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**Abhishek Kumar**  
UGC Net Qualified, PG  
Sociology, IGNOU, Delhi,  
India

## A sociological study on social change in tribes of Bihar

**Abhishek Kumar**

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### Abstract

Tribes are groups of people who still live in traditional ways and are largely unknown in today's society. There are several indigenous communities spread out over India and the rest of the globe. The Himalayan belt, Western India, the Dravidian region, and the Andaman, Nicobar, and Lakshadweep islands are home to the largest tribal populations, while the states of Bihar, Orissa, and Madhya Pradesh in the country's center are home to more than 55 percent of the overall tribal population. D.N. Majumdar defines a tribe as a social group composed of individuals who share a common language or dialect and who recognize a social divide from members of other tribes or castes. One notable group, the Santhal, makes up more than half of India's tribal population. The research explores the Santhal populations in India's Birbhum area in an effort to shed light on the nation's upbeat tribal status, and it also uncovers interesting insights into the Santhals' diet, religious traditions, social system (including marriage), and levels of knowledge. One of the major factors influencing progress and shifts in lifestyle is social transformation. According to L.M. Lewis, tribal communities have a narrow morality, religion, and world view because of their tiny size, limited spatial and temporal range of social, legal, and political relations.

**Keywords:** Indigenous society, social transformation, environmental impacts, celebrations

### Introduction

Santhal are the largest Hindu religious believer adivasi community in India and can be found mainly in the states of Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and Orissa. In India, 90 million people belong to the indigenous communities known as advisees or tribals. According to the 2011 census, India has 8.10% of tribal population and about 14.8% of Bihar's total population is tribal. The Santhals constitutes more than half of the total ST population of the Bihar (51.8 per cent). According to Oxford Dictionary "A tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarous stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor. Social change refer to change of society and change of social relationship through social process which made by the system of web. It is includes reciprocal activities and developed the new relationship by society in different parts of the countries. It may be defined in other ways,' social change is explained to various aspects of social phenomena, social system, custom, tradition, social interaction, common habits and organizational setup. According to Merrill and Eldredge, "Social Change means that large numbers of population are engaging in activities that differ from those which they or their immediate forefathers engaged in some time before". According to M.D. Jenson, "Social change may be defined as modification in ways of doing and thinking of people. According to Jones "Social change is defined variations in or modifications of any aspect of social system, processes, social patterns, social interaction or social organization".

### Theories of social and cultural change

Social and cultural change has generally been considered as synonymous. While, theorists have several times tried to draw a line between these two types of changes with few overlapping aspects. Since, society is not static and human beings are not sedentary creatures, hence, they keep on moving either horizontally or vertically in the socio-cultural ladder. Martindale (1962) advanced three interpretations of the theory of social and cultural change as discussed below.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Abhishek Kumar**  
UGC Net Qualified, PG  
Sociology, IGNOU, Delhi,  
India

**(a) The Cultural lag theory:** According to this theory, social change is generally indicative of progress but there are differential rates at which the material and nonmaterial aspects of a culture change. The rate of change in the material sphere is fast and it takes sometime before the other non-material spheres catch-up.

**(b) The Progress theory:** This is advanced by the schools of social behaviourism and positivistic organism and includes the cyclical theories of change.

**(c) Functionalism:** Due to the concept of society held by the functionalists, they have found it difficult to reconcile it with change and fit it into their definition of change.

Describes 'cultural change' as, the process by which the existing order of society, that is, its social, spiritual and material civilization is transformed from one type to another thus, covers the more or less rapid processes of modification in political constitution of a society, in its domestic institution and its mode of territorial settlement, in its beliefs and system of knowledge, in its education and law, as well as its material tool and their use, and consumption of goods on which its social economies are based. In the widest sense of term, cultural change is a permanent factor of human civilization; it goes on everywhere and at all times. Cultural change may come from inside e.g., independent invention, or from outside, e.g., cultural borrowing. Along with these dynamic forces, several factors also play important role in bringing about change. Necessity of adaption and adjustment is an important factor in acceptance of changes. Needs arisen due to changing situations, require change in the culture accordingly. Gradual change coming in a slow and steady manner brings stable and sound change. 'Rate of change' is another aspect which varies from culture to culture and depends upon the ability to adapt" of a group.

Thus, cultural change is a very important process in a social system undergoing change, but social change is equally important. Social change, as mentioned above, mainly refers to the structural change in the society, that is, change in the social structure and social relationship, whereas cultural change refers to changes in cultural beliefs and values.

### Review of literature

Verma (1960) <sup>[12]</sup> has discussed the socio-cultural organisations of the Sanria paharias, Mai- paharias and Knmarbhag. He has examined various phases of the tribal life, pregnancy and birth, puberty, widow remarriage, place of women in the society, religion, village council and political institutions.

Sachchidanand (1964) <sup>[9]</sup> in his study of the Gond in Bihar has demonstrated how parts of the same tribe are at different points in the tribe-caste continuum. While some groups claim Kshatriya status, others are satisfied to get the status of some lower Hindu castes. The life of the Gond in Saran and Champaran is marked by heterogeneity, multi-ethnic residence and participation along with other communities in an economy involving specialization. In some areas we also find the emergence of the elite and notions of social stratification. While their brethren in Ranchi, Palamau and Singhbhum are nearer the tribal pole, they have become part of society as a caste.

S. Sinha (1966) <sup>[10]</sup> think in terms of two different poles joined by a scale on which different communities may be placed at different points according to their socio-cultural

characteristics. Both of them, of course use different parameters. Bailey, after his experience of Khond tribe and Oriya castes in the politico-economic field feels that sociologists must view communities as structures or as institutional complexes. Both tribal and caste alternatives coexist as choices in a given situation. Surajit Sinha tried to use Bailey's model to Kharia and Pahera tribes in Bihar.

Thompson (1975) <sup>[11]</sup> states that there are regularities in ecological adaptation and social organisation in pastoral communities in high altitude environment of Alps and Himalayas. The criteria they set for comparison are subsistence techniques, ownership patterns, socio-political forms and regulatory devices. They however, omitted to include the historical, cultural and ideological aspects of communities which form an essential aspect of comparison of two economic processes.

Pradeep Kumar Bose (1981) <sup>[14]</sup>, in his paper, questions the validity of observing stratification pattern among Indian tribes on the basis of caste hierarchy or 'Sacred' hierarchy or division on class basis. This is observed in the context of Bihar tribes. Tribal population in modern market and production systems and their incorporation into 99 modern political systems are shown regional variations in occupations, use of modern machinery etc. Data were collected from seven districts of Bihar, through survey method and random sampling, identifying four distinct classes: rich peasant, middle peasant, poor peasant and agricultural labourers.

Renuka Pameche (1985) <sup>[8]</sup> has studied political aspects of the Bhils and the process of the formation of elite in Bhil Society - Elaborate accounts of the traditional political system of Bhils and the impact of the modern system on them is given. A serious limitation of this book is that, it is has not taken into consideration the socioeconomic aspects of the poor tribal.

Rawat (2007) <sup>[15]</sup> Several theories have been developed by scholars to understand social change. According to Jones, "social change is a term used to describe variations in, or modifications of, any aspect of social process, social pattern, social interaction or social organization".

Jagannath Dash (2010) <sup>[16]</sup> for a traditional society especially tribal community like that of "Paraja" in south Orissa, the fundamental features are always in favour of the maintenance of their socio cultural tradition. Like others they also need money (in cash) for their livelihood but it should not be at the cost of their socio-cultural tradition. It is easier to lose traditional values to acquire economic development. Day-by-day due to the impact of globalization, people are tending towards new economic order which may ultimately fade away their traditional values.

Puttaraja (2012) <sup>[6]</sup> Women in a tribal society play a vital role in their social, cultural, economic and religious ways of life and are considered as an economic asset in their society. But they are still lagging far behind in the various walks of life like education, employment, good health and economic empowerment etc. Empowering may be understood as enabling weaker sections like poor women, especially tribal women to acquire and to possess power and resources.

### Theories of Social Change

Social change has been understood and defined by various scholars in a number of ways. Few definitions propounded by different sociologists and social scientists may be

mentioned here to begin with. Morris Ginsberg (1958) defines social change as “a change in social structure, e.g., the size of a society, the composition or balance of its parts or the type of its organisation changes in attitudes or beliefs, in so far as they sustain institutions and change with them”. Thus, Ginsberg emphasises upon two aspects in social change which are interlinked-- changes in the structure of society and changes in the values and norms. The tribal communities did not evince significant social change till the commencement of British rule in India because due to the inaccessibility and remoteness of the areas generally inhabited by the tribals, it was not possible for them on the part of others to establish contacts. Due to lack of contact and interaction, tribal communities remained within the bounce of their social contours and cultural boundaries of long years. In socio-cultural change, contact with ‘reference groups’ is a major factor, in other words tribal communities did not have contact with significant others whom they could have accepted as reference groups in situations of culture contact.

Due to this and other inherent limitations it is not easy to study the progress of education among them, prior to independence. There is no doubt that a few anthropologists, welfare workers, missionaries and government officers posted in these areas, who established contacts with the tribals, have left valuable information about the conditions in which the tribals were living, but the information is rather scanty and does not give complete account of the deplorable conditions prevailing at that time. It appears that the colonial government in India also never thought seriously of taking any constructive steps for the educational and for that matter even social and economic development of the tribal people. For this reason, the tribals- remained educationally extremely backward. Educational backwardness accounted for their socioeconomic backwardness. Lack of education is a retarding factor. Credit must be given to the Christian missionaries for their laudable efforts in spreading education among the tribal people in certain selected pockets. Their work in this respect carried out in North-Eastern India is particularly commendable. Of course, they have succeeded in converting significant proportion of tribals in this area to Christianity.

It was purely economic on the part of outsiders but it was totally cultural on the part of tribal natives. What happened in Bhagalpur district in Bihar which is the homeland of the tribes, is noteworthy. Once these outsiders made themselves friendly and acceptable to the local tribal's, more and more peasants from the plains areas penetrated into the deep regions of the tribal's for eking out a livelihood. In the beginning there seems to be enough land for all. Land was originally under the control of local tribal communities, but slowly some lands got transferred through occupancy rights to non-tribal. Professor F. G. Bailey who carried intensive and extensive studies in the Kandhamal of Orissa has highlighted the factors of tribal land transfer. The non-tribal's who settled down in tribal areas gradually became richer and acquired more and more tribal assets. Hindu service castes who also settled down in tribal areas and could not be absorbed in the tribal system acquired more and more land and became affluent.

### **Social Change: Conceptual Exploration**

Social change is a ubiquitous phenomenon going on in time and space. It is a multifarious, multi-dimensional, and multi-

faceted process explained in numerous ways by various social scientists, social anthropologists and sociologists. The theories of these social scientists took into consideration various factors, forces and sources responsible for bringing change in human society or social group- urban, rural as well as tribal. Society is an integrated structure consisting of several parts and sub parts which are so arranged that keep the system ongoing. Change, due to external or internal sources in any of these parts has repercussions to other parts in varying degrees depending upon various factors viz., region of change, and distance from source of change and type of change etc. Human being, as the basic unit of social system also plays an important role in the process of change. His way of life and life style which are guided by his culture, beliefs, traditions and value systems are the pivotal factors which play major role in either accepting change or showing resistance against it. Hence, in the study of change, individual as well as entire social group have significant place.

In India, transhumance areas include marginal mountains and desert regions where the allocation of natural resources is unequal inspite of abundance of these resources. People in these areas cope with these irregularities by adjusting their livelihoods and accordingly prepare for the strategies of existence. The mobility of livestock and people depends on the availability of pastures. In this seasonal cycle of transhumance, shepherds and the community members make use of differential distribution of natural resources in order to survive both perpetual and sudden changes in ecological system (Aguilar, 1999). The importance of transhumance calls for an economic and ecological understanding of nature with regard to the state. Transhumant societies in general are fast changing in social, political and economic spheres. In India, the transhumance is in declining phase with the current trend of total or partial abandonment of transhumance by the communities. In most of the cases, state has nationalised and confiscated pastures, forests and natural resources, and thus, alienating the nomadic transhumants of their traditional rights and resources. Inspite of large number of ethnographies, there is dearth of academic works on comprehensive and comparative understanding of transhumance. During the colonial period, pastoralism and transhumance was the subject of classical anthropological romanticism and accordingly treated as a stage in evolutionary process preceding settled agriculture. It was the tradition among anthropologists to classify human societies on the basis of their economic activities such as hunting-gathering, pastoral nomads, shifting cultivators, settled agriculturists, peasants, industrial and so on. Bonte and Galaty (1991) calls this classification as „evolutionary myth“ that has been put to rest by archaeological study, which reveals the co-evolution of animal and plant domestication in Central and South West Asia. Not only that, for the authors „pure“ pastoralism is a myth and a pastoral continuum is emerging with pure pastoralists at one end and those that are engaged in agriculture on the other. However, further exploration into this is required in order to establish whether such a continuum is community specific or is true of other communities as well.

### **Social Change and Social Organization**

Society is an integrated whole, where all its parts are interrelated with one another in a manner that any change in

aspect of any one of them, would send ripples of change in many other aspects and all the institutions would feel the effect in different intensities. Likewise, the state of unrest caused due to various factors, external or internal, in a particular social group would put that group in the state of transition whereby most of its social institutions would be affected at different degrees. Some of them change immediately, some of them change very slowly over a period of time and some overcome the repercussions and resist change. Family, Marriage and Kinship is the most important components of any social organisation and the change in them are comparatively slow. The change in the economic, political or religious institutions, affect them gradually, and because of the emergence of new type of situation and interplay of various factors, family, marriage and kinship also undergoes change.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To highlight the Socio-cultural changing status of tribal community.
2. To study the existing opportunities facilitating the preservation, promotion and dissemination of tribal and folk art & culture;
3. To trace out the socio-cultural and socio-economic factors which are hindering the promotion of tribal and folk art & culture?

### Data based and methodology

The study is based on both primary and secondary sources of data, but more emphasis given on primary data which are collected by authors through field survey. On basis of random sample, 80 household has been taken from study areas. The secondary data have been collected from BDO (block development officer) office and Gram Panchayat. Lastly all the data are arranged in the suitable table form and prepare chart and diagram for better understanding through analysis. At last all the data are represented through graphical method and used statistical method.

### Conclusion

It has already been mentioned that Santali people are the largest community & ethnic group in Bihar. Traditional art & crafts are a part in their life. They celebrate their festivals and rituals throughout the year wearing their traditional dresses. These celebrations are made with tribal songs & dances in the open courtyard of the village as with beating drums of various types locally known as Madol, Dhol etc. They speak among themselves in their own language called Al-Chiki. At the same time they got used to speaking in Bengali as well with the outsiders when they come to visit their village. In general these people are peace-loving & friendly with the outside visitors.

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