

# CHAPTER I

# CHAPTER I

## *The Framework of the study*

The present chapter is aimed to discuss the framework of the study. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first section, an attempt is made to understand the concepts and approaches used to analyze the process of social change in India in the existing literature. In second section, meaning, definition and characteristics of the tribe, the setting of tribal population in India and their major classifications developed by different anthropologists and sociologists are discussed. The third section is devoted to analyze the major trends of tribal research in India. In the last section, the objectives of the study and methodology used in the present study are discussed.

### I

#### **SOCIAL CHANGE: CONCEPT AND APPROACHES**

The term social change may be defined as “a change in social structure (including changes in the size of a society), or in particular social institutions, or in the relationships between institutions” (Bottomore 1971:297). The term ‘cultural change’, however, refers to “variations in cultural phenomena such as knowledge and ideas, art, religious and moral doctrines etc.” (Bottomore 1971:297). According to T.B. Bottomore (1971), social and cultural changes are linked in many cases and in a given society while analyzing one process its linkages to the other processes should

also be analyzed.

The concept of social change has been discussed very widely in sociological literature but its theoretical position has been remained controversial in the formative period of sociology. There has been a deep concern about historical reconstructions and generalization about social change. Comte, Spencer, Marx and Pareto made significant contributions to social and cultural evolution and its laws were oriented to historical reconstructions. A similar tendency can be traced in the works of Morgan, McLennan, Bachofan and Henry Maine. During this period the notion of social change was a central concern of sociology, although it had some ideological bias, in the sense, that it emphasized on the universal progress of mankind and unilinear course in social evolution for all societies following the western model.

Because of its evolutionary overtones the concept of social change become relatively unpopular among the sociologists during 1920 – 58 and sociological focus shifted from evolution of social forms to their function. During this period macro sociological generalizations gave way to small group studies and micro sociological theorizing. Sociologists and anthropologists laid an emphasis on field studies and collection of first hand emperical data. The focus of sociological studies shifted from system change to system integration and boundary maintainance function of social forms. This period may be characterized by the predominance of structural-functionalism approach established by Talcott Parsons and his followers in the United States and Radcliffe-Brown and Malinowksi in the Europe.

During the decade following 1958, however, a revival in the study of social change can be observed in Western Sociology as the theoretical assumptions of Structural-Functionalism were challenged on several grounds. It forced the sociologists of functional orientation to demonstrate the effectiveness of their model for analysis of social change also (Smelser 1959 and 1963; Parsons 1964). Another factor responsible for this revival of interest in social change was the decolonisation of Asia, Africa and Latin America, where revolutionary change was the dominant national aspiration and ideology rather than the continuity. Moreover, the younger generation of western sociologists was least interested in the problem of continuity and order and was more interested in formulating alternative paradigms in which shortcoming of structural-functional approach can be overcome. Consequently, the analysis of social change once again became a central concern of Sociology. Two dominant theoretical paradigms emerged in contemporary sociology, namely, functional paradigm and conflict paradigm, for the analysis of social change. The functional paradigm can be traced in the works of Talcott Parsons particularly in his theory of evolutionary universals and pattern variables scheme. Smelser's model of structural-differentiation is one of the most systematic attempts to develop a model of social change in the context of the developing societies. These works are of basic importance in the analysis of transformation of traditional societies into modern one and give rise to the modernization theory of development. On the other hand, Marxist sociologists, mainly emphasized on contradictions in the society particularly in economic interests of different social groups which led to a model of conflict between different classes mainly bourgeoisie and proletariat as conceptual -

ized by Karl Max. The social change is a result of conflict between classes having antagonistic relations on the basis of their different class interests.

The theoretical growth of sociology in India has been deeply influenced by its development in the west particularly the U.S.A and the U.K. The analysis of various social and cultural systems in India can be traced in the works of British and European scholars right from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and from the very beginning attempts had been made to analyze the process of social and cultural changes in the Indian society but Indian sociology did not experienced theoretical fluctuations such as evolutionary, functionalist and neo- evolutionary for the analysis of change as evident in the west. The problem of social change has always been concern of Indian sociologists including the functionalists. Functional sociologists had developed most discussed concepts of social change in India. However, the Indian sociologists have been more concerned with the process of social accommodation and adaptation rather than with abstract theory building, which has been a major characteristic of Western Sociology of the past and the present. Therefore, most of the sociological writings on social change in India tend to be substantive rather than theoretical with few exceptions (Singh, Y. 1974).

In sociological literature various approaches have been used for the analysis of social change. Y. Singh has reviewed major concepts and theories used to understand the process of social change in India in a comprehensive trend report (Singh, Y. 1974). A brief summary of the trend report may be helpful in conceptualization of the problem.

According to Y. Singh, (1974), these approaches may be classified in to four categories: (1) Evolutionary Approach; (2) Cultural Approach; (3) Structural Approach; (4) Dialectical-historical Approach and (5) Institutional Approach.

### **(1) Evolutionary Approach**

The village community, caste and family were the three major themes on which most of the ethnographical and sociological studies concentrated in the later part of 19th century and the early twenties. A number of scholars were influenced by the evolutionary approach of Tylor and Morgan and concentrated on the stages through which institutions like caste, family, marriage, village community passed in the course of their growth in India. The origin of caste and its racial composition constituted the major themes of evolutionary speculation in the work of Crooke (1896), Ibbestson (1916), Risley (1915), N.K. Dutta (1931) and Hutton (1955). The studies of villages and land system were similarly oriented either to finding out the historical stage of growth or their comparative evolutionary sequence and succession of forms (Maine 1890; Baden-Powell 1892 and 1908). These evolutionary formulations also implied that social forms and traditions in India were at a lower stage of growth compared to the western forms and structures. This type of interpretation of Indian social system and culture evoked a feeling of resentment among these scholar such as B.N. Seal and Radha Kamal Mukharjee (Y. Singh. 1967).

During the second quarter of twentieth century Indian sociology and social anthropology became essentially empirical which established fieldwork tradition in

these sequence and focus shifted from the process of change to that of integration and functioning of different institution. In these studies which were conducted at the micro level and strictly maintained their empirical character, the notion of change was analyzed in terms of observed deviation in the forms and functions of the systems concerned between two points of time.

## **(2) Cultural Approach**

The first system systematic concepts to analyze the process of change taking place in Indian society were formulated by M.N.Srinivas (1952), which he calls as 'Sanskritization' and Westernization'. Sanskritization is a process by which a low caste or tribe or other group takes over the customs, rituals, beliefs, ideology and style of life of a high and in particular a twice born ('dwija') caste. Sanskritization as a concept not only identified a very crucial aspects of the process of changing Indian culture and its institution but the use of this term soon led to the beginning of debate in Indian Sociology which has not yet come to a conclusion. Associated with Sanskritization 'Westernization' refers to all cultural changes and institutional innovations in India as this country came into political and cultural contact with the western nations, primarily the U.K. Secularization is a counterpart of the process of westernization specially as it emerged after independence as national ideology. This ideology calls for a spirit of religious and cultural tolerance and co-existence amongst the religious groups. It also refers to various legislative and constitutional provisions that have been made in India to reinforce its foundations. Srinivas has thus attempted to portray the most important processes of social change in India through these three concepts.

The process of social change in India has also been studied and analyzed with the help of the concepts of traditional and its social organization. This approach has its origin in the works of Robert Redfield who postulated a series of cultural and social organizational levels at which the process of change should be analysed particularly for those societies which have a deeper historical past and civilizational maturity (Redfield: 1955-56). According to Redfield, each civilization consists of traditions, one of the elits or reflective few where it is formally articulated, and the other of the folk or the unlettered peasants. The former was called 'Great' and latter 'Little' tradition. Each tradition has its own social organization that is institutionalized roles, status and personnel. Both traditions taking together symbolize a world view which represents the unity of civilization. These traditions are not impervious to changes originating from within and without. Each tradition develops first, in terms of its own internal creative urge, as an orthogenetic process. But at the same time, it also come under external impact of the traditions outside their own civilizational matrix. This process of change may happen through historical contact, war and political domination or migration or communication. Civilizations and their social structures also change through this external contacts or heterogenetic process. Redfield assumed that all civilizations begin with orthogenetic or primary process of growth and keep on transforming themselves through heterogenetic contacts. Presumably at some point of time, the heterogenetic contacts among civilizations might lead to a universal form of civilization. This conceptual framework was applied by Milton Singer (1959), Mc Kim Marriott (1955) and their associates to analyze the process of cultural change in



India. According to Singer, India had a 'primary' or 'indigenous' civilization which had been fashioned out of pre-existing folk and regional cultures, its 'Great tradition', was continuous with the 'Little tradition' to be found in its diverse regions, villages, castes and tribes. This cultural continuity was the product as well as the cause of a common cultural consciousness shared by most Indians and expressed in essential similarities of mental outlook and ethos. This common cultural consciousness has been formed with the help of certain processes and factors. ....i.e. sacred books and sacred objects..... a special class of literati (Brahman) and other agents of cultural transmission. In a primary civilization like India, the cultural continuity with the past is so great that even the acceptance of 'modernizing' and 'process' ideologies doesn't result in linear form of social and cultural change but may result in the 'traditionalizing' of apparently 'modern' innovations (Singer 1955-56). Singer concludes that the resilience of the Indian tradition is such that changes take place in it through selective adaptation rather than basic transformation.

Mc. Kim Marriott supported the views of Singer in his studies and characterizes the mode of interaction between the 'Little' and 'Great' traditions in the Indian village as 'Parochialization' and 'Universalization'. The first is when elements of the great tradition percolate downward and become organic part of the 'Little' traditions losing thereby their original form. The second process operates when elements of 'Little tradition' (deities, customs, rites etc.) circulate upward to the level of the 'Great tradition' and are identified with its legitimize form.

'Sanskritization' according to Marriott does not proceed as an independent process, it is superimposed on non-sanskritic cultural forms through accretion rather than simple replacement (Marriott 1955). This dichotomous classification of the traditions has been criticized by many Sociologists. Dube (1965) is of the view that this kind of analysis of cultural change is insufficient because traditions in India are organized not in a bi-polar but a multi-polar system and postulates a six-fold classifications of traditions as an alternative. These are: the classical tradition, the emergent regional tradition, the western tradition and the local sub-cultural traditions of social groups. But all these approaches to cultural change have been criticized by Yogendra Singh (1974) on various grounds. Firstly, it does not formulate explicitly the definitive criteria of traditions that may be logically consistent, exhaustive and exclusive. Secondly, these approaches do not go beyond the nominalistic schematic formulations of categories to understand change and finally, it is mainly helpful in analyzing cultural and not structural changes in the Indian society.

Another attempt to rationalize the classification of substantive areas for the analysis of change in India seeks to formulate three ramifications of social realities; the elite cultures and structures, the folk cultural forms and social structures and the tribal culture and the society. At these three levels it is suggested that a comprehensive analysis of social change should be undertaken (Unnithan, Deva and Singh 1965). This approach is intended to be a modification over Singer's category which particularly overlooked the tribal social and cultural organization in India but from a theoretical point of view these classification also does not offer a theoretically viable alternative. The fact that elite structure may also separately exist in tribal

segment of culture has been overlooked in these classifications (Yogendra Singh 1974: 394).

Thus, most of above discussed conceptual formulations have been insufficient in explaining the process of social change in Indian context as they are partial and focus upon a limited segment of social reality. The treatment of structural process of social change is by and large neglected in these formulations.

### **III) Structural Approaches**

Although, the major concern of the sociologists and anthropologists in India has been in analyzing the social change in culturological terms but some attempts have also been made to analyze the structural aspects of the social change. According to Yogendra Singh (1974) “a structural focus in the study of change does not imply a variation in the dependent variables through which changes are being identified but also establishing relationship with interdependent causal variables. This enhances the power of the social change theory. Firstly, the units of observations in a structural study are not ideas, sentiments and values but the order of roles and statuses which form the basis of social relationships and are schematized into groups or categories. *A major principle which governs the form of ordering of social structure is asymmetry of power in relation to command over resources or values.* Structural changes may primarily be located by identifying the emerging principles that lay down the new role about this asymmetry and consequent differentiation and transformation in the institutionalized forms of social relationships and their ordering in society. The principles through which this transformation

is measured are abstractions over the raw social data or the actual social ethnographic portraits of social life. These abstractions forming a set of hypotheses that are logically interrelated constitute the explanatory systems of the process of social change. The structural approach thus seeks to explain and not merely describe social change” (Singh 1974 : 394-395).

The second major characteristic of social change in India is the observation of the magnitude and incidents of role-differentiation in the social structures resulting from social pressures such as increase in population, diversification and growth of industries, rise of new cities or urban centers and rise in the economic and technological bases of society, which necessitate creation of more complex organization and new role and status types. In these processes the fused structure performing multiple roles such as the traditional family (which was not only a unit for biological reproduction but also earning of livelihood, recreation as well as education of children etc.), become differentiated as other specialized groups come into being to take care of many of the functions of its traditional structures (Smelser 1959 and 1968 ; Hagen 1962).

In most Indian studies of social change a systematic structural differentiation model has not been used but it is implicit in their analytical framework. The studies related to the process of structural differentiation have been focussed in the area of family structure, factory system, leadership and elite categories in respect of their changing role and status principles, functions, variations in their forms and its implications to the social system as a whole. These studies are conducted sometimes as a part of the study of social mobility of occupations,

groups and or categories. Mobility studies have mainly drawn their data from the studies on caste, class and occupation and also covering leadership and elite structures. Another group of studies uses the framework of tradition-Modernity in analyzing attitudes and values pertaining to social structures, roles and status constellations (Lambert 1963; I. P. Desai 1964; Kapadia 1958; Madan 1962; Shah 1964; Kolenda 1968; Epstein 1962 and Gould 1968).

The problem of social mobility is directly linked with the system of social stratification. It is a process that directly reflects the direction of the structural changes in society. The tradition – modernity dichotomy in the studies of social mobility has often led to a confusion of perspective by assuming that mobility was absent in the social system of traditional India, which was said to have close system of stratification. Srinivas (1968) corrects these perspectives saying that “while traditional society, was stationary in character it did not preclude the mobility upward as well as downward, of individual castes in the local hierarchy” (Srinivas, 1968:169). This view has been confirmed by a number of studies conducted by both historians and sociologists (Barber, 1968, Stein 1968, Cohn 1962, Habib 1963, Panikkar 1955, Shah 1964, Damle 1968).

Social mobility as a process has become more active in recent times. It has resulted from sets of endogamous and exogamous factors that have loosened the summation of status principles, which the traditional caste stratification represented. The congruence of ritual status, economic status and power status as in the traditional caste stratification is withering away under the impact of social legislation as a consequence of increase in social mobility. The studies in structural differ

tion education, democratization, industrialization and urbanization. These processes have created many alternative resources for supplementing one's social status and have broken the exclusiveness of traditional principles of social status determination as a consequence of an increase in the rate of social mobility. The studies in social differentiation of family, caste and community have been theoretically misdirected because the western derived continuum type concepts were used to analyze social change.

What matter most in formulating conceptual categories for the study of change? , is that native "initial conditions" or historicity of social process must not be overlooked and researcher should try to observe the dialectical relationship between the system interactions and social change. How uniquely the historicity of Indian social reality has impinged upon the nature of social change has been objectively analyzed by a number of sociologists in India and abroad (Eisenstadt 1970 and 1965, Beteille 1969, Singh 1970, Bendix 1964, Ishwaran 1970).

Most of these studies bring out that social change processes even though structurally similar, being generated by universal forces, such as population growth, diversification of occupational structures, industrialization growth of technology and science, assume historically different shapes and propositions in each society due to its pre-existing systems of social institutions and ideologies. An important historical element in the traditional Indian social structure was that of inter-sub-structural autonomy, such as, the autonomy between polity and stratification, stratification and culture and culture and polity (Eisenstadt 1970 and Y. Singh 1970).

This structural autonomy between social sub-systems helped in acceptance of many social and cultural innovations at one level of the system without affecting the other systems. The nature of this process was segmental. The changes of great significance could thus take place without generating resistance from other social segments (Karve 1961). The contemporary process of social change, have now ceased to be segmental; they have become organic. This is so as the structural autonomy of the social sub-systems is now slowly breaking down with the erosion of the traditional structural insularity. This takes place following various institutional changes in society, which effect all other systems and activate most of its segments for participation in a wider national scene.

#### **IV) Dialectical-Historical Approach**

The use of the Dialectical-Historical model for the study of social change has not been as common in India as other approaches discussed above. Probably the explanation lies in the colonial linkages of the Indian social sciences and social scientists and this was historically conditioned. Nevertheless, some important studies of social change have been made using a Dialectical-Historical framework (Thorner 1966, Desai 1966, Mukharjee 1957 and 1958).

From the above discussion it can be inferred that the process of social change in India is a complex phenomenon and has various dimensions. The most important concepts used to understand the process of social change in India are Sanskritisation, Westernization and Secularization, tradition-modernity dichotomy, acculturation and assimilation. As the present study is aimed to analyze the process

of social change in a tribe, namely, 'Barman' it will be more appropriate now to focus on the concept of tribe, their classifications and major trends of tribal research in India.

## II

### **TRIBE: MEANING, DEFINITION AND CHARACTERISTICS**

In ordinary usage, the term 'tribe' is used to categorise those people who are primitive in nature, subsist on hunting, fishing or by simple forms of agriculture and those who are recognized by the State and Central Government and included in the Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution.

Indian tribes are mainly territorial groups. The ties of kinship, one language, joint ownership and a political organization characterize them. Different authors have defined the concept of tribe. According to *Imperial Gazetteer of India* "a tribe is a collection of families which have a common name and a common dialect and which occupy or profess to occupy a common territory and which have been, if they are not, endogamous".

According to this definition, there are four characteristics of a tribe: (i) a tribe bears a common name; (ii) Its members speak a common dialect; (iii) They occupy or profess to occupy a common territory; and (iv) They are usually endogamous.



In more or less similar fashion, Majumdar (1986: 242) defines the term tribe “ as a collection of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations.”

Majumdar’s definition of tribe includes some additional characteristics of a tribe particularly observance of taboos not only in marriage but also in choice of occupation. Another characteristic pointed out by Majumdar in this definition is that a tribe has a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligations. Thus, he adds two important characteristics to the notion of tribe, which are significant from sociological point of view. But the major weakness of both the definitions is that they equate a tribe to a collection of families. On this ground, these definitions of the tribe cannot be accepted as appropriate definition as a tribe is not simply a collection of families but it has a definite, well integrated social and cultural system.

T.B. Naik (1990) mentioned that Prof. Ehrenfels also made an attempt to define the term ‘tribe’ and according to him, “a tribe is nothing but a community, however, small it may be remain in isolation to compare with other communities within a geographical location. This may apply for both tribe and caste. The members of a true tribe, however, are generally not included into the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy and frequently speak also a common dialect, entertain common beliefs, follow common occupational practices and consider themselves members

of a small but semi-national unit”(Naik 1990:73).

In this definition, tribe has been defined in contrast to caste and is considered as an isolated small community. However, the characteristics of the tribe are more or less similar to previous definitions. But major problem in accepting this definition of tribe is at two levels: 1) it equates the tribe to a small community, which in itself is a vague term in sociological literature; and 2) it considers tribe as an isolated entity. In fact, tribal societies have not been isolated entities but have vital social, economic and political linkages with other societies. Therefore, this definition is also not free from criticism.

Murdock (1937) defines tribe as ‘ a social group which includes many clans, nomadic bands, villages or other sub-groups which usually have a definite geographical area, a separate language, a singular and distinct culture, either a common political organization or at least a feeling of common determination against strangers”(Murdock 1937)

In his definition, Murdock considers tribe as a concept, which is denoted by heterogeneous social groups. It may include a group of clans, nomadic bands, villages or other sub-groups. Thus, the concept of tribe is applicable to a variety of social groups rather than to a specific social group. This definition of tribe by Murdock seems wider in application and can be applied to understand tribal societies in India, which are highly different from each other in social and cultural dimensions. Thus, we can define the term tribe as a group of people who have the

following characteristics: i. They bear a common name; ii. They speak a common dialect or language. iii. They occupy the same territory; iv. They observe certain *taboos* regarding marriage and occupations; v. They have a singular and distinct culture and ; vi. They have either a common political organization or at least a feeling of common determination against strangers.

### **THE SETTING OF TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA**

According to 1991 census, the population of scheduled tribe is about 67.8 million i.e. 8.08 percent of the population of India. A little more than half of these population is concentrated in four states - Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Bihar. Madhya Pradesh has the largest population of scheduled tribes (15.4 million) or 22.73 percent of the total tribal population in India and 23.27 percent of the state population. Maharashtra comes next with strength of 7.31 million or 10.8 percent of the total population and 9.27 percent of states population. This is closely followed by Orissa with over 7 million (or 10.38 percent of total tribal population or 22.21 percent of total population of the state). Bihar has a tribal population of 6.6 million or 9.77 percent of the total tribal population of the country. The other states, which have a tribal population over 2 million or more then 4 percent total population in the country, are Gujarat (6.16 million or 9.09 percent), Rajasthan (5.5 million or 8.08 percent), Andhra Pradesh (4.2 million or 6.19 percent), West Bengal (3.8 million or 5.62 percent) and Assam (2.87 million or 4.24 total tribal population of India. The highest concentration of tribal population in North East is in Assam with 35.29 percent followed by Meghalaya with 18.64 per- cent, Nagaland and Tripura

are the other two states having sizeable population of scheduled tribes with 13.03 percent and 10.47 percent respectively. Remaining three North Eastern states, namely, Mizoram, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh have 8.03 percent, 7.76 percent and 6.75 percent of the total tribal population of the North East. Mizoram, Nagaland and Meghalaya are predominantly tribal states with 94.75 percent, 87.70 percent and 85.53 percent of the total population of the state. In Arunachal Pradesh, more than half (63.66 percent) of the population is tribal in character. In other three states, Manipur and Tripura have more than 30 percent tribal population, while Assam has only 12.82 percent tribal population. In Assam the Karbis (formerly Known as Mikir) are the major tribal community of the Karbi Anglong. The Karbi is collective name for four endogamous groups. They are Chaintang, Ronghang, Amri and Dumrali. Dimasa tribe inhabits North Cachar Hill District of Assam. In addition to this, two hilly districts, the Bodo speaking tribe mainly (i) The Boros and the Boro-Kacharis of Goalpara, Kamrup and Darrang districts (ii) The Rabhas of Goalpara and Kamrup districts (iii) Lalungs of the Nowgong district (iv) The Sonowal Kacharis of Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh districts and (v) The Chutiyas of Lakhimpur and Dibrugarh districts are worth mentioning tribes of Assam. The other tribes of Assam are Mishing formerly known as Miri and Garo, those who lived in plain areas of Assam are also countable tribes of Assam. In Cachar plain, a tribe generally known as Barman belongs to the same stock of Bodo-Kacharis. This tribe distinguishes itself not only from Bodo Kacharis but also from Dimasa Kacharis. It is listed as a plain scheduled tribe of Assam in the sixth schedule of Indian Constitution.

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## CLASSIFICATIONS OF TRIBAL POPULATION IN INDIA

Elwin (1964) divides the tribes of India into four classes according to their stages of cultural development.

The forest tribal groups, the purest of the pure tribal groups, comprising about two or three millions people have been placed in the first group. These highlanders don't merely live like other tribal groups, comprising about two or three millions people have been placed in the first group. The social organizations of the tribes are unimpaired, their customs and traditions are unbroken, and their religion and culture are alive. Geographical considerations have largely protected them from the debasing contact of the plain.

The second tribal class, according to Elwin's classification has been experiencing contacts with the plains and consequently has been undergoing change. This group, though, retaining their tribal mode of living, exhibits the following characteristics in contrast with the first group that instead of communal life, this group lives a village life, which has become individualistic. Their communal life and traditions are only preserved through their village dormitories and the members of this group of tribes are more contaminated by the life of outside.

The third category constitutes the largest section of the total tribal population of India and members of this class of tribal groups are in peculiar state of transition. This tribe has been affected by external contacts and has been exposed to the influences of economic and socio-cultural forces of Hindu society, they have also been subjected to missionary influence.

The tribes of the fourth group are most aristocrat, according to Elwin, and tribe under this group are Naga, Bhil, Gond etc. They retain the old tribal names and their clan and totem rules and observe the elements of tribal religion though they generally adopt the full Hindu faith and live in modern and even in European style.

Elwin's classification has been so often used as something of a crusaders manifesto, and therefore, it requires to be seriously studied. It takes the right-stand in making a dynamic approach to the problem of tribal culture and advocating advance from one class to another without the despair and degradation that accompany the transmission at present. On the other hand, it suffers from some very serious drawbacks.

1. His analysis suffers from being based on a deep-rooted, but illogical, prejudice against culture contact between tribal and non-tribal people.
2. He makes a fatal mistake when he says that the tribesmen of the first and second categories have to advance direct into the fourth class.
3. His fourth category is not eternal.

(Majumdar and Madan 1988 : 263-265)

D.N. Majumder gives another classification of tribal population of India. He mentioned two types of tribal culture that is assimilated and adaptive, the later type of transitional culture is subdivided into commensalic, symbiotic and acculturative types. Commensalisms stands for common economic pursuits with neighbours, symbiosis indicates interdependence and acculturation indicates a one-way traffic of culture traits. In this classification no mention is made of tribes listed in the first category of the previous classification, because there is hardly any tribal pocket in India today which may be said to have had no contacts direct or indirect with non tribal ways of living.

The Indian conference of Social Work (1952) appointed a Tribal Welfare Committee with L.M. Shrikant as Chairman to deal with this matter and the Committee divided the Indian tribal population into four categories (I) Tribal Communities (ii) Semi-tribal (iii) Acculturated tribal and (iv) Assimilated tribal. But it is a difficult task to mark a distinguishing line between the tribal with semi-tribals and similarly acculturated with assimilated tribe.

On the basis of economic grading the classical classification of Adam Smith or the more recent classification of Thurnwald and Herskovits is mainly attempting to indicate the nature of economic difficulties experienced by the tribal communities.

The first group is of those who have food gathering type of economy and they mainly depend upon forest, the cultivation of crops are very rare and if practiced it is shifting cultivation.

The second group is of those who practice both the food gathering and primitive agriculture, the Kamar; the Baiga belongs to this group.

The tribal population which depend upon some form of agriculture with forest produce as a secondary support (in such cases where forests are within reach) constitute the third group.

Finally, a new economic category emerged in tribal society due to the growth of industry in India and it driving the tribal people away from their traditional occupations.

On the other hand, L.P. Vidyarthi's and A.K. Danda's zonal distribution of tribal population in India is worth mentioning. Vidyarthi pointed out that on the basis of geographical location the tribal people can be divided into four major zones, namely, the Himalayan region, the Middle Indian region, the Western region and Southern Indian region with coastal Islands.

### **(I) THE HIMALAYAN REGION**

It is mainly comprises of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Tarai area of Uttar Pradesh, North Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Manipur. This zone is further divided into three sub-zones : the North Western Himalaya zone; the Central Himalaya; and the North Eastern Himalaya. The tribal belt of North Western Himalayas extends from the vicinity of upper Nepal in the east to the Pamir Knot in the North West. More precisely one may consider the



Dhuladhar Range of the Himalayas and the water shed of the Yamuna as the sub-division. For the sake of convenience, the state of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and portions of Punjab fall under this region. The Central Himalayan belt begins from the water shed of the Jamuna in the west to the water encatchment of the river Tista in Sikkim. This zone includes the district of Kumayun and Nainital in Uttarakhand, Champaran district of Bihar and North Bengal district of Bengal except Darjiling. The North Eastern Himalayas mainly consist of Darjiling district of West Bengal, autonomous hill districts of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and the hilly parts of Manipur and Tripura. The important tribal groups of the region are Gujjar, Bhot, Gaddi, Kinnura, Thara, Kuki, Mizo, Dimasa Boro, Garo, Khasi, Naga, Tripuri etc.

## **(II) THE MIDDLE INDIAN REGION**

In middle India, he included West Bengal, Bihar, Orrisa and Madhya Pradesh. The important-tribal groups living in this zone are Mina, Bhil, Dubla, Dhodiya, Ganit, Koli, Mahadeo etc.

## **(III) THE WESTERN INDIA**

Three state of this region, namely, Rajasthan, Maharashtra and Gujrat, contained tribal communities like Minaand Bhil in Rajasthan; Bhil, Dubla, Dhodhia, Gamit and Sahyadri group in Gujrat; and Bhil, Koli Mahadeb and Kokna in Maharashtra. Bhils are found throughout the region.

#### **(IV) SOUTHERN INNDIA**

The different states and Union Territories of this zone comprises of mainly southern parts of India namely Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu, Kerela, Pondicherry, Karnataka with few Islands such as Andaman and Nicobar and L.M. etc. The main tribal communities are Gond, Koya, Yanidi, Yerukula, Irula, Malaku Ravan, Toda, Naikoda, Marati, Pulayan, Paniyan, Kadar, Andamanese, Nicobari, Jarwa and so on.

Danda (1996) divided tribal population of India in to six geographical zones, namely, North Western India (Delhi, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh), Middle India (Bihar, Madhaya Pradesh, Orissa and West Bengal), Western India (Dadar and Nagar Haveli, Goa, Daman, Div, Gujarat Maharashtra and Rajasthan), Southern India (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Pondichery and Tamilnadu), North Eastern India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura) and Island Territories of India (Andman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Minicoy and Amindivi).

When these two classifications are compared, it becomes clear at the very first look that both the classifications are more or less similar. The only difference between the two is that Danda Divided the category of Himalaya Zone into two regions – North Western and North Eastern and separated Islands and territories from the Southern Zone. Both the classifications are useful in analyzing the sociological and anthropological studies of Indin tribes.

### III

#### Major Trends of Tribal research in India

Before discussing the nature of tribal studies in North-east India, it would be worthwhile to discuss the tribal researches conducted by anthropologists and sociologists in India. At the very outset, it seems appropriate to summarize the trend reports of L.P. Vidhyarthi (1974), Sachchidanand (1985) and Danda (1996) in order to understand the major trends of researches in the context of tribal societies of India. According to Vidhyarthi (1974), tribal researches in India can be divided into three phases, namely, formative (1774-1919), Constructive (1920-49) and analytical (1950-onward).

##### (a) FORMATIVE PHASE

According to Vidhyarthi (1974), since the foundation of the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1774, the British administrators, missionaries, travelers and a few other anthropologically oriented individuals collected data on tribal and rural groups and wrote about their life and culture in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, (estd 1784), *Indian Antiquary* (estd 1872) and latter in the *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research society* (estd 1915) and in *Man in India* (estd 1921). Along with other historical and geographical information, they also collected ethnographic data and published a series of district gazetteers and handbooks on tribes and castes and also a numbers of monographs especially on the tribes of Assam.

Some scholarly British administrators, posted in different parts of India, (Russell in Middle India, E. Thurston in South India and W. Crooks in Northern India) wrote encyclopedias, inventories of the tribes and castes of India which, even today, provide basic information about the life and culture of the people of respective regions.

These generalized works about the land and people of the regions were followed by efforts to prepare detailed accounts of specific tribes. Among them, mention may be made of J. Shakespeare (1912), P.R.T. Gurdon (1914), J.P. Mills (1922 and 1937), N. E. Parry (1932), W.G. Grigson (1938) and a few others who wrote competent monographs on specific tribes. Here worth mentioning British Anthropologists are Rivers (1906), Seligmann (1911), Radcliffe-Brown (1922), and J.H. Hutton (1931) who worked on the tribes of India and published their monographs. Under these influences, the first Indian to write exhaustive monographs on the tribes of India was S.C. Roy who published his first epoch-making work on the Munda tribe in 1912. It was followed by a series of five monographs on the Oran, (1915a), the Birhor (1925), Oran Religion and customs (1928), Oran Religion and customs (1928), the Hill Bhuiyan (1935) and the Kharia (1937). These works of Roy were acknowledged by contemporary British anthropologists as competent studies and in his presidential address at the annual meeting of the Indian Anthropological Institute held in Calcutta on January 5, 1938, Hutton described Roy as "Father of Indian Ethnology" (Vidyarthi 1974: 38).

## **b) CONSTRUCTIVE PHASE**

Social Anthropology in India witnessed a phenomenal change when it was included in the curriculum of the two important Universities in Bombay (Sociology in 1919) and Calcutta (Anthropology in 1921). During this period, a few anthropologists studied and analysed their data critically and brought about a certain amount of theoretical sophistication in Anthropological researches. For instance Srinivas's work on Marriage and Family in Mysore (1942) and N.K. Bose's publication entitled "Hindu Methods of Tribal Absorption" (1928, 1941) were a turning point in Indian Anthropology.

The entry of Verrier Elwin and the publication of his problem-oriented studies on the tribes of Madhya Pradesh and Orrisa, like the Baiga (1939), the Agaria (1942b) and Maria (1942 a), gave further recognition to Indian Anthropology. Furer Haimendorf's (1943) publication on the tribes of Hyderabad and other successive publication (1945, 1945 & 1946) provided refined models for research workers in India (Vidyarthi 1974: 39).

## **c) ANALYTICAL PERIOD**

During this period some American anthropologists like M.E. Opler (1948 and 1950) of Cornell University, Oscar Lewis (1954) of the University of Illinois started the village, caste and urban studies as well as the problem-oriented researches of power structure and leadership, of religion, of culture and personality which emerged in this period. The tribal studies were also given an analytical and action-oriented

approach. Efforts were made to study the tribal communities in terms of inter-relations as well as in terms of differences and similarities among the tribal and non-tribal communities. Here mention may be made of D.N. Mazumdar's and G.D. Barremen's studies of polyandrous Khasa, Surajit Sinha's study of the Bhumij, Vidyarthi's of the Maler hill village and a mixed tribal village of Chotonagpur and Edward Jay's study of a Maria Village. Majumdar (1963) presented a comprehensive study of the polyandrous Khasas and brought out the characteristics of the tribe-Hindu continuum. Berreman, however, accepts these people as Hindus without any doubt (1963 and 1964). Sinha's theme in the study of Bhumij of Manbhum is similar to the above studies as his analysis brings out clearly the prevalence of the Bhumij-Rajput Continuum (1957b and 1962). Again Vidyarthi's work on a tribal village of Chotanagpur shows how the Manjhi tribe has attained the status of a caste in the Munda village of Ranchi (1965). These researches open up a new era of understanding regarding changes among tribes in the setting of the main stream of Hindu Social Organisation. Vidyarthi's (1963) study of Maler Culture was the study of a tribe in terms of nature-man-spirit complex. It provides an alternative model for understanding tribal complex in terms of the interrelatedness of ecology, economy, society and spiritual beliefs and practices.

The constitutional commitment of the Government of India to ameliorate the conditions of the tribal communities gave further fillup to the study and evaluation of the processes of change in tribal communities. In course of time, a number of tribal research institutes were established, for example, at Chhindwarain Madhya Pradesh (estd. 1954), Ranchi in Bihar (estd. 1954), Calcutta in Bengal,

Bhubaneswar in Orrisa (estd. 1955), Shillong in Meghalaya, Udaipur in Rajasthan (estd. 1964), Hyderabad in Andhra Pradesh, and Poona in Maharashtra to undertake problem-oriented researches for the effective formulation and implementation of development programmes in tribal areas. Several publications like the tribal number of the *Journal of Social Research* in 1956-60, the comprehensive book on applied anthropology edited by Vidyarthi (1968a) and several reports and papers bearing on the tribal problems prepared the ground for the introduction of the teaching of applied and action anthropology in several universities in India.

During the sixties the census organisation of the government of India commissioned a large number of ethnographic studies on a set frame. Many of these have been published in the seventies. This decade shows some additions to the ethnography of Chotanagpur. B. Dasgupta (1978) published a book on the Birjhia, a section of the Asur tribe. It was based on the data collected three decades ago. Hari Mohan (1973) studied the Chero an important but neglected tribe in the district of Palamau. Before his study there had been no full-length study of the tribe, which, a couple of centuries ago, enjoyed great political power in the entire neighbourhood. The author deals with all the aspects of Chero life and culture under the aspect of acculturation. The study attempts to give a good holistic picture of the entire Chero community. Saileshwar Prasad (1974) produced a monograph on the interaction among three tribal communities in the Santhal Parganas. The three tribes are the Maler, Malpharia, and the Santhal. The patterns of cooperation and conflict and interdependence as well as mutual resistance in different spheres of life

have been brought out clearly. Interaction has led to symbiosis among three communities in this area.

R.N. Pareek (1977) has detailed the culture of the Jatapu living in the Eastern Ghats in villages near the Andhra-Orrisa border. Although, Pareek is not a trained anthropologist but he has discussed all the essential features of Jatapu life and culture. Naik, Masavi and Pandya (1979) have produced a short monograph on the Kolgha, a little known tribe largely concentrated in the Valsad and Surat district of Gujrat and analyzed the social organisation, economic life, material culture, life cycle and religious life of the community. During this period, three monographs on Assam were brought out. These are Prashun Chandra Saikia's (1978) Dibongiya tribe, Dipali Danda's (1978) study on Dimasa and N.K. Shyam Choudhury's and M.N. Das's (1973) study on the Lalung tribe in plains of Assam.

S. L. Doshi (1971) writes on the Bhils with special reference to their self-awareness and cultural synthesis, which they are building up with neighbouring communities. The study was made in the district of Banswara in Rajasthan. The social problems of the Bhils of the area have been analyzed. He delineates the trend of change resulting in the process of cultural integration. G.S. Aurora (1972) discussed the life and culture of the Bhilala of Alirajpur in the Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh. The study points out how tribe, caste and class encounters have led to changes among the Bhilala.

W.G. Archer (1974) has produced a book on the Santhal. The book gives an account of Santhal traditions and customs, the Santhal village and Santhal world



view. T.S. Negi (1976) has dealt with the scheduled tribes of Himachal Pradesh as a whole. Since the author has long experience as an administrator and a politician, he brings into discussion all the criteria for scheduling the tribal population. He attempts profiles of different tribes inhabiting Himachal Pradesh such as the Kinnaur, the Bhot, the Swargla, the Domba, the Gujjar, the Gaddi and the Lamba etc.

P.R.G. Mathur (1977) published a book on the tribal situation in Kerala. He deals with the transfer and alienation of tribal land and the bonded labour system and the problem of indebtedness among the Irula of Attappady. Then, he follows an appraisal of rural electrification in tribal areas and residential schools for tribal children. One chapter is devoted to the status of women among the tribes. Tribal political movement in the Wynad area have been analytically discussed in this work.

A.K. Danda (1977a) has performed a similar exercise for the north-eastern part of the district of Sarguja in Madhya Pradesh. He has brought together many contributions on various aspects of tribal life and culture in the district. Fresh material on some of the little known tribes of the area is included in the volume.

K.N. Thusu (1977) has written a monograph on the Penga porojas of Koraput. This is a section of the large Poroja tribes. Thusu's account deals with tribal organisation, phratries and clans, lineages and family units, kinship terminologies, rituals of life cycle and religious beliefs and practices of the people. S.G. Morab (1977) has produced a monograph on the Soliga of Biligiri Rangana hills near Mysore. This is a very small tribe of shifting cultivators. The author describes their material

culture, social life, family and kinship, social control and religious beliefs and practices and the effect of culture contact in this small community.

N.K. Shyam Choudhury (1977) wrote a monograph on the social structure of Car Nicobar Islanders. The author gives a detailed ethno-history of the island and then deals with a number of institutions, which have great significance in the life of the tribal people, one such organisation is *Ramage*. It is a group of people linked by blood. The author gives details about the village organisation and concept of land through several case studies.

C.P. Singh (1978) in his study on the Ho tribe of Singhbhum deals largely with historical material. He traces the history of Singhbhum from the middle of the eighteenth century and brings out the impact of British penetration into Singhbhum on the Larka Ilo. The first and the second Kol rebellions have been dealt with in some detail. The administrative machinery that emerged during the British rule has been examined and the British impact on the Socio-economic system has been analyzed.

Furer-Haimendorf's (1979) book on the Gonds of Andhra Pradesh is based on field work done among the Raj Gonds of Adilabad district thirty years ago. However, the material has been revised in view of the authors restudy of the tribe in 1977. Some of the chapters on myth and ritual, which had been published earlier in Vol.I of the Raj Gonds of Adilabad have been reproduced with only slight changes. However, a large number of chapters on social structure, social control and cultural

change have been added. The traditional pattern of Gond life has been completely upset by the invasion of non-tribal settlers in their area. The result is that the bulk of the tribals have lost their land and have been reduced to the status of a disadvantaged minority in a region where only a generation ago they had been the sole population.

Since independence, tribal society of India is passing through a process of social change. However, on account of the working of various factors, the rate of change has been accelerated. I.S. Chauhan (1970) in course of a short paper examines the important trends of culture change in tribal life. D.N. Mazumdar (1972a) has dealt with acculturation among the Hajong of Meghalaya. R.K. Gulati (1970) describes social change among the Bhils of the West Kandesh district. R.S. Mann (1972) examines the relationship between leadership and planned changes in tribals of Rajasthan.

Hari Mohan (1969) has made a full-length study of the Parhaiya tribe in the Palamau district of Bihar in the perspective of culture change. As the tribe was studied in 1898 by Sunder, his account is treated as a benchmark by the author. The monograph follows the usual ethnographic model and contains details about the style of living, the means of subsistence, trade market and indebtedness, family and kinship, the life cycle, crime and punishment, religion and magic etc. Towards the end of the book Hari Mohan examines the reasons for the failure of the resettlement scheme. Narayan Mishra (1978) studied culture resistance and change with reference to a village situated near Gumla in the Ranchi district. Most of the inhabitants

of the village are Orans but there are a large number of other high and low Hindu caste group living in the village. The Hindu way of life is slowly creeping but the kinship-based institutions of the tribals, such as marriage and family, continue as before.

In many areas of the country the missionaries have been one of the most important factors of social change. Nalini Natrajan (1977) brings this out with special reference to the Khasi of Meghalaya.

Kanak Mittal (1979) has tried to find out if the medical practices of the Santhal labourers employed in the Chittaranjan Locomotive Factory have undergone any change. The contact with the outer world has changed their material outlook but their cultural norms have remained more or less the same. They still largely depend on traditional methods of cure.

Kurup (1986) in his study of the Bharias of Patalkot, a little known community of Madhya Pradesh focused upon the nature and extent of change taking place among them, the factors and forces responsible for such changes and the direction of change. In order to have a more intimate perception of change, certain aspects of their culture and leadership were observed in detail. Changes were found to be most perceptible in the material culture like dress and hairstyles of the man & women, house hold articles etc. Kurup found that the most important force of change has been acculturation or more specifically, 'hyperculturation'. Though the Bharias live in comparative isolation, they do come in contact with their immediate neighbours like the Gonds and the Hindus living around for ages. He also noticed

that the improvement in communication has been found to be the important factor accelerating change among the Bharias. K. Kumar (1977) studied the Pailibos people and he gave importance on life and culture of the people with ethnographic details and he also describes about the communication of people with other neighbouring tribes such as Bori, Boker and Ramo. He analyzed the changing nature of the regional economy very beautifully.

Amir Hasan (1982) studied the life of the Tharu, Buxa, Raji, Bhotia, Kol, Korua and Baiga with the rapidly changing \*surroundings and the dilemmas and suggested few facts for uphold development of the tribes according to their own genius. R.K. Kar (1982) tried to explain the nature of interrelationship between the religious and traditional socio-political system with the recent changes that have been taken place in their society. He also tried to explain the under currents of social necessities which helped the people to evolve their present form. U.K. Roy et.al (1982) discussed, the origin and present social system, religious belief and practices, festivals, some political aspects of the Santhal life in relation to the change..

Jacob John Kattakayam (1983) studied the social structure of the *Uralis* a primitive tribe of Idukki District in Kerala and analyzed the reason for failure of various welfare programmes among them.

Makhan Jha (1983) studied the *Ollar* , a little known tribe of Orrisa, and discussed various aspects of Ollar life, in terms of their social structure, economic organisation and rituals of life cycle gave importance on economic life of the people where he found that the selling of bird and animal is the main source of income of

the tribal people. William Ekka and A.K. Danda (1984) studied *Nagesia* of Chattisgarh. The main concern of this ethnographic study is to study the tribal culture that is disappearing very fast, it also provides relevant information on socio-religious reform movements among the *Nagesia* society and culture.

Ramakant (1988) produces an interesting detail about the *Parahiya*, a marginal tribe of Bihar and reported that the above mentioned marginal tribe divides itself into small bands and lives into a distinct ecological setting. He also explains that the tribe represents variations within a culture due to exposures to various eco-cultural influences. P.K. Khare (1991) discussed the impact of Planning and Economic Development on the life of *Munda* tribe of Bihar and the socio-economic features of *Munda* tribe.

## **TRIBAL RESEARCHES IN NORTH EAST INDIA**

Following Vidhyarthi's classification, the tribal studies in North East India can be classified into three phases :

- (a) Formative period
- (b) Constructive period and
- (c) Analytical period.

### **(A) FORMATIVE PERIOD (1874-1919) :**

During period, the studies done specially on tribes of Assam. And along with historical and geographical information the Journal of the *Asiatic Society of Bengal*, *Indian Antiquary*, the *Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society* and *Man in India* collected ethnographic data and published a number of monographs. In view of the immense significance of this area from the point of view of administration, the colonial scholars and anthropologists were greatly attracted to study the land and the people of this area. A number of persons belonging to British administration, Foreign missionaries, military officers and census officers wrote about the life and culture of the tribes of this region. Among the early scholars who wrote about the tribes of Assam in handbooks, ethnographic glossaries and district gazetteers mention may be made of Robinson (1841), Hodgson (1848), Jhon Butler (1855), Dalton (1872), Risley (1891), W.H.G. Cole (1912) and others. In addition to writing notes and papers on the tribes of India, the Govt. of Assam took a decision in 1904 to bring together all the scattered and fragmentary information collected by the previous investigators and after supplementing it with up-to-date information to publish it in the form of monographs. In order to set a model before the other workers, Gurdon prepared an ethnographic monograph on the *Khasi*, the revised edition of which was published in 1914. (Gurdon 1941).

### **(B) CONSTRUCTIVE PERIOD (1920-1949)**

During the constructive period of tribal studies in North Eastern India, the monographic studies on the tribes of the region were adversely affected by the

outbreak of the first worldwar. It was possible for Hutton only in 1921, to revise the series with the publication of his monograph on the *Angami Naga*. Hutton, an anthropologist trained at Oxford, got the opportunity for serving in the Naga Hills for a long period. His descriptions are more analytical and comprehensive.

In a series of notes in the census volumes of 1921 and a number of papers, Hutton (1923, 1924) attempts comparison and establishes affinities among different Nagas and other tribes in North East India. He finds that these tribal group of people migrated from several directions the west, southern China and from the south. He also establishes striking connections between the material culture of this area and the Indonesian type. Here in North Eastern region the works of G.C. Bardolai (1923) is also worth mentioning , J.P. Mill another administrator, who worked under Hutton done research among the *Lotha Nagas* for several years and published his book in the year 1922 and he was struck by the process of *detrribalization* of the *Lotha*, firstly under the impact of Christainity of the American Baptist Mission and secondly under that of Hinduism of the Nepalese settlers. In his next monograph (1926) on the *Aao*, Mill makes an attempt to estimate the social effect of the American Baptist Mission on the *Aao* Society.

This analysis of the acculturation situation of the *Aao* Naga is confirmed by Smith, who also observes that Christianity has forced the *Aao* Naga to give up their traditional forms. He, however, suggests that a new realignment has emerged under the Christian impact ( W.C. Smith 1925).



J.H. Hutton continued to work on the ethnographic studies of Assam tribes and wrote his third monograph on the *Rengma Nagas* which was published in 1937. The study of *Rengma*, though of great importance, could not be taken up earlier owing to the complex geographical setting of this tribe. At the level of acculturation, again the eastern *Rengma*, being isolated, have maintained their traditional culture while the Western *Rengma*, being exposed to Christianity, have undergone transformation. The isolated and wild terrain of the NEFA region remained unexplored till C. Von. Furer-Haimendorf was invited as a special officer to conduct an exploratory survey of the NEFA area (1944-45). In the course of his first visit, he made contacts with three NEFA tribes, the Dafla, the Meris and the Apatanis and published books (1947).

The department of Anthropology of Calcutta University, which was established in 1921 also took an interest in the study of the tribes of North Eastern region. In 1931 T.C. Das with his students visited four Purum villages in Manipur. He stayed in these villages for about five months between 1931 and 1936 and published his excellent monograph on Purum in 1945.

On the whole, the field enquiry conducted by Das as early as the beginning of the thirties and the publication based on it, get an example of meticulous field enquiry and systematic presentation of ethnographic data. Das has shown exceptional skill as an ethnographer, who could observe record and analyse every affair of a community with precision and theoretical insight. His approach to the presentation of data in a specific frame and his interest in analysing the data in the light of

theories of culture diffusion and functionalism, bring out a balanced picture of the *Purum* society.

K.P. Chattopadhyay of Calcutta University trained under W.H.R. Rivers was attracted to the study of Khasi kinship and social organisation. He applied River's genealogical method to the study of kinship system for the first time in the study of the Khasi kinship organisation (1941). He also made a study of ownership of land and its inheritance in the Khasi society (1949).

J.K. Bose , who worked as a Research fellow of the American Museum of Natural History, and who was also associated with the Department of Anthropology, Calcutta University, concentrated on the study of the *Garó* tribe and wrote a number of papers (1934a 1934b, 1934c, 1935, 1938 &1941) on the *Garó* law of inheritance, the religious ceremonies and other subjects.

### **(C) ANALYTICAL PERIOD (1950 — ONWARD)**

In this period a systematic study of Indian villages started, firstly, with a view to test certain hypothesis, secondly, for referring some of the methodological framework developed elsewhere, and third to assist the community Development programmes in the Indian tribal villages i.e. the tribal development schemes and so on.

Robbins Burlings (1963), an American anthropologist, is the first to publish a village study on a tribe in India. His study of Rensanggri, a Garó village, with

special reference to family and kinship provides a first rate model to be followed by a researcher in tribal ethnography in India. In these period Tribal Research Institute established in Shillong (1964) and it undertake problem-oriented researches for the effective formulation and implementation of development programmes in tribal areas of North Eastern region.

B.S. Guha (1953), the then Director of the Department of Anthropology ( Government of India) himself studied the *Moshuk* Organisation among the *Abor*. B.C. Gohain (1954) also studied the *Abor* with special reference to agricultural organisation. B. Mukherjee in 1953 did field researches among the *Garos* and the *Riang* of Tripura and wrote about their kinship and social organisation.

B.B. Goswami (1960) , who made a study of the Kinship system of the *Lushai* (Mizo) and Sukumar Banerjee (1964) carried out a special study of *Phar* kinship and residence pattern. The study of cultural dynamics, however, is rare, and one come across only one paper by M.K. Nag (1965) on the effect of Christianity on *Khasi* culture in Meghalaya.

Burlings researches on a *Garo* village have introduced the phase of analytical research in this region, where the earlier anthropological researches were either descriptive or impressionistic. This type of study has been followed by few scholars like B.K. Roy Barman, M.C. Goswami , D.N. Mazumder and B.B. Goswami. In this connection Roy Burman observes that, while there have been far reaching changes in certain matters, there is unexpected persistence in other areas. In this

context, he raises the question as to whether this disproves, 'the anthropological dictum of functional inter-relatedness and dynamic equilibrium of culture'. He also shows that taken together the changes in certain spheres and persistence in others should be considered as a study of a 'little community at a low level of technology striving to find its way through the dazzled allies of the Modern world' ( Roy Burman 1961; 103).

In a seminar on the tribal situation in India held at Shimla, B.B. Goswami and D.N. Mazumdar (jr) in two separate papers, emphasised the need for the study of tribe-caste interaction in Assam. Goswami (1969) deals with the socio-cultural relationship between the tribes and other non-tribal groups of Assam. Mazumdar (jr) (1969) also examines the *tribe-caste continuum* and the process of *Sanskritization* among the Bodo-speaking tribes of the Garo Hills. D.N. Mazumdar(1972a) has dealt with *acculturation* among the *Hajong* of Meghalaya. R.K. Kar (1974) has studied social change among the *Adis* and he explain the changing scenario of the *Adis*.

In 1973, N.K. Shyam Choudhury and M.M. Das have produced an ethnography on the Lalung tribe in plains of Assam. The entire study has been made in a dynamic perspective . The changes taking place have been discussed in some detail. Other monograph on the *Nagas* has been produced by M. Horam (1975). The book has a useful appendix and an account of the first military expedition in the *Naga Hills* .

Furer-Haimendorf's *Return to the Naked Nagas* (1976) is a republication of his earlier work which is extremely interesting and gives details about the *Konyak* Nagas. The author has a postscript added his impressions about *Konyak* society and the changes taking place there, when he visited them nearly forty years after his first fieldwork.

Nalini Natrajan (1977) analyses the organization of *Khasi* society in historical perspective with the arrival of the missionaries and discusses their impact on various aspects of *Khasi* life.

M.M. Dhasmana's *The Ramos of Arunachal* (1979) is an empirical study bearing result of a long association of the author with the *Ramos*. The author deals with their cultural transformation in the light of their historical background .

Pranab K. Das Gupta (1984) studied life and culture of a Matrilineal tribe of Meghalaya and he describes the life of *Warkhasi* who live in the southern hill slopes of Meghalaya and also describes their material culture, economic life, social and political aspects as well as the religious aspects.

Gangmumei Kaboi (1985) in his research study on *Anal*, a Trans-Border Tribe of Manipur, describes about the people, their origin and migration, society and culture, religion, the village polity and the economic life of the *Anal* and also examines the uphold development of the people after independence.

Rajat Kanti Das (1988) has examined the structural relationships among various categories of kin groups and the factors contributing to their functional growth in *Mairong* tribe of Manipur. H. Kamkhenthang (1988) studied the Paite

tribes living in border area of India and Burma, he analysed the structure of the Paite society by unfolding the invisible ties of kinship based on consanguinal affinitive and local membership in a corporate body. An edited volume by S.Karotemprel (1984) '*The tribes of North -East-India*' contains several articles written by several writers on tribes like Khasi, Jaintia, Mishing, Garo, Naga, Dimasas, Hajong, Monpas, Rabha and Mizo.

Jayanta Sarkar (1987) in '*Society-Culture and Ecological Adaptation Among Three Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh*' tried to explain the life of Khampti Padam and Kaman Mishmi. The author studied their life style pattern, their rites and rituals of life cycle and so on. B.K. Gohain (1994) discusses the continuity and change in the Hills of Assam in reference to the Lalung, a matrilineal tribe of Assam. The author deals with their life and culture as well as social change which is taking place in their society.

From the above analysis it is now clear that the tribal societies of North east India are passing through a process of social change. But a number of tribal studies in the north - eastern region have not yet attracted the attention of the sociologists and social anthropologists. The Barman of Barak valley is also one of those tribes on which no sociological studies have been conducted yet. Therefore, the present study is aimed to analyse the process of social change among the Barman of Barak valley.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The present study has the following specific objectives :

- a) To analyse the changes in the institutions of family, marriage and kinship system of the Barman ;
- b) To analyse the changes in their economic structure ;
- c) To analyse the changes in the field of education and communication ;
- d) To analyse the dynamicity of power structure among the Barman ;
- e) to analyse the changes in ritual structure and material culture of the Barman.

## **METHODOLOGY**

As the present study is focused on social change among the Barman of Barak valley, three villages were selected for intensive study. These three villages were at different stages of social change. The first village Kumacherra located in Lakhipur circle of Cachar district, is a traditional Barman village surrounded by other Barman Villages. The Barman predominantly inhabits this village. The second village, Dormikhal is located in Sonai circle of Cachar district, it is also predominantly inhabited by the Barman but it is surrounded by Bengali villages. The third village Nikama has a mixed population of Barmans and Bengalis, and it is also located in Sonai Circle. Therefore, the villages were selected with a purpose to understand the process of social change among the Barman on the basis of different habitation situation. The village Kumacherra is a traditional Barman village, the second village Dormikhal is now in a transitional phase and represents both the



***A Barman family of Kumacherra Village***



traditional and modern way of life. Whereas the third village, Nikama is relatively more advanced and is passing through a process of social change at a relatively faster rate. Thus, the framework of the study is comparative from the viewpoint of research design. The study takes into account concomitant variations found in the three villages to analyze the problematic of social change (Durkheim 1958). The fieldwork for the study was conducted between May 1996 and December 1998. The data were collected by using non-participatory observation and survey techniques. A household survey of all the Barman families of the three study villages was conducted to collect the base data of the present study. A structured interview schedule was administered on 231 Barman families of the three study villages. To collect information about the kinship system of the Barman, the technique of genealogical mapping was used. The information about the religious behaviour and about rituals of the Barman was mainly collected by non-participatory observations. The general information about the Barman society was collected from the office of the Integrated Tribal Development Project (I.T.D.P.) Silchar. For qualitative data in-depth conversations were made with some knowledgeable persons of the Barman society. The study also utilized some historical data published in the form of articles and books on Dimasa and Barman tribes by anthropologists and historians. The works of Barman (1984) and Danda (1978) and Bhattacharjee (1977;1984) are worth mentioning in this context.