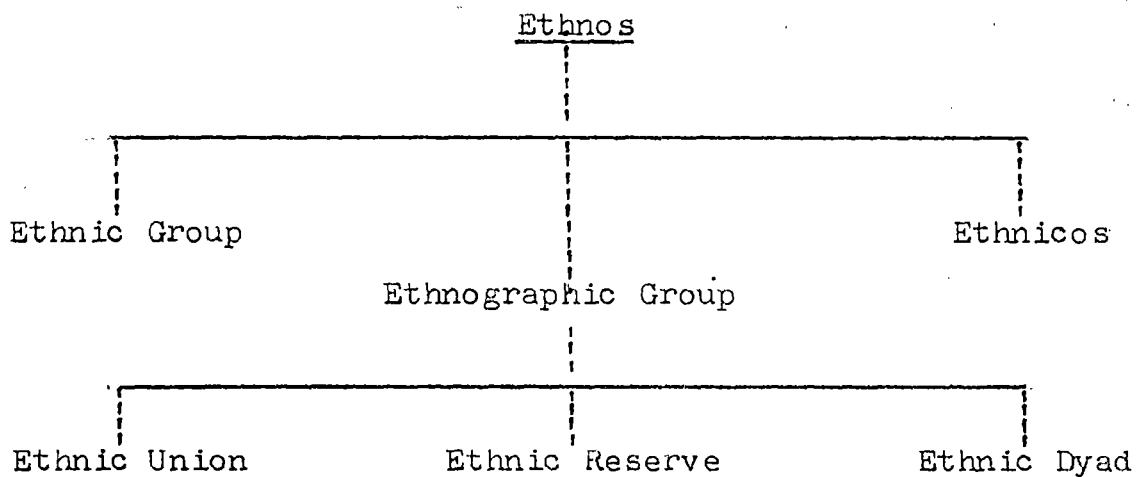# CHAPTER 1

PROBLEM FORMULATION
I

INTRODUCTION

The world today is in an ethnic turmoil. A sudden spurt in identity assertion in ethnic terms has become a global phenomenon. Disintegration of U.S.S.R., the world super power, is the result of uncontrollable identity assertion by her ethnoses. The recent ethnic violence in America, the other super power, warns this mighty nation that the eddies of ethnic identities are going strong. The heat-waves generated by ethnic wars in Yugoslavia, Afganistan and other such affected nations, seem to have gradually moulded Czeckoslovakia to consider peaceful parting of its two chief ethnic groups Czecks and Slovaks. Most other nations whether affected by this wave of assertion of ethnic identity, or likely to be affected by it, are thinking over this problem seriously.

In India, the proportions of ethnic problems are next only to U.S.S.R. Kashmiris, Sikhs, Gurkhas, Jharkhandis, Bodos, Karbis and many ethnoses are fighting for establishing their separate identities. Even in remote, but so far a quiet state Arunachal Pradesh, ethnic movements like United People's Volunteers Group (U.P.V.A.) have been found to be active , making the nation aware that the problem of ethnic identities is very serious in India too, and it is wise to settle it amicably at the earliest, whenever possible at the onset.

This situation is hence alarming, and demands serious study of the problem. Solutions exist for every problem, provided they are correctly understood, suitably approached, and logically and systematically tackled by appropriate methodology. Foremost need is to understand the problem. The problem here is of the increasing assertion of ethnic identities. Key terms are 'ethnic' and 'identity'. To understand the problem, these key terms must be understood well.

'Ethnos' is understood in the sense of the 'people' or 'community' in general. 'Community with very large or very small populations, and again both archaic and modern people alike may be called ethnos'[1]. B.P. Misra draws the following heirachy of ethnos[2].

```
                          Ethnos
                            |
    ┌───────────────────────┼───────────────────────┐
    |                       |                        |
Ethnic Group                |                    Ethnicos
                   Ethnographic Group
                            |
    ┌───────────────────────┼───────────────────────┐
    |                       |                        |
Ethnic Union          Ethnic Reserve           Ethnic Dyad
```

He describes ethnos in a tribe-nation continuum
and states the elementary ethnic group as the tribe[3]. Ethno-
graphic groups, on the other hand, consist of either an ethnic
union or an ethnic reserve or ethnic dyad. The ethnic union
is formed of two or more ethnic groups who tend to merge into
a new identity. The ethnic reserve may be treated as made of
one dominant ethnic identity into which various others merge
themselves, whereas ethnic dyad is split into oscillating
between more than one ethnicos, the latter being the manifes-
tation of an identity which is highly developed both spiri-
tually and materially[4].

This structural pattern is dynamic as is any human
being. The formation of ethnic groups, ethnographic groups ,
ethnic union, ethnic reserve or ethnic dyads or the reverse
of it, is a regular and continuous phenomenon. This process
may take various shapes as is shown in table 1.1 as described
by S.K. Acharya[5], and to understand the problem of ethnicities,
these processes must be taken into consideration.

The elementary group in this process is a tribe as
seen in the tribe-nation continuum, and in the sense of a
community or a society. The process of linking 'a tribe' with
community or society has been a practice in the past too. 'The
Oxford Dictionary' links the term 'tribe' with "the then three
most civilised people i.e., The Romnes or Latins, the Tities
or Sabines and the Lucerea or Eturuscans ; all three commonly

Table 1.1 : The dividing/unifying ethnogenic processes

Sl. No.	Name	Process		Types of Ethnos/es Involved	Effect
		Main Type	Sub Type		
1.	Ethnogenic divergence	Dividing	Ethno trans- formational	One ethnos	Two or more ethnoses are born
2.	Ethnogenic inter- ethnic consolidation	Unifying	"	Kindred ethnoses	A new ethnos is born
3.	Ethnogenic mixing	"	"	Non-kindred ethnoses	A new ethnos is born
4.	Intra-ethnic consolidation	"	Ethno evolutionary	One ethnos	Smoothening of intra ethnic differences*
5.	Inter-ethnic integration	"	"	Non-kindred ethnoses	(i) Homogenisation, and (ii) Formation of meta ethnic entities
6.	Assimilation	"	Trans-formatio- nal and evolu- tionary	Non-kindred ethnoses	One of the ethnoses disappears

Note : * Some of the sub units become ethnographic groups, others sub ethnoses.

called as Tribes in Latin, depicting the trifold division of the people of Rome"[6]. Indeed, retreating to times even more distant than the founding of Rome, we encounter other words in the spirit of tribes, all showing similar meanings. The Greek word 'phyle' is found to have been applied during Homeric times to groups of uncertain composition. According to historian Victor Ehrenberg, "The Greeks themselves came into the land as tribes"[7]. An Indo-European tribe referred to the largest kind of social and political community which existed before the existence of the city state. More elementary social units were included in it, from the smallest, the 'genos' and the 'phratra' and the latin 'gens' and 'curria'[8]. To clarify this reality of 'a tribe' in the form of 'tribe' as a 'type of society', Andre Beteille states, "A tribal is, in an ideal state, a self-contained unit. It constitutes a society in itself"[9].

Morgan, the father of modern anthropology, too described a tribe to be a 'completely organised society'[10]. He noted the attributes of a tribal society as 'common name, dialect, territory, religion, endogamy, and equality and fraternity'[11].

"A century later, the tribe is still defined much the same way in terms of commonality of territory, descent , language, culture and name"[12]. Other definitions of a tribe are not very different from Morgan's. After Morgan, the

prominent anthropologist A.W. Hewitt defined a tribe as ' .... a larger or smaller aggregate of people who occupy a certain tract of hunting and food ground in common, who speak the same language with dialectical differences, who acknowledge a common relatedness and who deny that relatedness to other tribes"[13]. According to a committee of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, "A tribe may be defined as a politically or socially coherent and autonomous group occupying or claiming a particular territory"[14]. Dictionary of Anthropology states, "A tribe is a social group, usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity, and unifying social organisation"[15]. G.P. Murdock describes, "language, contiguous territory, common culture and a tradition of common descent and a common name"[16] as the attributes. R. Piddington defines tribe as " .... a group of people speaking a common dialect, inhabiting a common territory and displaying a certain homogeneity in their culture"[17]. Dictionary of social Anthropology states, "A tribe is a social group usually with a definite area, dialect, culture, homogeneity and unifying social organisation"[18]. While studying the Andaman Islanders, Radcliffe Brown, found that, "A number of clans who had the same language and similar customs, formed a linguistic community"[19], which he referred to as a tribe.

If we analyse all the above definitions, we find that the tribe is defined by its essential attributes which

are generally stated to be the common name, territory,
culture, descent (kinship) and the language.

Common name for a group of people establishes
their image, their identity, and shows their allegiance ,
solidarity and sense of belongingness to the group as a whole.
Image here refers to the ideas, emotions, concepts and per-
ceptions of the group ; identity refers to the individuality
of a group. To study the image and identity of a tribe-name
with which it is identified/identifies itself, it is worth-
while to start with the etymological meanings of the names
of individual tribes or the appellations which the tribes use
for themselves. The legends and traditions associated with
the names of particular tribes constitute another significant
aspect of study. A study will remain incomplete if we do not
take note of the factors of change or ignore the forces that
have affected their self-image and identity.

In dealing with the etymology of tribe-names, it
may be noted that several tribes have two sets of names - a
popular name by which the tribe is known by its neighbours
(exoethnonym) and a name which the tribe uses to identify
itself (endoethnonym). Both types of names generally refer to
certain common characteristics or qualities of a given tribe.
There are also some appellations which are resented by the
tribes as derogatory and need an analysis. In a nutshell, we
must study etymological meanings of tribe-names, and tribe-

appellations, the solidarity with the tribe-name, exoeth-
nonyms and endoethnonyms ; legends and traditions associated
with tribe name and the factors/forces affecting their self-
image and identity.

The next attribute "Common territory" of a tribe,
describes the compactness and spread as well as the natural
ecological and economic environment of the tribe. The ethnic
boundaries of a tribe are generally compact and well-defined.
The tribe may derive its name from a particular territory or
give its name to a particular territory. The territorial
boundaries may be described either geographically or adminis-
tratively. Geographic isolation of the tribe from other tribes
is indicative of its circumstantial identity. The geographi-
cal or administrative boundaries are, however, breaking up
with the fast speed of development of communication and contact
all over the world. The flow of tribe members out of their
geographical boundaries has become quite frequent, "moving
out of a person from the predominant or exclusive area of the
tribe does not debar him from identifying with the tribe. The
geographical and administrative boundaries still persist
despite a flow of personnel across them"[20]. In other words,
categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence
of mobility and contact. In a nutshell, to study the tribal
identity based on a common territory, we will have to study
the geographic and administrative boundaries of the tribe ;

any in-flow/outflow and its impact, the mobility and migra-
tion of the population and the tribal identity with the name
of the area and the place of origin of the tribe.

Territorial boundaries generally match the cultural
boundaries. Cultural boundaries are marked by areas of least
difference amongst the cultural traits of ethnoses. A tribe
can be identified by the particular traits of the culture.
Differences in trait inventories become differences in tribes
or ethnoses.

A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, after analysing 160
definitions of culture, present a synthesis that embodies the
traits of culture positively accepted by most contemporary
social scientists : "Culture consists of patterns, explicit
and implict, of behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols,
constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups,
including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core
of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically divided
and selected) ideas and especially their attached values ;
culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as produ-
cts of action, on the other, conditioning elements of further
action"[21].

B. Malinowski describes these traits to be material
and non-material, and states : "Material traits are his arti-
facts, his implements and weapons, the liturgical paraphernalia

of his magic and religion, and the non-material traits are the knowledge in the production, management and use of artifacts, implements, weapons and other constrictions, and are essentially connected with mental discipline of which religion, laws and ethical rules are the ultimate source"[22].

The traits of culture in respect of a tribe can be innumerable but which are more commonly applied for determining identities of a tribe are life cycle, means, instruments and impliments for livelihood, instruments for recreation, pleasure and enjoyments, customs, traditions, rituals, religion, laws, ethical rules, belief etc.

These common traits of a culture generally arise as a result of mutual relationship between the various members of a tribe, and the most important binding relationship is the kinship. The kinship system, as defined by Radcliffe Brown, is "a system of relationships between person and person in a community" that means "a network of relations"[23]. The network of relations are either by blood (through descent) or through affinity (brought about by marriage).

Consanguinity emerges from lineage and is traced through genealogy. Affinity is bounded or expanded by endogamy/exogamy. Quoting Morgan and McLennan, Godelier states a tribe to be 'an endogamous group while the clan is exogamous'[24]. Endogamy is very essential to maintain effective social group and also for the purpose of inheritance which passes on through

descent may be through a male-line (patrilineal), or female-line (matrilineal) kinship depends on the social recognition and cultural implementation of relationships derived from descent and marriage, and normally involves a set of kinship terms and an associated set of behavioural patterns and attitudes which together make up a system as a whole. Thus, a kinship system is usually taken to refer to the complex of rules in any one society, which by governing descent, succession, inheritance, marriage, extra-marital sexual relations and residence, determine the status of individual and groups in respect of their ties of consanguinity and intermarriage. "It is one of the universals in human society and therefore, plays an important role in both the regulation of behaviour and formation of social groups"[25].

Kroeber[26] laid the following eight principles of kinship identification :

> (1) Difference in <u>generation</u> levels (father, son ; Grand parent, grand son etc.).
>
> (2) Difference in <u>age</u> levels with the same generation elder and younger brother, etc.).
>
> (3) Difference between <u>lineal and collateral rela-tionship</u> (father, uncle; brother, cousin; etc.).
>
> (4) Difference in <u>sex of relatives</u> (brother, sister; uncle, aunt; etc.)..

(5) Difference in <u>sex of the speaker</u> (males and females may have two separate systems of relationships).

(6) Difference in <u>sex of the person through whom the relationship is established</u> (father's brother, mother's brother; father's father, mother's mother).

(7) Difference between <u>genetic relatives and those connected by marriage</u> (mother, husband's mother; etc.).

(8) Difference in <u>status or life conditions of the person through whom the relationship is established</u> (living or dead, single or married etc.).

Fred Eggan, however, lays down the following charecteristics of kinship for differentiating societies[27] :

(1) The extent to which genealogical and affinal relationships are recognised for social categories.

(2) The ways in which relatives so recognised are classified or grouped in social categories.

(3) The particular custom by which the behaviour of these relatives is regulated in daily life.

(4) The various rights and obligations which are mediated through kins.

(5) The linguistic form which are used to denote kin categories.

The principles laid down by Kroeber appear to be more discrete and clearer in determining the identity of a tribe.

To identify the kinship, following identifying aspects can be evaluated:

(a) Kinship system :- Descent (matrilineal/patrilineal) affinity (endogamous/exogamous), residency (patrilocal/matrilocal), genealogy, lineage, etc.

(b) Kinship levels :- Generation, age, lineal/ collateral, sex of person, relatives or status etc.

(c) Kinship terminology :- Descriptive and classificatory linguistic forms, grouping, stages etc.

Another important attribute for identity of a tribe is language. "Language constitutes the single most characteristic feature of a separate ethnic identity"[28]. No other bond can bind the people of a particular society firmly and permanently than the linguistic identity. Members of the same ethnic group or society forget their differences, private or public, social or political, over the language issue. They

stand united to preserve, protect and defend their mother-
tongue whereever its existance is threatened ; linguistic
identity, in a given society begets a sense of fellow-ship,
kinship, brotherhood, and one-ness among the people. In short,
"no other bond is so strong and durable as the bond of lingu-
istic identity"[29]. The same view point is given out by Sergey
Arutyunow, " .... the language, more often than any other
cultural factor, serves as the basic factor of ethnogenesis
and ethnodifferentiation. It is also one of the basic stand-
point of formation and preservation of ethnic identity"[30].
The various aspects of language on the basis of which the
identity of a tribe is determined are the language name and
the language boundary ; commonly known as language/dialect
geography. C.F. Hockett (1973) [31] describes the procedure for
preparation of the language boundary as follows :-

(1) A preliminary survey of a region is made to get
some notion of the ways in which usage varies subregion-wise
and some impression of the way in which the region is broken
up by variations of usage.

(2) Two basic frames are then prepared. One is a
list of the geographical points at which usage will be checked
in more detail. The other is a list of items of usage to be
checked at each point ; this is in the form of questionnaire.

(3) Field workers travel through the region stopping
at each pre-selected point, finding suitable informants and

filling out a copy of the questionnaire for each informant.
Only one or two informants can usually be used at each point,
and they are generally chosen from the oldest living genera-
tion of people who resided at or near the point since early
childhood. The collected material thus represents only a tiny
sampling of the total sampling of the region.

(4) When all information is in, maps are drawn
showing the distribution of each alternative usage for the
items in questionnaire.

The items which are selected for survey can be of
various sorts. C.F. Hockett[32] gives out a representative sam-
ple of these :-

> (1) The word of phrase customarily used for certain
>   meaning.
>
> (2) The meannings for certain word, provided that
>   the word is known.
>
> (3) The pronunciation of a given word.
>
> (4) The phonemic identity or difference of two
>   forms.

The modern linguists sum these up as phonology,
morphology, semantics and syntax.

It can then be stated that relevant material should
be available for providing the details about the language-name,
and its characteristics based on phonology, morphology, seman-
tics and syntax. This material can be obtained through sample
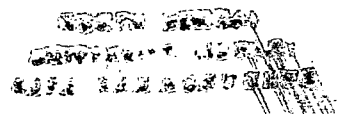
survey of the region which can then be compared for deter-
mining the identity/identities.

The aforesaid five attributes have been applied
universally to define a 'tribe' in the sense of a community
and society. The universality of the definition of a tribe,
however, has been found to be mutilated by European coloni a-
lists. The word 'tribe' during the European Colonialism
was also used "to reflect them equivalent of savage, barbaric,
primitive, aboriginal, junglee, banfu, nomadic, pagan, heathen
and many other disparaging and contemptuous terms with all its
connotations of primitivity and unfounded distinction between
primitivism and civilisation in terms of interior and superi-
or"[33]. Falling in line, even Morgan described a society accor-
ding to its condition of relative advancement and decided upon
three major stages of advancement i.e., savagery, barbarism
and sivilisation. Tribe according to him belonged to the second
stage. In 1968, Marshal Sahlin[34] advocated Morgan's point of
view of three stages of evolution but naming them as band ,
tribe and state.

The term tribe in this sense was freely used by the
colonial powers to dominate the people of third world. Sub-
sequently, with the rise of national liberation movements in
the colonies, ironically, these colonialists spearheaded a
policy of 'divide and rule'. In order to create a wedge betw-
een the various communities for this purpose, they started

eulogising those who could be won over and downgrading others who could not be. Tribal people being very simple souls, were an easy prey of this game plan ; hence, colonialists focussed their attention on them. "Their culture was magnified and the myth of 'noble and contented savage' was spread to deride the struggling people and join hands with pro-imperialists' sections from among them'[35].

In India, the effect of above stated colonial policy was felt variedly. The systematic segregation into various groups in accordance with the policy of 'divide and rule' resulted into giving special designations to the tribal people through the various Acts of the Government. The enactment of Scheduled District Act XIV of 1874 brought in a special status for the 'aboriginals' which included those groups which were distinguished by "tribal characteristics" and by their spatial and cultural isolation from the bulk of population. The British attempted to protect these "aboriginals" by placing areas in which they were concentrated outside of ordinary administration to permit a policy of insulating them from 'exploitative or demoralising contact with more sophisticated outsiders. These enclaves were called "Backward Areas" in the Government of India Act, 1919 . The first clear attempt to identity the "primitive" tribes based on the above criteria was in 1931 Census which counted 24, 613, 848 . These enclaves (called 'Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas', in the Government

of India Act) were placed under the operation of general law and were the object of broad executive powers to provide special protective regulations. Some provinces had undertaken a policy of protective treatment of tribals outside these areas . In the 1935 Act, for the first time, provision was made for some representation for 'Backward Tribes' in the reformed provincial legislatures and a total of 24 of 1535 seats in the provincial legislatures were reserved for these 'Backward Tribes'. A list of 'Backward Tribes' was promulgated in 1936 for all of the provinces except Punjab and Bengal . The 1941 Census counted 25.4 million tribal people (6.58% of the total population)[36].

The Constitution of India, 1950 carried forward this dual treatment of tribal areas and tribal people in a set of provisions for their 'protection and advancement' far more elaborate and detailed than the provisions for the other categories of the backward classes. Along with the reservations in legislatures and services comparable to those for the Scheduled Casts, there are provisions for their direct control over administration ; for direct central responsibility , for annual reports by the Governors to President for extensive executive power over Scheduled Areas to insulate them from the application of inappropriate law and to fashion protective legislation, especially regarding allotment and transfer of land ; and money lending and the formation of Tribal Advisory

Councils to participate in the formulation of policy[37].

As per the Constitution, term 'Scheduled Tribes' means "such tribal communities or parts of or groups ow within such tribes or tribal communities as are defined under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purpose of Constitution". The list of tribes defined, 'Scheduled Tribes', however , is to be specified by the President, after consulting with the Governors. Once promulgated, the list can be varied only by Act of Parliament. The 'Scheduled Areas' are to be ordered by the President, 'who retains the power to alter or deschedule them'[38].

In 1950, the President promulgated the list of Scheduled Tribes apparently by making some additions to the 1935 list of Backward Tribes. Some groups had been listed in Scheduled Tribe List. The 1951 Census counted 19.1 million in these groups (5.30% of the total population). Some tribes had been omitted ; about a million members of these "left out" tribes were temporarily accommodated in the Other Backward Classes (O.B.C.)[39] category adding 2.5 million tribals, mostly in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, bringing the total to 22.5 million persons were added, bringing the total to almost 40 millions.

Although the lists contain groups throughout the country, the tribal population is heavily concentrated in

central and northeastern India. Unlike the relatively dispe-
rsed Scheduled Castes population, about 90% of the tribals
are found in nine states. Out of the 471 tribes listed in
the 1971 census, Arunachal Pradesh alone accounts for 110
tribes[40]. The Scheduled Tribes were defined partly by habitat
and geographic isolation, but even more on the basis of social,
religious, linguistic, and cultural distinctiveness-their
"tribal characteristics". Just where the line between "tribals"
and "non-tribals" should be drawn has not always been free
from doubt.

In 1951 the Commissioner of Scheduled Castes and
Scheduled Tribes (CSC ST) noted that no uniform test for dis-
tinguishing the Scheduled Tribes had been formulated . He
circularized the state governments for their views. After
surveying the divergent responses, which included racial ,
religious, linguistic, and cultural tests as well as tests
of political, exonomic and social organization, and degree
of contact, isolation, or assimilation/distinctiveness, the
Commissioner proposed as the common elements : tribal origin,
primitive way of life,, remote habitation and general back-
wardness in all respects[41].

The Lokur Committee in 1965 reported that, "in
revising the lists, we have looked for indications of primi-
tive traits, distinctive culture, geographic isolation,
shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness;

we have considered that tribes whose members have by and
large mixed up with the general population are not eligible
to be in the list of Scheduled Tribes"[42].

The above set of attributes which includes primitive
traits, geographic isolation, shyness of contact, backwardness,
remote habitation, tribal origin, distinctive culture etc.,
serves to designate a stage of evolution i.e., barbarism (a la
Morgan). Tylor, simply places civilised nations at one end of
the social series and savage tribes at the other. Arranging
the rest of mankind between these limits, ethnographers are
able to set up at least a rough scale of civilisation, a
transition from the savage to our own. As the country was handed
over to us in 1947, we also took over the lagacies of the
British, which also included this definition of tribe. It was
found remarkably suiting in new conditions in India. Our tribal
people, who had already tasted the fruits of the division did
not understand the implication. They not only accepted but
insisted on being called tribes as this designation got lot of
benefits for them as described. The political parties too, found
it suiting to their political requirement and this term came
to stay, with the characteristics of defining tribals on the
basis of stage of evolution.

This definition based on the 'barbaric' stage of evolu-
tion could define the people as tribals but was found wanting
to distinguish between tribes themselves. With the

increasing demand for benefits, a struggle arose to gain
maximum. The strongest the tribe, the better benefits he had.
Thus started a wave of demand for identities of individual
tribes. For the purpose of determining the identity of 'a
tribe', the attributes required to define a stage of evolu-
tion did not suit. The attributes which suited to distinguish
between tribes were the same as described for defining a
society i.e., common name, territory, culture, kinship and
language; these attributes were also accepted in later empiri-
cal work investigating ethnic identity[43].

These attributes are applicable in case we are to
distinguish one tribe from other tribe where the tribals are
already identified, but cannot be applied where the requirement
is to distinguish tribals from non-tribals. To distinguish
between a tribal and non-tribal, the second set of attributes
will help us out. For example, if we have to differentiate
Toto tribe of Bengal from the non-tribal population adjoining
the tribe, we will first apply the second set of attributes,
and then, to confirm their individual 'tribe identity', we
shall apply the first set of attributes to confirm whether
Toto is realy 'one tribe' or more. Similarly, if we have to
identify the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, we shall first
distinguish the tribals from non-tribals based on the criteria
of second set of attributes and then with the help of first
set of attributes, we shall establish identity of each tribe.

It will be pertinent to point out here that all the attributes may not be necessary for providing these identities ; sometimes even a single attribute or even single aspect of it may be providing a clear identity, but this depends upon tribe to tribe, place to place or even time to time, as the conditions and situations keep on changing with time; so do the definitions and applicabilities of the attributes.

If we apply the second set of attributes i.e., primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographic isolation, backwardness and shyness of contact with community at large, we find these attributes generally applicable to all the North-Eastern states, Northern-Hill region, Central-Hill region and a few other areas. Out of these above, maximum number of tribes recorded in the Census records and also accepted by the Government of India as tribes, are in Arunachal Pradesh. This then turns out to be a priority area for any study into the tribes and their characteristics/attributes and we must pay full attention to tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. This area, which is generally described tribal area, is extremely important strategically, as it is situated on India's North-East corner ; bordering Tibet in the North, China and Burma in the East , Bhutan in the west and Assam and Nagaland in the south.

Its other characteristics in brief are as follows : it is spread over 84,000 square kilometres of land of evergreen forests, snow-topped mountains, deep valleys and beautiful

plateus, and records one of the heaviest rainfall in the world. It is inhabited by 6.32 lakh people out of which about 70 percent are tribal, living in 3257 villages as per 1981 census. The state has remained isolated from rest of the world due to its difficult terrain, nearly non-existent communications and inner-line-permit-system ordered by the British during their rule over Assam. The tribals, hence, lived their own independent, uninterfered and untempered life, and developed their own language, culture and indigenous system of governance in their isolated ethnic existence,

From the above description, we find the people of Arunachal Pradesh having the following clear characteristics:

(a) They are in the most remotest and isolated region of India.

(b) They are the most backward economically.

(c) They retain their primitive cultural traits and value these most.

(d) They have been in an isolation in the form of geographical pockets where they had restricted contact even with their tribal neighbours.

Based on above characteristics, the people of Arunachal Pradesh, in general, have been stated as tribals. Their identities as individual tribes, however, have not yet been properly determined. This is apparent from the number of tribes recorded from time to time as scheduled tribes. In the

Presidential Order of 1956 only 11 tribes of this state were listed. This list was amended from time to time based on the later census reports and this number rose to 80 after 1961 census and to 110 on the basis of 1971 census counts. Further amendment to this list has not been done after 1981 census, in which the number was accounted as 105, 5 less than that of 1971 Census. The results of 1991 census are still awaited. This problem of identity of tribes of Arunachal Pradesh becomes all the more important, because these tribes have started asserting their identities themselves. Firstly, these people would like to introduce themselves by their original and authentic names and not by misnames which their neighbours or people from the plains used to address them. Secondly, for all round development and for getting preferences from the government, they feel that the individual group identity as 'a tribe' has become a necessity.

'It is observed that most of the tribal communities of Arunachal Pradesh have started to reject their earlier identity and have taken new names on the pretext that those were not their original names and were given to them by the plains people. This happend probably because today they are afraid of loosing their identity and rich culture and becoming more and more close with the people in the plains. Their elite have come up with the opinion that it is high time for them to identify with their original name and at the same time form

some cultural groups for every community where they should
revive all their activities or there is a chance for them to
loose everything in the wake of rapid changes due to moderni-
zation'[44].

Such happenings, however, should not always be viewed
as unhealthy or disruptive forces, but may be, these are the
initial steps taken by the tribesmen to come to the national
mainstream, but at the same time to maintain their self-image.
As soon as they are provided with a definite identity, automa-
tically they are also demarcating the area people by their
men. In due course they get a seat in the assembly to fight
their cause, develop the communication system and get subsidies
of different kinds. Subsequently, they also manage to get other
modern amenities and educational facilities. This also helps
them in getting absorbed in different government jobs and derive
benefit of government schemes and projects. For all these
reasons people have started to attach much importance to iden-
tity specially as a scheduled tribe.

As tribal identities have become dear to them in the
wake of increasing benefits, it is important that this aspect
is understood before any detailed study is taken up about any
specific tribe. Unless we know how many tribes are there in
Arunachal Pradesh detailed studies are not possible either.
For this purpose an attempt has been made in the next chapter

to have a count of all these tribes from the available
sources so that there is some base available for further
studies.

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