Tribe as Mode of Thought and Revisiting Contemporary Tribal Practices

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Abstract

The present essay is designed as a departure from the tradition of studying a tribe from a cultural perspective, particularly during the colonial period and subsequently in the discipline of Anthropology quite for a long time. In this approach, a tribe is assumed as a cultural construct and therefore whatever attempts have been made to study tribal mode of thought or the mind there has been an obvious bias on culture (for example, see the discussion with reference to worldview). In other words, the tribal mind has been studied as reflects through culture. This approach to tribal studies fails to explain culture as a reflection of the mind. The present study is an attempt to address this research gap and therein lays the departure from the conventional approach.

Introduction

Precisely, the paper is an attempt to conceptualise tribe as a mode of thought and to examine the prevalence of tribal practices in our times in the light this mode of thought. It is based on field observations among the tribes of the Northeast during more than 35 years and a general understanding of tribal lifeways from available works.

The study of tribes in a cultural perspective in India, it can be argued, corresponds to a great extent to criteria informed in several works (Dube 1977: 2; Majumdar 1963: 367; GoI 2018-19: 39). Based on these criteria, 'tribe' as a social category has been 'defined'. These criteria provided the domain of subject matter studied during the colonial period and in the discipline of Anthropology[1] quite for a long time, even in post-colonial India.

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[1]Ethnography was the focus during colonial period till 1930s and 1940s (Béteille 1986: 297). Anthropology, to be specific, Socio-Cultural Anthropology initially 'speculated on the origins and progress of the family, ritual, religious beliefs, and politics' (Barnard 2000: 19). Its subject matter comprised two types of specialisations: regional and theoretical. Regional specialisations included study of communities in West Africa, the Caribbean, Amazon, Southeast Asia, North Atlantic fishing communities, Arctic hunters and reindeer herders, and gypsies. Theoretical engagement covered ethnicity, witchcraft, gender relations, family and kinship, economic anthropology, applied anthropology and Marxism in anthropology (Barnard 2000: 20). Topics like gender relations, applied anthropology, Marxian anthropology were taken up in a later stage.

Such studies have formed the distinct approach of cultural perspective in Anthropology though the nomenclature of the discipline differs between American (Cultural Anthropology) and British (Social Anthropology) schools. The distinction is blurred when one looks at the topics covered (Barnard 2000). However, in India, tribal studies formed the subject matter of cultural or socio-cultural anthropology and studied the tribe from a holistic perspective. The topics that the scholars are engaged with are covered in the definition of culture forwarded by E.B. Tylor. It is to be mentioned that the definition was very crucial to anthropologists studying tribes in initial stages. According to him, culture is that 'complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society' (Tylor 1887: 1). The definition includes material and non-material aspects of culture. Anthropologists studied one or the other aspects of tribal culture, which correspond to Tylor's definition. When culture is at the core of analytical perspective, the mind behind a phenomenon remains subordinate to cultural expression. Therefore, the mind behind the culture assumes insignificant. A critical understanding of mode of thought behind human action (both perception and action) could be an alternative approach to cultural perspective in designating some communities as 'tribe'. In this paper, a preliminary attempt is made by formulating the following hypotheses:

1. Mind or mode of thought is behind every human act for survival needs.
2. Mind evolves, so also survival needs, over period of time.
3. Evolution of mind can be slow or rapid and accordingly corresponding survival needs.
4. Correspondence between mind and survival needs in the process of evolution passes though distinct stages.

The hypotheses are formulated to distinguish a specific stage of correspondence between mind and engagement with survival needs to conceptualise the category of tribe. The hypotheses have been formulated drawing on earlier available works and field observation; it will be evident in following paragraphs. As it is assumed that mind is behind all human activities, we argue, tribe is a mode of thought.

Conceptual perspective

Existence of individual and community reflects a positive relation with appropriate survival ends, which are achieved through activities underlying ideas corresponding to mode of thought of the people of the community. Conversely, mind or mode of thought directs action to achieve survival ends of individual and community. Arguably, ideas and thus, the mode of thought have bearing on the identity construct of the community to which it corresponds. In other words, the community, in our context 'tribe', is a reflection of the mode of thought.

A clear understanding of the proposition claims conceptualisation of analytical terms and perspectives. This is taken up in this section.

Survival ends

The means and needs are the ultimate end (goal) of the community for survival. Because of this the concept of 'survival ends' has a broader connotation and includes social organisation (kinship organisation, social appropriation of labour), political

organisation, and economic organisation, along with underlying ideology. Even engagement with supernatural beliefs affects survival strategy.

It is not a surprise to find the reason of disease and good harvest in supernatural causation; a mode of thought in the matter of disease free-life, good produce, protection, and so on. The notion of safety against the disease, attacks from the enemies, theft and encroachment and also at the time of forest activities has a bearing on the survival goals. Looking after differently-abled and old age persons also comes under the survival needs of the individual and community. Survival of individual and the community is the ultimate goal to be achieved. Each of these activities meant to accomplish this end undoubtedly has a corresponding mental element that directs action.

Survival refers to the continuity of life. The term conceptualised for our purpose in a broader sense to include everything that a person needs for individual survival and survival of the community/group in which he/she is a member. Survival does not mean mere existence of life or community; it means existence in a good living condition to satisfy both physical and mental requirements. Artistic creation, in this sense, is a survival need in that it appeals to the mental satisfaction of the artist. Therefore, any activity involved in creating material objects-utilitarian or artistic, maintaining social order, appealing to the sense of satisfaction and healthy emotion; concerning faiths and beliefs has a bearing on holistic existence of the individual and community. The scope of survival ends is therefore all-inclusive and reflects mode of thought or mental involvement of people.

The nomenclature 'tribe'

It is to be mentioned that the designation tribe is suggested for convenience without going to the debate underlying its appropriateness. Moreover, a section of people, particularly in India has been known as 'tribe' since the colonial period, most of them being christened as Scheduled Tribe in the post-colonial period. Our attempt here is to suggest a more comprehensive and precise definition for tribe than understood in terms of criteria right from the colonial period.

The word 'tribe' is used to give a name to a number of communities sharing ideas. It can be any name, and should not be confused with the construct tribe which we define based on mode of thought.

Distinguishing mode of thought

The task of conceptualising the category of tribe as a mode of thought is full of risk and challenges. How does mode of thought represent tribe as a distinct category? Does mode of thought criterion take care of diversity that exists across communities which have been categorised as a tribe since the colonial period? This is a big challenge, but the possibilities are open.

Mode of thought is a generic term that includes ideas behind activities. The ideas, which are common to several communities and guide their activities, define the communities in terms of a particular mode of thought. The mode of thought which we have discussed as 'tribal' mode of thought actually represents a number of communities.

In India, all the communities were designated as non-European, non-industrial or non-Western. Many of the ideas are common to all the communities. Then how do we group the ideas to make a distinction among the communities?

A cursory look at communities in India would place them under two broad categories, say first and second categories. There are a number of communities which would reveal a broad arrangement of social institutions and activities as compared with several other communities. In the former group, the power structure would reflect cross-community relations in contrast to community centred structure in the second group of communities. Thus, community autonomy in the former group of communities is not as exclusive as in the latter.

Further, it can be observed that the first category of communities is primarily designated in terms of specialised occupation while in the second category, each community practises multiple occupational pursuits. The specialised occupation communities are interrelated to form a wider social reality of mixed occupational sphere while in the second category, each community represents a social sphere of mixed occupations.

It is further observed that communities of specialised occupations have territorial spread displaying multi-community territorial space. A community of this category does not have contiguous territorial space. In contract, each community of the second group has territory contiguity, and even when other communities live alongside such communities, each community has clear perspective of its territorial space. There are exceptions and these exceptions can be attributed to migration from both sides and/or migration of a community for security reason, or to oblige rulers.

As activities follow the mode of thought, the intensity of activities prevailing in a group of communities would follow a progressive and expanding mode of thought. In other words, activities in other groups of communities are less intense. Between the two categories of communities, there might be common or distinct activities. It would be logically meaningful to place the less-intense activity communities at an earlier stage of social evolution. Common ideas prevalent in the less-intense activity communities[2] allude to a mode of thought by which the group of communities would have a common designation. In this context, we categorise the less-intense activity communities with the designation 'tribe' and greater intense one as 'non-tribe' to understand the dichotomy within Non-European construct of social reality in India.

It can be explained in another way. As mind evolves, it is a challenge to distinguish mode of thought of a stage from the other. This problem is addressed with a simple but palpable argument. What exists in earlier communities if found in a later stage of social evolution, it means that the phenomenon has its roots in the former; for mind of a previous stage would not readily accept and internalise what emerged as a later stage. A simple example is due for clarification. In the early stage of development, the tribal communities of India could not believe and accept modern health care system, many till now, despite the fact of their process of integration with the development project of the nation. Similarly, many tribal communities put the cattle to their traditional use as a source of meat in place of using them for milking and ploughing, for which the scheme had envisioned (Elwin 1960).

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[2] In India tribes interact with their neighbours. It is but natural to find influence of assimilation and acculturation. Hindu mode of tribal absorption or tribal peasant continuum alludes to the presence of features of high-intense activity community in the low-intense-activity communities (Béteille 1986: 308-309). Such features would vary from tribe to tribe depending on the neighbours whom they interacted with. The borrowing would appear more prominent in the former and in a diluted form in the latter.

We propose studying activities, but not the mode of thought. How do then we arrive at mode of thought by examining activities? It is a big challenge, but a beginning has to be made by studying behaviour and activities, not as cultural manifestations, but to seek reasons as to why they think to do what they do. Of course, engagement in seeking reasons in this way would gradually unfold dimensions of the mode of thought underlying activities related to survival ends.

The study of 'tribal mind' through rituals, socio-political and economic organisations, cultural practices, material objects, etc. encompasses tangible and intangible aspects of life and thereby gives a holistic representation of tribe. What is argued here is that study of rituals, socio-political and economic organisations, cultural practices, material objects, can be possible with tribal mind or mode of thought as a framework of analysis. In a single paper, such an attempt, though ambitious, is not free from the risks of epistemological over-generalisation, methodological fallacy, and many others. However, these inadequacies would be the basis of further enquiry in the process of conceptualising or rejecting the premise of tribe as mode of thought.

The paper is an attempt to fill in this gap by defining 'tribe' in terms of 'mode of thought' and explaining existing tribal practices in our time. Mode of thought is proposed because the notion of tribe corresponds to the colonial period during which European or Western mode of thought dominated the ideology of categorising people as tribe, non-European, European in terms of such attributes as savage, uncivilised, backward, primitive, pre-industrial and so on. As tribe is a conceptual product of colonial mind, it is but logical to examine if mode of thought can be of use to define the category. Naturally, a question would arise as to the nomenclature of the category defined in terms of mode of thought. Without going into the debate on the appropriateness of nomenclature, we will label the category as tribe.

Why mode of thought

There are four specific reasons behind the suggestion of considering tribe as a mode of thought:

1. Criteria adopted to construct tribe suffer from internal contradictions and do not correspond to empirical evidence; there are shortcomings in defining criteria.

2. There are studies which indicate that mind is behind activities of people, a mental perspective behind action in contrast to study of mind within the frame work of cultural perspectives.

3. Maurice Godlier puts primacy of mind in the creation of culture, which have empirical support.

4. Tribe is a construct of Western mode of thought reflected through colonial mind.

Shortcomings in defining criteria: colonial and subsequent perspectives

In India, tribe emerged as a social category during the colonial period. After Independence, it has been christened as Scheduled Tribe (ST) in the Constitution and put under the administrative category. For colonial mind, tribe is 'others' in contrast to the self-image of the coloniser imbued with the western mode of thought and the notion of 'civilisation'. In India, all the communities in principle were 'others' in initial colonial thinking. But political exigency created another category of 'others' from within 'others' of the non-European category. The second category of 'others' was labelled as 'tribe'

following the practice colonisers adopted to label the natives in Africa, Australia, Canada, etc. without a proper understanding of Indian social system. The word 'tribe' first appeared in the official document through the enactment of Criminal Tribe Act, 1871. Whom the British administration found involving in activities, considered 'crime' by it, were labelled as criminals and the communities they belonged to as criminal tribes. Unfortunately, the British could not formulate any objective criteria, except involvement in 'crimes' while suffixing the term 'tribe'. The confusion contented and reflected in the Census reports.

In the first Census Report of 1891, Baine, the then Commissioner for Census of India, classified some groups of people as 'Forest Tribes' under the sub-heading of Agricultural and Pastoral Castes'. In subsequent Census Records, the nomenclature underwent successive modifications. In 1901 Census, Risley classified them as 'Animists'. In 1911, E. Gait further classified them as 'Tribal Animists' or people following 'Tribal Religion'. Hutton categorized them as 'Hill and Forest Tribes' in 1931 Census. The term 'tribe' or 'tribal religion', however, does not have any definitional note in the above Census Reports. In the Government of India Act, 1935 these people came to be recorded as 'Backward Tribes' without a definition of the term. Similarly, in 1941 Census they were designated as 'Tribes' accounting for 2.47 crores of people.

Risley (1891) had provided occupational and caste criteria on the basis of which groups which were not like occupational category in the caste system were considered tribes. He also provided racial theory[3] to distinguish between tribal and non-tribal populations. Colonial anthropologists and several anthropologists of the 'non-Western world' (Mafeje 1971: 253) including Indian counterparts focused on criteria like common territory, common dialect, endogamy, stateless in the scheme of social evolution, primitive traits, backwardness, tribe as secondary phenomena or segmentary system, simple religion, isolation, the shallow conception of history, large family, common ancestor, and so on (Fried 1975: 7; Lowie 1917; Morris 1980: 1369; Morgan 1964/1872; Sahlins 1968 and 1961 and Bohannan 1963).

Many of the criteria do not corroborate to field reality.[4] With regard to religious criterion tribe is idealised in the absence of institutionalised religion like Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam; but all the components of organized religions- faiths, beliefs, practices and a sense of realisation of super consciousness (Kapoor 2000) through which religion is comprehended are evidently present in tribal communities[5]. The criterion of isolation ignores empirical tradition of interaction with neighbours[6] and in the process of state formation (Skoda 2019; Kapur 2020; Mishra 2007, 2011; Tushu 1980).[7] Statelessness is another criterion, but it can be contested in the sense that the

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[3] Majumdar (1963) challenged racial theory of Risley (1891). Majumdar (1963: 368) subscribes to the view that 'the distinction between the tribe and caste…is difficult to establish'.

[4] For a detailed discussion on perspectives and criteria involved in categorising tribe and critis of such perspectives and criteria see Biebuyck (1966), Béteille (1986) and Devalle (1990).

[5] Many of the tribes even before colonial period belonged to Islam (tribes in Minicoy Islands), Buddhism (Monpa, Khampti and Singpho tribes of Arunachal Pradesh) and Hinduism (Dimasa, Mishing of Assam, Meena of Rajasthan and several others).

[6] Even cave dwellers like Raji had relations through silent trade (Alam and Jha 2019: 41-42, fn 1). In the Northeast, relation with neighbours and state power can be appreciated in Devi (1992).

[7] In the Northeast, the Jaintia (Athparia and Pandey 2002) had their kingdom. Historical records are available on Dimasa (Bhattacharjee 1987) and Khasi state formation (Bareh 1987). For social and polity formation in the Northeast India, see Bhattacharjee (1991).

notion of governance, that underlies the State is not absent in tribal mind, it reflects in various forms of political organisations and their functioning (Behera 2018 and Behera and Misra 2013: 75-82). The sense of historicity, as is defined in conventional subject of history, is marked by its absence in tribal category (Lowie 1917).

Evidently, the concept of tribe has never been unambiguously defined; it is always attempted with perspectives of conditioned mind. In this regard, it is useful to cite Susan B.C. Devalle (1990). She observes,

> In India, the category 'tribe' has not developed as a conceptual category, independent from administrative practice, possibly because anthropology in India has tended to be applied anthropology (Devalle 1990: 73).

Nationalist writers like G.S. Ghurye (1963), D.N. Majumdar (1937 and 1963), A.R. Desai (1994), N.K. Bose (1941 and 1971), S. Sinha (1965) have tried to define tribe taking a departure from colonial perspective. The concepts like *Backward Hindu* (Ghurye 1963), *Hindu mode of tribal absorption* (Bose 1941 and 1971), *tribe in transition* (Majumdar 1937 and 1963) describes relation between tribe and civilisation rather than defining it. The concepts proved epistemologically problematic and lacked empirical support. The first two concepts lacked general applicability in the context of India. These concepts kept tribes of Andaman, or Buddhist tribes like Khampti and Monpa tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, Christian tribes like Nagas, Mizos of the Northeast, Muslim tribes like Siddi and tribes of Minicoy Islands out of outside the purview. Tribe in transition is simply a statement of the obvious, for 'in India tribes have always been in transition, at least since the beginning of recorded history' (Béteille 1986: 299). In these definitions the notion of backwardness and preliterate stage are implied. Hindu framework is placed as desirable goal so that tribes are yet backward to reach it or in the process of being absorbed in it. The transition implies change from the 'tribal state' toward 'non-tribal' direction. Obviously, colonial hangover continues[8]. It is not therefore a surprise to find that the Government of India more or less depended on colonial perspectives. In general, tribe in India is an exogenous construct.

One of the problems of tribal studies in India emanates from lack of proper understanding of empirical situation. The experience of Australia, Africa and other countries was directly applied initially to understand Indian situation. André Béteille's (1986) observation is enlightening on the problem of defining tribe in India. The whole debate is encapsulated in the following words:

> Ethnographic material from India did not figure prominently in the general discussion regarding the definition of tribe. The problem in India was to identify rather than define tribes, and scientific or theoretical considerations were never allowed to displace administrative or political ones. This is not to say that those engaged in drawing up lists of

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[8]Annual Report of Ministry of Tribal Affairs (2018-19: 39) enumerates indication of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with community at large and backwardness as criteria to schedule a community as tribe. These criteria, it is claimed, have been formed taking into account definitions in 1931 Census, the reports of the first Backward Classes Commission (Kalelkar), 1955, the Advisory Committee on Revision of SC/ST list (Lokur Committee) 1965 and the Joint Committee of Parliament if the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Bill 1967 and Chanda Committee 1969. Presence of 1931 Census definition alludes to its colonial hangover. Do Gonds who ruled during medieval period or Meenas display primitive traits?

Indian tribes did not have their own conception of tribe, but those conceptions were neither clearly formulated nor systematically applied (Béteille 1986: 299).

Mental perspective behind action

Understandably, the construct of tribe and tribal culture underlie a mental element. Martin Hollis (1996) argues that '…people act, for the most part, rationally' (ibdi.: 1). Though his argument was in the context of 'economic theories of rationality', what is crucial in it is that a *thinking* underlies the action and 'social sciences depend on it' (Ibid.). That thinking is given primacy over the action is evident from the fact that he begins with the question, 'Did Adam and Eve act rationally in eating the fruit of the forbidden tree? That can seem to depend solely on whether they had found the best means to their ends' (Ibid.). A similar logic is evident in the proposition that the material is a part of the mode of thought, for behind every material there is mental (Godelier, 1986).[9]

There is no denying the fact that academic approaches in terms of worldview (Redfield 1953, 1962), its variant nature-man-spirit complex (Vidyarthi 1963) or Brnard's concept of foraging mode of thought (Barnard 2002; Behera 2009) are close to an understanding of tribal mind. But worldview or nature-man-spirit complex explains existential reality rather than an analysis of *interactive thought process* underlying the reality. Reidfield's concept is community specific; it describes 'way of life, as it differs from other ways of life, generally and taken as a whole' (Redfield, 1953: 84). Thus it lacks a generic perspective as it displays binarity, for 'in every word view there is an I from which the view is taken' (Ibid.: 86). The concept describes way of life as worldview, but does not connote the idea of worldview as a thought process.

Vidyarthi's study (1963) also suffers from similar shortcomings. He has organised his study of the Maler tribe of Rajmahal Hills in three thematic divisions, namely Nature, Man and Spirit.   In the first part, he describes ecological basis of the Maler culture. In the second part, he deals with man to man relationships in all the social dimensions. In the third part, he discusses Maler belief system concerning rituals; and the relationship of the belief system with Man and Nature. The belief system alludes to the mode of thought when he brings out the reason that supernatural power controls the nature of happenings, underlying Maler's practice of rituals (Vidyarthi 1963: 9-11). But essentially, the study was not designed to examine the mode of thought behind the activities, and so he admits its importance 'in understanding the society and culture' (Ibid.: 11).

Barnard (2002) describes a few features such as association with land, kinship, leadership and economy as reflections of foraging mode of thought but is silent over conceptualising it. However, he has tried to explain economic activities, particularly distribution, in terms of sharing mode, which he highlights as a practice but not as thought process. He extends it to understand foraging society in totality as he opines, 'sociality depends on sharing' (Barnard 2002: 7). He equates foraging society as foraging mode and defines as a community in which goods are widely shared (Ibid..). Mind has occupied a back seat when sharing is presented as a mode of life, but not an

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[9] According to Maurice Godelier (1986: 131) material (physical objects) and intellectual (skill, knowledge, etc.) elements roughly make up productive forces and reflect two realities of human   activities. Though Godelier has focused on economic dimension of material and mental inalienability, there is also such inalienable perception in belief system (Behera 2019: 59).

idea behind the mode. Barnard presents practices and institutions existing in hunter-gatherer communities as foraging mode of thought, but not deals with the ideas behind the practices and institutions.

A gap exists between cultural representations and thought process underlying them. Moreover, when we articulate something about the tribe, for example, tribal worldview, we do not define tribe to study their worldview but explain the worldview given that the tribe exists as a category. The definition is also not adequate to explain some practices/phenomena, such as the concept of impurity attached to menstruation, sense of belongingness, isolation measure in the modern health care system and several others found in our time. However, these prevailed among the 'tribes'.

Primacy of mind over culture

However, Godelier has gone a step further. He sees the culture as a product of mind.[10] He argues, 'The fact is that: human beings, in contrast to other social animals, do not just live in society, they *produce society in order to live*. In course of their existence, they invent new ways of thinking and of acting-both upon themselves and upon the nature which surrounds them. They, therefore, produce culture and create history (or History)' (Godelier 1986: 1).

It is useful to substantiate the logic of primacy of mind over culture with empirical support. The Khamptis of Arunachal Pradesh who live in Chowkham (now spelt as Chongkham) area has developed an indigenous method of irrigation to paddy fields. In contrast, those who live in Namsai, Lathao and Ningro areas entirely depend on rainwater. They have not developed an irrigation system to irrigate paddy fields. These two practices are elements of Khampti culture, but the practices are objective reality formulated in mind corresponding environmental differences. The technology of irrigation through embankment (an aspect of material culture) did not influence the mind to create a similar irrigation system in Namsai areas. Instead, the mind responded to the prevailing environmental condition in the regions. Embankment system of irrigation was a design of mind before translated into practice. Mind precedes action, which forms the material aspect of the culture.

Another example with reference to Tani group of tribes (Adi, Apatani, Galo, Nyishi, Tagin tribes who claim Tani as common ancestor) of Arunachal Pradesh is cited to substantiate the claim of primacy of mind over culture. Naturally, the people who formed into different tribes had a culture when they lived together in ancient times. But when they divided into different groups and settled in different places, even in a similar environment, the mind acted differently to achieve survival ends so that distinct cultural features emerged. The Galos have a type of polyandry (scholars use the word cicisbeism practice) which is sexual relationship of a woman with her own and lineage/clan brothers of the husband which is absent or tabooed in other tribes. While Padam section of Adis has elaborate dormitory system (*Musup* for boys and *Raseng* for girls), in others the system is absent. Similarly, tattooing is popular among the Apatanis. The Apatanis are famous for wet-rice cultivation while the others practised shifting cultivation until recent years when a section of hill dwellers migrated to plains. Emerging features in the culture of people who lived in different groups suggest primacy of mind over culture. The forces from the old culture did not

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[10] This contests efforts within the analytical frame such as world view, nature-man-supernature complex or foraging mode of thought constructed with cultural components to understand tribal mind.

orient the culture when groups divided; otherwise, the cultural manifestation would have been identical.

Moreover, common empirical knowledge displays the primacy of mind corresponding to activities involved in meeting survival needs at different periods of human evolution and in different environments. A reflection on our common knowledge would show that mind acted differently at the time of cave dwelling than at the time of village life. It works differently in different environment; so the survival activities in a hill environment are different from those on the seacoast. It is, therefore, argued that mind or mode of thought directs action, and it is an evolution of mind that evolves ways of meeting needs. Conversely, the ways specific to a group of humanity attests an identity to the group.

The mind acted in a particular way to make and use stone tools and in a different way to make and use plough related to survival needs. The second assumption is that with the evolution of mind the activities evolve. In the process, the image of the past gets copied, which take different forms at different stages. Any contemporary activity bearing the resemblance of the past is simply the activation of the image in the context.

The mind evolved in a direction from which emerged industrial means of meeting survival ends. These means, in other words, underlie a mode of thought different from the pre-industrial thought process and corresponding means of securing survival needs.

Evolution of mind to the stage that differs from the previous stage, in our example the industrial stage, as distinguished from the pre-industrial stage, implies that the corresponding thought is the prime mover of all aspects of life-social, religious, economic, political, etc. within and without the community/territory/nation. It alludes to inter social, territorial, or national relations. It is in the fairness of things to state that the new phase of social evolution corresponding to evolution of mind is not exclusively independent of the life of the previous stage, which continues in the form, spirit or both in some areas. Evolution of society, it is argued, directly related to evolution of mind, which is assumed as an independent variable. The corresponding social dynamics (including religious, economic, political) depend on the then stage of the mode of thought. In this context, it is further assumed that as mind evolves, so also the means of survival and every successive stage of mental evolution would result in an expanded dimension of the society (based on historical evolution of society from cave dwelling to present time).

The mind directs the production of stone tools at one stage and a gun at a succeeding one. If we consider gun as we do, is a better tool than a stone one, the mind evolves progressively, and the succeeding stage is better than the previous one in the same logic. The point is that mind or mode of thought has a direct link with means of survival, both of which evolves progressively through different stages.

Opposite to western mode of thought

Criteria used to categorise a section of people as tribe, such as preliterate, pre-industrial, statelessness, isolation, etc.; characteristic attributes labelled, such as savage, primitive, others, etc. and theoretical basis of understanding as a stage in social evolution are products of European mode of thought, particularly during colonial expansion. Since European mode of thought, also known as western mode of thought of a particular period of history became the yardstick to designate a group of non-European humanity

as tribe (or any of its variants),[11] two inferences can be deduced from it. First, the people who have been labelled as tribe had their mode of thought different from European mode at that time. Mode of thought in this context refers to a way of thinking that underlies life ways covering material and non-material aspects of community life. Second, as the mode of thought was specific to a period of history, as we understand, from use of terms like pre-industrial, primitive (in opposite to industrial and modernity respectively), a stage of social evolution, it can be safely deduced that Europe also had people with a mode of thought previous to the period of industrialisation, modernity or use of scripts. It is further worth mentioning that the then intellectual tradition influenced the idea of tribe as a stage in social evolution following Darwin's (1859, 1871) evolutionary theory of natural selection and evolution of human.

As we have mentioned, all the non-European peoples, except living in Africa, Australia and Canada were not designated as 'tribe' or in one of its variants. The people in Asia, for that matter, became problematic as most of them had scripts, displayed a higher stage, i.e. state in the scheme of social evolution and high level of religious philosophies. All the religions of the World had their origin in the East- Christianity in Jerusalem in the Middle East; Islam in Saud Arabia; Zoroastrianism in ancient Iran; Judaism in Israel; Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism Hinduism in India; Taoism and Confucianism in China, and so on. The faulty and narrow European standard could not appreciate the diversity in Asian population and divided them under the broad category of tribes and non-tribes. This mode of thought has influenced colonisers and colonial scholars. They made a distinction between Europeans and non-Europeans and within non-Europeans, between tribes and non-tribes.

The crucial point that emerges from the above discussion is that European mode of thought had non-European mode as its anti-thesis in the binary scale. This non-European mode of thought in the context of Europe, for example, before industrialisation, and still before in pre-literate stage, can be termed as the pre-European mode of thought for convenience of distinguishing it from non-European mode applied beyond Europe.

Industrialisation involves a mode of production. In this mode, primary resources (the Nature-land, forest, water, minerals) are processed and transformed to material means of existence in contrast to the pre-industrial mode of direct–processed or raw (unprocessed) –use of the Nature to secure material needs. In the former, production, unlike the latter, shifted from domestic or community mode to factory mode transcending community boundary. The distinction between the two modes of production can also be appreciated with reference to substantive and formal systems of production (Herskovit 1952; Dalton 1961 and Le Clair 1968).

It is in the fairness of things to argue that pre-industrial domestic or/and community mode and direct utilisation of Nature is a representation of the corresponding mode of thought evolved around in the absence of industrialisation. Thus, conceptualisation of 'tribe' as a pre-industrial category is quite the opposite to the mode of thought corresponding to industrialisation,[12] which is popular in academics as western mode of

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[11]. For example, these communities are known as 'Aborigines' in Australia, as 'Maori' in New Zealand, as 'First Nations' in Canada, as 'Indigenous' in the United States.

[12] In ecological history of India, Gadgil and Guha (1992) suggest four mode of production on the basis of mode of resource use such as gathering (including shifting cultivation), nomadic pastoralism, settled cultivation and industry and each mode has been examined along the axes of technology, economy, social organization, ideology and ecological impact. Our discussion on tribal mode of thought roughly

thought, knowledge system or discourse. When we consider the pre-industrial mode of thought in Europe and non-European mode in non-European countries, tribe as a category corresponding to the non-European mode of thought in non-European countries during the colonial period of history is not an exclusive one. In this categorisation, people of pre-industrial European mode have not been labelled as tribe or any one of its variants. The label is applied to a section of people in colonised countries and an Asian context; tribe represents as much a non-European mode of thought as a non-tribe category. In other countries, tribe represents a directly non-European mode of thought. Obviously, tribal mode of thought as a non-European one and European mode of thought are not mutually exclusive. Both the divisions of tribe and no-tribe represent a non-European mode of thought in Asia and particularly in India. Though they are seemingly mutually exclusive in India; there are overlapping areas–scripts, state, for example, exist in both the categories. Even agriculture as a source of livelihood and several other aspects of culture as well exist in both categories; concepts such as tribe-caste and tribe-caste-peasant continuum, Hindu mode of tribal absorption (Bailey 1958/1964, 1960; Sinha 1965, Bose 1941) substantiate to the argument. Among the tribes, there is a wide range of diversity in terms of mode of resource use, scripts, and state formation and so on. What is important to note is that the categories, tribe and non-tribe, depended on nature directly, unlike industrial mode.

Tribal mode of thought

Mode of thought is an abstract concept. It manifests an ideological superstructure of distinct but inter-related ideas underlying activities. Ideas are independent mental constructs and activities are dependent. There is no one to one correspondence, as we would see later, between idea and action; for one idea may underlie a number of activities or an activity may be based on more than one idea. We have attempted in this essay to define tribe as a mode of thought. It is, therefore, imperative to outline a few thoughts or ideas guiding tribal life-ways.

Belongingness

Belongingness, in the sense of 'we feeling',[13] reflects at various levels of social organisation starting from the family to the tribe. When it is a matter concerning the whole community, belongingness at lower levels are compromised. It is a common phenomenon in many tribal communities to ostracise an individual if commits incestuous crime or banish a family of any lineage and clan suspected of sorcery. Obviously, sense of community is strong and superimposing. Prevalence of the practice

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corresponds to first three modes before the industrial one and undoubtedly covers wide range of the modes of resource use. The distinction is made between direct use of the Nature and transformation of the nature for livelihood options.

[13] Belongingness is a 'we feeling' and more than that. Ralph Linton (1936) maintains that belongingness is the feeling of unity; it is the 'correlated' clear-cut distinction between members and non-members of the tribe/community and the 'concrete personal terms' as factors in establishing tribal solidarity (Linton 1936: 232-236). Sense of community ownership and mode of resource use gives a sense of togetherness. Emotional attachment and identity construct in terms of allegiance to language, myths, ethics, values, morality; territorial attachment, dress and ornaments, beliefs and faiths, etc. are elements in which the group takes pride in contrast to what they consider 'of others'. No doubt, Linton (1936: 231) defines a tribe as 'a group of bands occupying contiguous territory and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in their culture, frequent friendly contacts and a certain community of interests'.

of community ownership of resources and of individual ownership within community framework emanates from the sense of belongingness.

Let us have a clear understanding of the notion of belongingness. This arrests attention because students of tribal studies come across the phenomena of inter-tribe, inter-village or inter-clan feuds or conflicts in traditional tribal communities.[14] Conflict and belongingness are two diametrically opposite perspectives. Let us examine how belongingness can be understood when conflict is also a reality with reference to settlement pattern of different groups of tribes.

Hunter-gatherer tribes like the Birhor, the Raji, the Sulung, the Onge, and the Jarwa live in small bands and in one or a few settlements. However, agricultural tribes (both shifting and permanent cultivators) like the Adi, the Nyishi, the Oraon, the Apatani, the Santal live in several villages. Inter-village conflicts were reported during field study conducted in 1989, 1992-93 and 1999-2000 among the Adis and Apatanis. In this context community belongingness would be specific to village community. When conflicts arise involving two tribes, belongingness to the community would mean belonging to the community. In Arunachal Pradesh during field study this was observed during Nyishi-Apatani conflict in 1992-93 and Khampti-Mishmi conflict in 1984. In Apatani valley, a number of conflicts between Hong and Hari group of villages were reported during field study, and one was witnessed in 1992. These inter-village conflicts do not affect belongingness to the tribe when the conflict is of inter-tribe nature.

As it was reported, the conflicts, whether of inter-village or inter-tribe arise mostly from resource trespassing. Resource in this context has a broader meaning and covers both natural and human resources.[15] Except 1992 inter-village conflict in Apatani valley, which resulted from conflict between two groups in the School on the issue of election to Student's Union, other conflicts related to resource trespassing. The 1984 conflict between the Khampti and the Mishmi resulted from the destruction of Khampti timber camps in the forest by the Mishimis who claimed the camp area in their territory. Similarly, Nyishi-Apatani conflict in 1992-93 resulted from land encroachment in Tipnis area, which supposedly belonged to the Nyishis. Natural resources like land are very important to a tribal community. When it is encroached or trespassed, the concerned community consider it an act of imposing livelihood insecurity.

'We feeling' posits the community against other communities and triggers the sense of defence against their attacks. Because of the need for self-defence youth dormitory has a prominent place in many traditional communities like the Nagas, Padam and the Mizos. Other tribes have other types of arrangement like establishing a settlement in hilltops. The need for protection, the mind behind survival end, influences different aspects of life. A difference in the arrangement is not essential but what is important is

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[14]See Gao (2005) where she has described the conflict between Minyong and Padam group of the Adi. Head hunting practice (Hutton, 1928) among the Nagas is indicative of inter-village feuds. If an individual of one clan kills a person of another clan, it leads to inter-clan conflict. This was reported while the author was living in Mishmi areas of in Lohit district of Arunachal Pradesh from 1987 to 1989 and 1994-1995.

[15] While writing in 1884, Alexander Mackenzie informs; 'On the night of 12th February 1872, the village of Amtolla… was attacked by a body of two or three hundred hill men… trouble by an epidemic, which they believed to have been imported from the plains. They called upon the Duphlas (*now Nyishi*) of the plains to compensate them for the loss they had sustained in children and adults from the disease; and because the Duphlas of Amtolla declined to meet their wishes, they came down to recoup themselves by seizing them as slaves' (Mackenzie 1994: 31). This is an example of inter-village conflict of a tribe over human resource.

the underlying idea of protection of the community, which is common in every tribe. Protection of the community though amounts to protection of self, the common goal is held supreme, and this goal emanates from 'we feeling'.

Impurity

The notion of impurity reflects beliefs and practices. While belief is an idea perceived in mind, practices are actions corresponding to the metal perception. Impurity has a broader connotation and expresses in disapproval to certain activities which do not correspond to community's accepted norms. We may count many practices, but for the time being, they include segregation (of women at the time of childbirth or menstruation, men in certain occasions like killing a tiger as in Galo tribe) and taboos (disapproval of incestuous sexual relations and marriage restrictions). The practices are impure because non-observance invokes supernatural wrath.

The practices considered impure are not uniform in all the tribes, but what is crucial is that the notion of impurity is a mode of thought that prevails across the tribes.

Segregation

This notion relates to impurity notion to some extent. A menstruating woman is segregated because she is considered impure. A person suffering from a disease is not considered normal. His sickness is often attributed to supernatural intervention and considered a curse. So the person is segregated so that others do not suffer from his curse. In a sense, impurity underlies the idea of segregation.

Belief in nature and supernature

This is the notion that shapes belief system and associated performances. In their belief Nature is not commanded. The belief determines the nature and extent of interaction with the Nature in securing a livelihood. As the tribe does not overexploit the resource it migrates to search for green pasture when the carrying capacity of Nature reduces. The supernature is invoked in nature. No doubt, the tribes are nature worshiper at heart. Religious conversion, integration with development schemes, etc. however, are another topic, and allude to a shift in the mode of thought. Presence of some practices after this shift does not contradict our argument as the mind has copying capacity of previous idea and action.

Sharing

This is an important component of tribal mode of thought. It distinguishes a tribe from communities believing in accumulation. Mutual exchange, reciprocation, etc. are social behaviour based on shared ethics. Sharing is insurance against uncertainty. A hunter with a good catch is not sure to get one next day. However, one is certain that any member of the community would procure something, fish, animal or any other item to share. Therefore, the hunter shares his game with other members of the community. For the time being, the hunter may preserve the meat in smoked process, but his would amount to individual consciousness over community sense.

Subsistence outlook

Tribal production system is subsistence in nature. The community does not produce a surplus, though, at an individual level, surplus production may arise. This surplus at an individual level gives rise to the tradition of feasts of merit to earn social status. It is also

related to the ideology and practices of non-accumulation practice, minimisation of wants, small scale production, and limited spatial mobility of resources in barter exchange and above all sustainability of resource base.

Autonomy

Tribal communities are self-governed. Whenever there is any interference tribes have shown their resentment, often leading to revolts (Xaxa 2018 and Singh 1980). Arguably, the idea of self-governance is an integral part of the tribal mode of thought. However, the idea reflects a tribal sense of independence at large. It is but natural to note independent mind in other spheres of life. No doubt, tribes are characterised as self-reliant due to their self-dependent mode of production. It is useful to note that the mind of self-dependence reflects in both community and individual levels. That is why when an individual commits mistakes, which is likely to affect his freedom, then lineage or clan members come to his rescue so that he enjoys individual freedom. It is a general practice among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh. Importantly, it is the ethics of self-dependence, which stands responsible for the absence of beggary in traditional tribal societies.

Community of being[16]

This refers to the ideology that a tribe believes himself as one among animals and plants. The belief in totem, the tiger man concept among the Naga tribes, taboos related to killing animals and so on result from the sense of community of being.

These are a few examples to understand tribal mode of thought. It will not be out of context to generalise that all the activities undertaken by a tribe correspond to tribal mode of thought. However, this claim needs further empirical data and thus a critical investigation. In our discussion, we do not attempt to find commonality among different activities across the tribes, but seek to look at these differences as an outcome of mode of thought common to all tribes. It is not the matter whether the community pursues hunting-gathering or settled agriculture. But what is crucial is the mind of subsistence, we feeling, sustainability, sharing ethics that go with these practices. When the practices do not conform to a common mode of thought this is a signal that the correspondence between mind and activities has shifted to another mode.

Our contemporary tribal practices

In our present time, we come across some practices that also exist in tribal societies. A few of these practices have been examined in the light of the nature of mind and tribal mode of thought.

Belongingness in our time

Party-politics is a crucial component of modern democracy. Participation in governance, particularly the formation of the government, depends on party-politics. Members of a party are obliged to show commitment to party ideology, which is nothing but a sense of belongingness to the party. Formation of government, which is the ultimate objective of every party, amounts to have command over state resources. It can

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[16] The phrase is borrowed from Gadgil and Guha (1992) who used it to explicate the ideology underlying mode of resource use in hunter-gatherer communities. However, the phrase is relevant several tribal communities whose members identify themselves as a part of other living beings of the environment in the locality. For understanding the ideology see Gadgil and Guha (1992: 18-19).

be argued that not to have this command over resources or to be deprived of it after the formation of the government alludes to a sense of insecurity. The party which has a better chance of government formation appropriates a greater degree of belongingness from its members than the one which has less chance. Shifting of loyalty takes place. Belongingness thus plays a crucial role in party politics.

In our time, sense of belonging reflects in various organisations, associations and groups formed to achieve common goals which otherwise would not be easy to gain. In a literary society, for example, members show a sense of belongingness in that the society happened to be set up, continues to exist and work together to achieve the goal for which the society has been founded. Belongingness is usually specific to the organisation or group. This does not mean that it is absent, for example, for the country to which organisations belong. The trend of belongingness corroborates to the sense of belonging to the village community and to the tribe in the context. It should be made clear that the members of a village display their sense of belongingness to the tribe to which the village belongs.

However, in recent years a member also belongs to an international organisation like indigenous movement. In so belonging his/her belonging to the nation is not sacrificed. This movement can be viewed at the backdrop of insecurity perceived/experienced in their expectations and aspirations as negated in non-indigenous global forces of development. Further, one would find a worker or a manager belonging to a factory or an institution by virtue of the contract. An employee is, therefore, a contractual member in a factory in contrast to voluntary membership in an NGO or voluntary association. Sense of belongingness as discussed here however differs from that of in a tribe which is by birth and almost inalienable. But the point is about the sense of belonging, which is a characteristic feature of a tribe, and exists in different forms with the passage of time.

We have argued in previous paragraphs that security issue is at the core of tribal mode of thought pertaining to survival needs. Mode of thought is holistic,[17] a member of a tribe does not think various aspects of life as specialised fields, but conceives as an integrated whole like a honeycomb. However, in Western mode of thought all aspects of life have been perceived distinctly as specialised fields. So the sense of belonging with underlying security issue reflects through specialised forms, and displays a sense of holism to the ideology of the group or field only.

There is no denying the fact that in recent years security and associated sense of belongingness carry specialised overtones. For example, the security of the member of a literary club; to put it in another way, the identity of the member belonging to the club, claims complete commitment to achieving aims and objectives of the club for which it was formed. Even a student of an academic discipline, it is observed, feels comfortable when he/she studies a phenomenon within the framework of the discipline. The student aggressively defends his/her stand when critiqued from the perspectives of another discipline. While a student of political science would offer a political explanation to the failure of a socio-economic programme of the government, a student of economics

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[17]. During field study among the Adi, Galo, Adi Padam, Nyishi and Apatani, it was observed that when origin of a particular event pertaining to creation myth was asked the raconteur would narrate from the beginning of the universe, such as the stage of nothingness. He could not perceive a particular event something different from the entire creation myth. His faculty perceived the event not in isolation, but something as inalienably integrated whole. Also see Pertin (2009).

would focus on his/her argument on economic factors. It is often heard anthropologists presenting themselves as 'tribe of anthropologists', which otherwise is an expression of belonging to the discipline.

It is in fairness of things to recount that anthropological literature uses the word 'ethnocentric' as a characteristic feature of tribe. Ethnocentrism in the sense of belonging is an expression of exclusiveness in thought. In this sense, scholars identify themselves with their respective disciplines or with particular topics[18] and do not allow scholars from other disciplines to work with them; and thereby show ethnocentrism in their sense of belonging, a somewhat fundamentalist disposition.

In contemporary academics, interdisciplinary studies have emerged and thus *the sense of belonging* in a wider context across the disciplines. The sphere of belonging has a horizontal dimension unlike the context of belonging to the village and the tribe. In Arunachal Pradesh a friendship bond exists between individuals across the tribe. Among the Nyishi and Apatani the bonding is called *Diiliikanii,* and Apatasnis call the Nyishi friend as *Manyang*. Two individuals from each tribe may enter into ceremonial friendship, but it becomes the responsibility and obligation of every clan/lineage member of the Apatani friend to protect any clan member of the Nyishi friend if any visits the former's territory and vice versa (Behera and Misra 2013: 71). During a field study in 2004 in Damroh, the cradle of Adi Padam people, it was reported that they suspend their works in honour of the rituals performed by Basar and Riba clans of Galo tribe during the end of winter. Such a sense of belongingness under friendship tie has a horizontal dimension in many tribes, and interdisciplinary studies can be viewed in terms of such a sense of belongings.

There is an obvious indication of contradiction in the above explanation; for belongingness is attributed to the tribal mode of thought, and at the same time is observed in a particular sphere of inter-tribe relations. What does its inter-tribal dimension suggest? It suggests its fluid nature and thus, a risk of its use as a characteristic of the tribal mode of thought. An explanation is due. Belongingness is an essential element in the tribal mode of thought and reflects group consciousness. Arguably, belongingness is integral to any group consciousness, including inter-tribe relations-a formation of a group relation between two tribes. The mental element of group consciousness is an inherent characteristic of emergence and sustenance of any group- formal like a sports club or informal like a tribal village council. Our understanding of the past tells us that small communities in pre-industrial and preliterate stage, displaying greater degree of homogeneity in occupation, language, faiths and beliefs and so on, which formed the category of the tribe in India during the colonial period, had the strong sense of community consciousness. So, we can safely argue that belongingness is an inherent mental construct since the time small scale communities, whom we put the label tribe, were known; and the sense pervades through any group consciousness.

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[18] It is not rare to find senior scholars introducing themselves in the following words: *being a student of such and such discipline,* while delivering a talk, reading a paper or interacting in seminars.
In different seminars of 1980s and 1990s, Professor P. S. Ramakrishna of North Eastern Hill University, Shillong used to introduce him as *Jhum Ramakrishna*, as he was working on sustainability aspect of Jhum (Shifting Cultivation) and was renowned for his contribution.

Idea of impurity

The notion of impurity concerning menstruating women is widespread in patriarchal tribal communities. Because of this phenomenon, women are considered impure, and the floor space of the dwelling house of some tribes is divided along with purity and impurity consideration. The Galo tribe of Arunachal Pradesh distinctly mark the space inside the house as *pimme* for women and *pinte* for men. They remark that *pinte* is for *derne   pane* (unpolluted)   and *pimme* for *dermana* (polluted).   Women   during menstruation, miscarriage and after childbirth are confined to *pimme*. During menstruating age they use the ladder, *nyime rabgo* and the male *nyillo rabgo* to climb the floor of the house constructed on a raised platform.

Even the veranda (*koda*) of the house is divided between male and female on the basis of the consideration of general impurity of women. Although there are relaxations in some areas, the use of *nyillo koda* (male verandha) by a female during menstruation is strictly prohibited. Bago, a place in *pinte* area space is strictly restricted to girls after puberty. Such a restriction is noticed among the Adis and women, particularly during periods are strictly prohibited to *Rising* area of the house meant for male members. *Bango riisins/rising* is an area in Adi house, particularly at Riga where after-hunt-rituals are performed to appease the spirit of the hunted animal. This place is strictly tabooed for female members. In Apatani society, women of menstruating age are banned to enter *lapang*, a clan platform considered sacred and where the council is held and rituals performed. General attribution of impurity attached to women of menstruating age debars them from touching hunting weapons. Even it is tabooed to have sex before hunting expedition or war. In Miji community of Arunachal Pradesh a menstruating woman lives in isolation in *Byagne,* a house constructed outside the settlement area for the isolation of from the dwelling house. The woman stays there as long as she is bleeds (Rijiju 2006).

The notion of pollution of menstruating women or women of menstruating age is prevalent in our time. The burning example is the controversy over women's entry in Sabarimala temple situated in inside Periyar Tiger Reserve at Perinand Village, Pathanemthitta district of Kerala. The controversy is about the entry of women between 10-50 years of age, supposed to be menstruating age. Women of this age group are banned from entering the temple as a mark of respect to the deity Ayyappan who is a celibate. There are two important versions justifying the ban. One relates to celibacy nature of the deity, which is supposed to be damaged by the entry of women of menstruating age. The second one, which is strongly argued, is the concept of impurity associated with menstruating women. The underlying notion of impurity of women during menstruating age in both versions is an example of a characteristic feature in tribal mode of thought.

The notion of impurity explained in the context of patriarchy, and generalised as tribal mode of thought, suffers from over-generalisation fallacy. It is a fact that the construct tribe includes both matriarchal and patriarchal communities. Our example has at best a relative connotation, related to patriarchal tribe. However, the purpose of the argument is not to generalise a particular event as impure across the tribes, but to verify the general notion of impurity through tribe specific examples. Of course, there are practices like incest relationships, common to all tribes–both patriarchal and matriarchal–that have generality. Deviation from parallel cousin (child of father's

brother or mother's sister) or cross cousin (child of father's sister or mother's brother) norms in marriage is considered incestuous and is associated with the notion of 'pure blood'.[19]

Notion of segregation

In the modern life of restlessness, people seek shelter in some practices which belongs to tribal mode of thought. Angling sport of present-day is a foraging activity of bygone days of hunters and gatherers. More striking is the tribal practices followed in modern time when such practices are immediate options for survival/escape in the face of crisis. The burning example is COVID-19 (coronavirus disease of 2019) where social distancing, quarantine and lockdown have been emphasised as preventive measures against the pandemic in the absence of a vaccine or other curative methods corresponding to modern science and technology.

When an epidemic breaks out in a village, then the villagers do not move out of their house/village boundary. The entry of members of other villages is strictly prohibited, and warning, symbolic gates (for example *dapo/yugang* among Nyishis) are constructed at the entry points. Gates also indicate *arrw* (restriction of entry for five or more days).

Any member of an epidemic affected village is not allowed to enter in other villages as it is believed that he/she will cause the disease in unaffected villages. So is the case, when a family observes taboos relating to curative ritual. In the Northeast, the term 'genha' is popular across the tribes, though each tribe has its own term for such prohibitions or taboos (*doliarrw renam*, for example in Nyishi language) having the essence of isolation at the core. The practice of isolation restricts movement and thus contact between affected and non-affected persons.

Isolation as health care practice has its root in tribal mode of thought. Isolation concerning COVID-19 has an element of sanitisation. Buses, offices, etc. are sanitised to avoid contact with the virus. The tribal curative ritual performed by worshipping a deity or cleaning a scared place, in many parts of the country, has the notion of cleanliness which may resemble the practice of sanitisation in the modern health care system. Arguably, the practice of sanitisation, isolation, etc. is not a modern innovation; it has its root in tribal tradition also. Though the form and philosophy behind it have changed the essence is the same–the relation with curing diseases, particularly epidemic ones. Isolation concept is so related to epidemics in that the whole village shifts to new places to maintain distance from the old site.

Isolation strategy related to COVID-19 has another dimension–'work at home'. In fact, working away from home emerged with the emergence of the factory system of production. In tribal communities, the house/village space is the place of production and dwelling. The cloth is woven at home; the agricultural fields/hunting tracts are located within the village territorial boundary. But with factory system of production community-based residence and workplace differed; a new social order gradually evolved into globalisation. With the globalisation of material and ideological fronts, the evils associated with it also get globalised. Under such a situation, globalisation of some diseases requires confinement, isolation; rather than open space interaction for cure or

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[19] It was reported during field study in the Northeast that the community maintains the purity of blood by practising cross cousin marriages which will be diluted if the bride comes from outside the marriage sphere.

prevention. Work at home is an example contrary to the spirit of globalisation; it is just a return to traditional logic by way of work from home in the absence of a suitable alternative.

Movements and demands

Our contemporary time witnesses several movements such as separatist identify and rights movements which at the core underlie a sense of freedom from the prevailing situation. Feminism, to put it in a simple language, for example, is a protest against patriarchal dominance. Even in matriarchal communities like Khasi and Garo, male voice resounds against the system over the issue of property rights. Naxal or other movements of the sort claim a system of governance by replacing the 'state anarchy.' Several denotified and other communities claim Scheduled Tribe (ST) status; while some ST communities demand autonomy within the constitutional framework. In all these demands and movements, underlie a sense of freedom epitomised in the idea of autonomy.

In the framework of the nation-state project, whether the movements and means adopted are desirable or not is not the question here. What is crucial is that the movements display a sense of freedom, e.g. to manage the affairs in their ways, to escape a situation of dependency or to make a situation favourable. Evidently, at the core of these movements underlie the primordial sense of autonomy, inalienable in the tribal mode of thought.

Theoretical insight

The above discussion on empirical phenomena suggests a link between tribal and present (industrial/European) modes of thought. Evidence are many, even though not so important. In this context, it is to be mentioned that angling is a past-time in our society, including the European countries. This activity was a major means of livelihood pursuit in foraging mode of thought. How do we then explain the continuity of phenomena in different modes of thought?

Already we have suggested evolution of mind and copying capacity of the mind. We shall explain this following Ingold (2001). While forwarding his concept of 'education of attention' in place of transmission of cultural representations as a whole he provides some input which we can use fruitfully to understand why indices of tribal mode of thought and corresponding practices are found in our contemporary time.

Ingold (Ibid.) citing Sperber (1996) maintains that the 'brain is innately pre-equipped' with the 'requisite processing devices' that would have evolved 'in the *proper* domain in the solution of cognitive tasks faced by hunter-gatherers' (Ibid.: 118). In other words, the mind possesses innate genetic conditions, that adapts to changing environmental conditions, meaning 'changes in its pool of cultural representations' (Ibid.: 119). To put it in straightforward words, mind of the hunter-gatherer stage though evolves still possesses innate capabilities that adjust similar activities in the historical process of cultural representations. Therefore, he maintains that 'the evolved architecture of the human mind has remained essentially constant' (Ibid.).

He cites examples from Sperber (op. cit.) to substantiate to theoretical positions advanced in the context. He relates driving of a car or throwing a cricket ball to hunter-gatherer practices of moving around the terrain or throwing stone/spear, etc. in the hunting ground. He argues that in both the activities of our time, the underlying cognitive

operations relating motor skill are much the same (Ingold 2001: 119); only the environment differs. As a matter of fact, 'cognitive modules designed by natural selection for one purpose, have throughout history, been turned to account in other ways' (Ibid.: 118).

Arguably, when 'ways' or input conditions are similar or provide favourable ground for a particular activity, the cognitive structure of mind though evolves around genetic changes, recognise the activity, its modified forms in the historical process or expresses in a similar way adaptable to the situation. In other words, with continuity of input conditions, the practices and beliefs also continue.

The issue can be explained further with reference to orthodox Darwinian approach and 'developmental systems' approach. According to the former, 'the formal characters of the incipient organism are copied along with the DNA, in advance of its interaction with the environment, so that they can then 'interact' with the environment to produce the organism' (Ibid.: 122). This is "brought out' in the course of development within an environmental contest' (Ibid.: 123).

In the latter approach, the process of copying depends on organism's development in the context, and therefore evolution reflects' the derivational history of development systems' (Oyam 1989: 5; Ingold 2001: 122-123).

If characters of organisms are copied, then why not all the characters and the practices get transferred? In this context Mayr (1961: 1502) claims that 'the range of possible variation is itself included in the specifications of the code' of the genetic programme. This explains why history has produced one system (some characteristics of one mode of thought) rather than another.

Tribal mode of thought, as can be deduced with reference to Ingold (2001), happens to be a reflection of the cognitive structure and corresponding cultural representations in a phase of history. The cognitive structure remains essentially constant in the evolutionary process and thus explains the eaxistence of cultural representations of bygone days. It is useful to cite Ingold (2001) in this context,

> Learning to throw and catch, to climb, or to eat and drink… is a matter not of acquiring *from* an environment representations that satisfy the input conditions of preconstituted modules, but of the formation, *within* an environment, of the necessary neurological connections, along with attendant features of musculature and anatomy, that establish these various competencies (Ingold 2001: 130).

The explanation contains evolutionary logic in the context of society, and that the present human society has evolved from a tribal mode of thought. In this line of argument, it is crucial to note that the society that reflects the industrial mode of thought has been preceded by non-industrial mode, nothing more nothing less.

Conclusion

The paper has been premised over evolutional nature of mind, and its corresponding social stage with regard to survival ends. Mode of thought or the mind reflects through ideas which give direction to achieve survival ends of individual and the community in which he/she lives.

Thus mind defines a social stage corresponding to its working ideas. Previous literature and present field observation attribute ideas like we feeling, the notion of impurity, sharing ethics, segregation logic as prevention to epidemics and so on to

several heterogeneous groups of people in India who, as we have argued, are different from industrial mode of western thought and also from other groups within the same mode with regard to occupational practices, group consciousness and the like. We have argued that these groups who reflect a common mode of thought in several spheres and whose diverse activities are organised around it can be called a generic category under the label 'tribe'.

We also argued that the mind has the capacity to copying images of previous thoughts and actions. This logic explains the prevalence of some ideas and practices like a sense of belonging, the notion of impurity, etc. in our time which we assign to the tribal mode of thought.

In fine, it is in the fitness of things to assert that tribe is a mode of thought in opposition to the western mode that reflected in colonial mind during British Raj in India. Non-western mode, however, is not exclusively tribal mode, for other groups with marked differences in terms of social formation and occupational pursuits also fall in non-western mode. So, tribe as a mode of thought in India is conceptualised in opposite to western mode and as co-exists with other groups within non-western mode. In India, tribal mode is not diagonally opposite to the mode of thought of other groups like its binarity with Europeans in Canada, Africa, Australia, etc. It is a construct of binary opposite to western mode, but reflects tribe-caste and tribe-peasant continuum in India, and at the same time has an independent existence in its distinct mode of thought.

This is a preliminary enquiry. It is, therefore, in the fairness of things to argue that further investigation by widening the scope of empirical observations would be useful to strongly establish, modify or reject the hypothesis that tribe is a mode of thought.

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