partially excluded areas. So, what does this do? What is the implication of this? Now, this created a binary of state and non-state, caste and tribal, hierarchy and egalitarianism, civilized and uncivilized, Hinduism and animism.

Now, an important aspect of this schedule is that it resulted in what today we commonly refer to as indirect rule in many of the tribal areas, in a sense that no legislations will be directly applicable to areas which are designated as a scheduled area by the law. Now, even under the Constitution of India today, areas which are governed under strict schedules in particular have a lot of provisions in terms of protecting the culture and political interests of the tribal communities. Now, the result, the outcome of this was that a broad generalization of the term tribe, which included a diverse population. Now, coming to the post-independent period, tribes are defined mainly in terms of administrative classification that divided the population into tribal and non-tribal. The Constitution of India has enumerated several communities in the list of scheduled tribes.

Now, it is Article No. 366, Section 25, which defines Scheduled Tribe, which goes as tribes or tribal communities or parts of groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of this Constitution. Now, it is only the President who can give assent to whether a community should be recognized as a Scheduled tribe or not. Now, if you look at the numbers today, there are 705 tribal communities. There are 705 communities that are recognized as scheduled tribes. But if you look back at

history, if you look back at the last 75 years of India's independence, you will see that the number of communities which are recognized as tribes has grown significantly.

For instance, it was 212 in 1951 to 427 in 1961 and 432 in 1971, and today, the number has gone up to 705, and tomorrow, who knows, the number may go even beyond 800. Now, what this means is that over a period of time, there are more and more communities that are being identified and categorized as Scheduled Tribes. So, as per the 2011 census, tribal communities constitute about 8.6% of the total population of India, which is approximately 10.4 crore people. Now, 8.6% of the total population of India is not a large number when we look at the total population of India. But then you will see that the tribal communities in India are quite spread out across the north, south, east, and west.

We have a significant tribal population as well as in states like Kerala. We have a significant tribal population in Maharashtra, in Gujarat, in Rajasthan, in Himachal Pradesh, as well as in Uttarakhand. And we also have, like I said, a significant number of tribal population, not only in Northeast India, but tribal communities are the dominant communities in terms of their population. In Mizoram, the entire population of tribal communities is almost 90 to 95 percent. In Nagaland, it is also more or less at the same range.

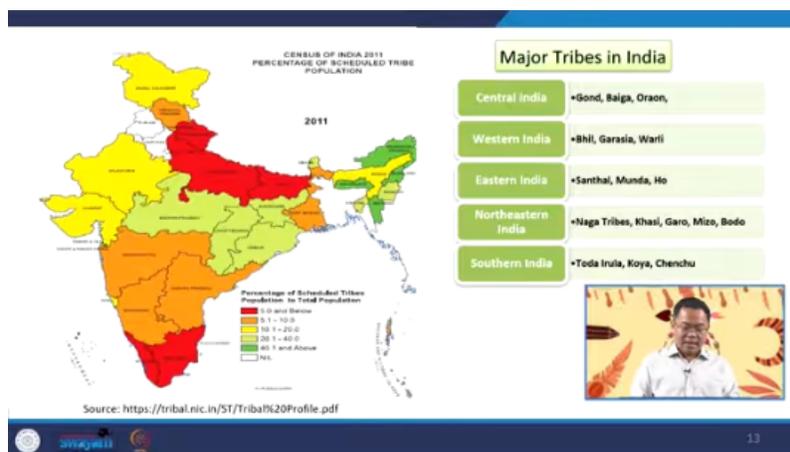
In Manipur, it is close to around 40 percent of the total population in the state. So, however, like I said, you know, in terms of their demography, in terms of their numbers, there is significant variation because some tribes can number only in terms of thousands, while some tribes can number in terms of lakhs and lakhs. Now, the Bhil communities are the largest tribal group with approximately 38% of the total ST population, while the state of Madhya Pradesh has the highest tribal population in the country. Now, what is the criterion that is being used to identify a community as a tribe in India today? There are five criteria that are being used.

One is the indication of primitive traits. Second is a distinctive culture. Third is geographical isolation. Fourth is shyness of contact with the community at large. And the fifth is backwardness.

I will come to that criteria and, you know, explain a little bit about them. Now, if you look at this map, you will see the geographical spread of tribal communities.

Now, like I said in the northeast, you know, states such as Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh have significant tribal populations. Now, again, if you look at the eastern part of India, like Orissa, if you look at the western part of India, like Gujarat, if you look at the southern states, such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, and if you look at the up north as well, like Himachal, Jammu and Kashmir, tribal communities in India are quite spread out. So this, you know, one is that, yes, geographically, tribal communities are quite spread out all over the states.

And there is also a significant population of tribal communities, even in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. But like I said, you know, in terms of the numbers, in terms of the population, in terms of the levels of development, you will see that most tribal communities in the northeast, you know, are quite developed, are quite advanced in terms of education, in terms of health care, in terms of life expectancy. But then if you look at the levels of development of tribal communities such as in the state of Odisha or in the state of Madhya Pradesh, you will see that they continue to lag behind when it comes to basic human development such as education, health care, life expectancy, and so on. Now, coming back to the criteria for defining a community as a tribe. Now, if you look at it, you will see that there is a lot of influence of anthropology in identifying or in the criteria that we are still using today.



Now, some of the criteria may be quite relevant for some communities. Some of the criteria may no longer be relevant for many, many communities who are recognized as tribes. Now, if you look at geographical isolation, to speak of any communities that are untouched by any other culture, that have no relationship

with any other culture, that are not impacted by the forces of globalization, I think in today's world that is something which is impossible, particularly in a country like India. But then we still have criteria like geographical isolation to categorize or to identify a community as a tribe. Shyness of contact with the community at large.

- There are 705 number of tribal communities recognized in India from 212 in 1951, to 427 in 1961 and 432 in 1971.
- As per the 2011 census, tribes constitute 8.6% of the total population of India, which is approximately 10.4 crore people.
- Bhil is the largest tribal group, with approximately 38% of the total ST population, while Madhya Pradesh has the highest tribal population.
- Lokur committee has spelled out five criteria for defining a community as a tribe:
 - indications of primitive traits,
 - distinctive culture,
 - geographical isolation,
 - shyness of contact with the community at large,



backwardness 12

This idea of shyness of contact also comes from the notion that tribal communities are geographically isolated. Given that they have rarely interacted with the outside world, there is some kind of reluctance on their part to have close cultural relations with communities outside of their own. So, another criterion is backwardness in a sense that they are still very rural, they are still very agrarian, they continue to practice jhum cultivation or shifting cultivation, which is also considered to be one of the most primitive methods of cultivation. So, therefore, you know, all these criteria continue to influence and shape the notion of understanding of the tribe. But then, on the contrary, it is also important to understand that many of these criteria may no longer be applicable to many of the tribal communities who are being identified and categorized as Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution of India.

Now, in the tribal dominant regions that I have shown in this map, particularly in Central India and North East India, there are two distinct administrative arrangements in the form of the Fifth and the Sixth Schedules under Article 244 section 1 and 244 section 2, which guarantee autonomy to the country's tribal population who live in regions declared as such. Now these scheduled areas have been defined in the Indian Constitution in Para Six of the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, which lays out the criteria for scheduling, rescheduling, and

alteration of Scheduled Areas as such areas as the President may order declared to be Scheduled Areas. Now today, this scheduled area covers 11.3% of the total geographical area of the country and is located in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh. Now, what is so important about this scheduled area? What is so significant about this scheduled area, the Fifth and the Sixth Schedule?

Now the Fifth and the Sixth Schedules are relatively different. Now, let me talk about the Sixth Schedule, for instance. The Sixth Schedule was drafted along with the drafting of the Indian Constitution, where the Constitutional Advisory Council met different tribal leaders in Northeast India, asking them what kind of political arrangement they wanted. So every tribal community, most of them have demanded that they be given a certain form of autonomy that will allow them, at the same time, to have some kind of safeguard and protection to continue to practice their customs and traditions. Now many tribal communities even till today continue to follow traditional customary rules when it comes to governance as well.

So, in that sense, the Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India essentially recognized that tribes have a distinct political system and therefore it needs to be legally recognized. So, now the Sixth Schedule is enforced in parts of Mizoram, parts of Tripura, and in Meghalaya. In these states, there is something known as the Autonomous District Council. And this Autonomous District Council has representatives who are democratically elected. Now, these Autonomous District Councils, their role and function is to essentially protect and safeguard the interests of the tribal communities.

Now, therefore, the Sixth Schedule is very, very powerful in the sense that the land rights of the communities, the customs and traditions, and the belief systems of the communities are protected and safeguarded. However, despite this, you see that over a period of time, the way in which we define tribes and the way in which scheduled tribes are recognized has changed. And it has passed through different stages. There was no single definition of who is a tribe. Even today, it is still very, very difficult to define who is a tribe.

In that sense, there is still a lack of consensus on the coherent and well-defined criteria to define tribes. Broadly, the criteria that we have adopted until today and which we rely on until today are the five criteria that I just read out. That is the primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and general backwardness. However, classification of communities as a Scheduled Tribe is not uniform throughout the country. What this means is that many communities, like the Scheduled Tribe in Tamil Nadu, may not be the same as the Scheduled Tribe in Karnataka.

Some communities may be recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in Mizoram, whereas they may not be recognized as a Scheduled Tribe in Meghalaya. Now, say for instance, let us take the example of some tribal communities in Assam. Now, during the British period, several tribal communities from Jharkhand, particularly the Chhotanagpur region, were forcefully transported to work in the tea plantations of Assam. And today, they are popularly known as tea tribes, primarily because they work in tea plantations. Now, back in Jharkhand or back in Chhattisgarh, all of these communities, whether they are Santhals or Oraons, are identified as Scheduled Tribes.

But in Assam, they are not granted any status of a scheduled tribe. So, there is no coherence in terms of, you know, the identification of a community as a Schedule Tribe. Till 1976, area restrictions were used for recognition of scheduled tribes, in a sense that, you know, a tribe can be a tribe only if they live under a specific region or area. And this has contributed to the anomalies in terms of identifying tribes in different areas. Now, in 1976, there was a removal of these area restrictions, which presumed that a tribe could only be a tribe if they lived in a particular region.

However, even till today, we still continue to have difficulty in terms of categorizing, or there still exists a lot of anomalies when it comes to the identification of tribe. Now, to conclude, I just wanted to briefly summarize what we have learned from these few slides. So I tried to lay out how the concept of tribe has been used over time, how the meanings of tribe and scheduled tribes have changed over a period of time. And the role of colonialism or the colonial state is very, very important in the sense that, you know, it was the colonial state which has actually officialized the category tribe. And in many ways, we continue

to follow the criteria, we continue to follow much of the definitions used by the colonial state to identify communities as Scheduled Tribes in India today.

And again, you know, we have close to 705 communities who are recognized as schedule tribes who constitute about 8.6% of the country's total population. And while the term Scheduled tribes does denote certain kind of easy classifications when it comes to identifying a community. But then it is also important to acknowledge that there is enormous diversity and differences between communities who are identified as tribes. Not only in terms of region from northeast India to mainland India, but also within communities who are identified as Scheduled Tribes in states like Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, or even in states like Mizoram, Nagaland, Manipur, and Tripura. There is a lot of difference, there is a lot of diversity in terms of language, belief systems, development, culture, traditions, you know, it varies from region to region, from tribe to tribe.

So, while 'Scheduled Tribe' or 'tribe' is very, very convenient for us to talk about the communities who are identified as such, I think it is important to acknowledge and realize the fact that we are talking about a group which is quite diverse and distinct in its own ways. Thank you so much.