

## **Quadrant III – Notes (Module wise)**

**Programme: Bachelor of Science (First Year)**

**Subject: Geography**

**Paper Code: GEC102**

**Paper Title: Social and Cultural Geography**

**Unit II: World Population**

**Module Name: Tribal Societies in India**

**Module No: 25**

**Name of the Presenter: Ms. Hema Umesh Sawant**

---

### **The Major Tribes in India**

Tribe, in anthropology, a notional form of human social organization based on a set of smaller groups (known as bands), having temporary or permanent political integration, and defined by traditions of common descent, language, culture, and ideology.

The term originated in ancient Rome, where the word *tribus* denoted a division within the state. It later came into use as a way to describe the cultures encountered through European exploration. By the mid-19th century, many anthropologists and other scholars were using the term, as well as band, chiefdom, and state, to denote particular stages in unilineal cultural evolution.

In its mysterious past it encompasses all the dim origins of life. Their lifestyle is completely different from the rest of the world. With an obscure

history they are still competing to get along with the modern trend. Their livelihood is mainly dependent on agriculture and handicrafts but the tribes of India still display a wide spectrum of “another India”. One cannot, however, get the complete picture about the whole tribe just by studying or getting close to one particular tribe as each one of them has its own respective culture – food, festival, dance, music, religion and language. Still to get a brief idea about Indian tribes, here is a comprehensive list of 20 tribes, picked from different corners of India.

### 1. Gonds Tribes



Source: [d0233dc006fa23471bef496b7a5740fc.Gond-Tribe.jpg](https://www.nitrocdn.com/d0233dc006fa23471bef496b7a5740fc/755x378)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

Known for their valor, the Gond tribes are mostly found in Central India in the Chhindwara district of Madhya Pradesh. They are also spotted in the Bastar district of Chhattisgarh, parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Orissa. So when one is on a tour in Madhya Pradesh, muttering and mulling over the titillating sculptures of Khajuraho and Sanchi Stupa respectively and wheeling from majestic palaces to whispering woods of Kanha and Bandhavgarh, steer towards the Gondi forest and

experience the unique lifestyle of the Gonds. The Gond tribes have a good command over Telugu, Hindi, Marathi, Parsi and many other Dravidian languages.

The rural colour with mud walls and thatched roof houses, earthen pots, traditional wears – men in dhoti and women in sari and ornaments, the festivals of Keslapur Jathra and Madai and ritual performances are the ones to experience. Kodo or Kutki, which is the staple food of the Gonds; moreover, they are mostly meat consumers.

## 2. Bhils Tribes



Source: [8dcc43a267c575f9870a2857a29e49cd.Bhil-tribes.jpg \(755x378\)](https://8dcc43a267c575f9870a2857a29e49cd.nitrocdn.com)  
([nitrocdn.com](https://nitrocdn.com))

On wheels for a trip to Rajasthan, moving from massive forts and palaces to Jain temples, then discovering the lifestyle of the Bhil tribes is an absolute contrast. This tribal community in India is mostly spotted in the Aravali Ranges of Sirohi in Udaipur and some places of Dungarpur and Banswara districts of Rajasthan. Further, the settlements of the Bhil tribes

are also found in parts of Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tripura. The cultural harmony – Ghoomar dance, then Gair (a religious dance and drama) are Baneshwar Fair that is held in the month of January or February are the major attractions. Whereas the Bhili language, which is an Indo – Aryan language, is one of the most interesting features to experience.

### 3. Santhal Tribes



Source: [1d2d946bed0ee277adbfd6f03d9301c4.santhals.jpg](http://1d2d946bed0ee277adbfd6f03d9301c4.santhals.jpg) (755x378)  
([nitrocdn.com](http://nitrocdn.com))

The Santhal tribes are the major tribes of West Bengal and are mostly seen in the districts of Bankura and Purulia. They are also widely seen in parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and Assam. The journey to the abode of Santhals heads from the cultural capital of India, Kolkata; route the terracotta temples of Bishnupur and Bolpur. The Santhals are largely dependent on agriculture and livestock; further, they are well versed in the art of hunting. The Santhali dance and music is one of the major attractions that can't miss when one is wheeling to Bankura and Purulia.

Moreover, festivals like Karam, Maghe, Baba Bonga, Sahrai, Ero, Asaria, Disum Sendra and Namah often fascinate travellers.

#### 4. Great Andamanese Tribes



Source: [838b9a57c95e194dbe4265046c929361.the-great-andamanese-tribe.jpg](http://838b9a57c95e194dbe4265046c929361.the-great-andamanese-tribe.jpg) (755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

Back in 2010 when Boa (one of the speakers of two Great Andamanese languages, Khora and Bo) died, the world lost two languages. So, before the extermination of these unique tribes, speaking Jeru and Sare, plan an ocean cruise to Andaman and explore the indigenous survival land. The Great Andamanese Tribe, which includes the Onge, Jarawa, Jangil and Sentinelese, are said to be the first inhabitants of the islands. But today a significant number is on its way to extinction. Nonetheless, the left-over population of the Great Andamanese are largely dependent on the vigorous campaign by Survival and Indian organizations. Well, it is hard to distinguish them by their appearance – complexion and dress, still one or another traveller who will end up capturing their lifestyle. The Great

Andamanese are mostly spotted in Strait Island and parts of Rutland Island.

## 5. Khasi Tribes



Source: [2e21b38e9fa6cd9056a110c45bd9df03.khasi-tribes.jpg](https://2e21b38e9fa6cd9056a110c45bd9df03.khasi-tribes.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

If one wish discovers the culture hidden in the mystical mountains of Meghalaya, the ethnical clamour of the Khasi tribes, who are filled with lots of music, playing musical instruments like drums, guitars, flutes, wooden pipes and metal cymbals, surely going to make one's tour to Meghalaya bright and striking. The Khasi tribes are mostly spotted in the Khasi Hills of Meghalaya and are also found in parts of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and West Bengal. Other than the language, which is an Austro-Asiatic language AND dress – Jainsem for women and Jymphong for men, the five days long extravaganza, the Nongkrem festival is a feast for travellers' eyes.

## 6. Garo Tribes



Source: [59c73b25a5db9deca965f9a8af41e193.garo.jpg](https://59c73b25a5db9deca965f9a8af41e193.garo.jpg) (755x378)  
([nitrocdn.com](https://nitrocdn.com))

One of the few remaining matrilineal societies in the world that are mostly spotted in the hills of Meghalaya, the Garo Tribes are ideally known for their vivid lifestyle. They are also spotted in the neighbouring areas of Bangladesh and parts of West Bengal, Assam and Nagaland. It is easy to distinguish the Garo tribes from other tribes of Meghalaya. Women are often found in varieties of traditional ornaments, whereas men are seen wearing turbans with feathers stuck behind them. The unique form of Garo architecture like Nokmong, Nokpante, Jamsireng and Jamadaal are some abstract captures in one's lense. Further, the Wangala festival of Asanang is something that can't miss.

## 7. Angami Tribes



Source: [83f13a0dc5ff2c0d2bae6c1de545e88.angami-naga.jpg](http://83f13a0dc5ff2c0d2bae6c1de545e88.angami-naga.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)



Source: [ddf932a46e1112a4d87576b010d8ecd1.angami-naga2.jpg](http://ddf932a46e1112a4d87576b010d8ecd1.angami-naga2.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

It's the famous Hornbill Festival of the Angami Naga tribes that pulls in travellers to the farthest corner of North East India, Nagaland. The Angami Nagas are one of the major tribes of Nagaland, widely present in the district of Kohima. Apart from the Hornbill Festival, the major attraction

remains their intricate and beautiful woodcraft and artwork. The Angami Nagas are known for the producer of bamboo work, cane furniture, beds, shawls and powerful machetes. What else to experience? The form of language, the Angami Language that is identified with different names such as Gnamei, Ngami, Tsoghami, and Monr, is another major feature to get hold off. Further, their dressing style – men in white Mhoushu and black Lohe and women in Mechala along with ornaments like Beads, miniature mask pendants, bangles and bracelets. Well, the hardcore carnivore travellers may try out some unique pork dishes from the Angami.

#### 8. Munda Tribes



Source: [99bc238d27eaabe9a93555f4e6b33b62.Munda-Tribe.jpg](https://99bc238d27eaabe9a93555f4e6b33b62.Munda-Tribe.jpg)  
(763x431) (nitrocdn.com)

The Nupur dance when one is in the abode of the Munda tribes. Their settlement is largely based in the Chota Nagpur Plateau region and is mostly spotted in the dense of Jharkhand. Further, parts of West

Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Odisha are also inhabited by the Munda Tribes. Amidst the vast eco sphere, these Munda tribes display a simple and basic lifestyle that follows the Sarna religion, believing in a God called Singbonga. Mage, Phagu, Karam and Sarhul are the major festivals of the Munda tribes that attract travellers from different parts of the world. Further, the Killi language is also another major feature to get hold off.

## 9. Bhutia Tribes



Source: [c1a294c31c403d7d5911d53851aa7501.bhutia.jpg](https://c1a294c31c403d7d5911d53851aa7501.bhutia.jpg) (755x378)  
([nitrocdn.com](https://nitrocdn.com))

Dominating the landlocked territory of Sikkim that is bordered by the Indian Himalaya, the Bhutias are widely known for their traditional grandeur, art and cuisine. One cannot forget the unique preparation of momo, steamed meat dumplings and thukpa, slurpy, burpy and yummy! Travel into the land of the Bhutias during the Losar and Loosong festival and experience the vivid culture – dance, music and religion. The hardcore carnivores can try out some spicy beef.

## 10. Chenchu Tribes



Source: [0f5738600e2c1feedcf245132e9ad139.chenchu-tribes.jpg](https://0f5738600e2c1feedcf245132e9ad139.chenchu-tribes.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

The Chenchu tribes are one of the indigenous people of Andhra Pradesh inhabiting over the years in the midst of the forest of Nallamala Hills. They are mostly seen in the districts of Mahboobnagar, Nalgonda, Prakasam, Guntur and Kurnool. Life is hard for them as they are largely dependent on hunting and trading jungle products like roots, tubers, fruits, beedi leaves, mahua flower, honey, gum, tamarind and green leaves. Well, other than the languages having Telegu accent, they are skilled in various form of arts and crafts. Further, the Chenchu tribes are extremely ritualistic. Their ritual performances of various gods and goddesses are the major attractions for travellers.

## 11. Kodava Tribes



Source: [ebf25f6cf1c24560c7910d6f0e89bc88.kodava-tribe.jpg](http://ebf25f6cf1c24560c7910d6f0e89bc88.kodava-tribe.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

Mysore – Madikeri Road from Mysore, one is slowly heading to the abode of one of the distinct races in India, the Kodava tribes, known for their bravery since ages. Coorg, flourishing as one of the eco – tourist destinations in India, attracts lot of weekenders from nearby cities of Karnataka and travellers from different parts of the country and world, but the harmony and ethnicity of the Kodava tribes is one of the major attractions for the explorers. Digging into the cultural diorama, the Kodava tribes are fond of music and dance. One can witness such hues during the festivals of Puttari, Kaveri Sankramana and Kailpodhu. Moreover, these people are also passionate about hockey with both men and women playing the game. One can seek such a playful panorama then be there during the Kodava Hockey Festival, which is held every year.

## 12. Toto Tribes



Source: [96799604fa4a5dd902b9d586920aade0.toto-tribes.jpg](https://96799604fa4a5dd902b9d586920aade0.toto-tribes.jpg)  
(755x197) (nitrocdn.com)

One of the isolated tribal groups inhabiting the village of Totopara in Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal is the Toto tribes. They have a simple lifestyle and are largely dependent on trading vegetables and fruits. In spite of the fact that they define themselves as Hindus, the Totos are believers of God Ishpa and goddess Cheima. If one is wheeling to Totopara during the peak winter season, then steer to Jaldapara National Park, which is one of the popular national parks in India that is located approximately 20 kilometers from Totopara. Eu, which is a type of country liquor made from fermented marua, rice powder and malt and is served warm in Poipa (wooden glass).

### 13. Irulas Tribes



Source: [a20a738bd2e2fcf2a86b4463d29c6893.irulas.jpg \(755x378\)](https://a20a738bd2e2fcf2a86b4463d29c6893.irulas.jpg)  
([nitrocdn.com](https://nitrocdn.com))

Expert snake and rat catchers, that's what make the Irula tribes of South India special. With a population of approximately 3,00,000 the Irulas inhabits parts of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala. Moreover, the Irulas are the second largest tribe in Kerala and is mostly seen in the district of Palakkad. So, one is on a holiday in Kerala to enjoy the sprawling hues of the Nilgiri Mountains and cruise down the sparkling backwaters of Alleppey, just for a day steer to Palakkad. The Irulas are largely dependent on agricultural products like paddy, raggi, dhal, plantains, chilies, and turmeric. Further, the major attraction remains their varied ritual performances. All though most of them are Hindus but they still believe in worshipping their own diety, Irulas are also known to be conversant in white and black magic.

## 14. Nyishi Tribes



Source: [718028b8cbb704f6f7e406eeaf59b62b.nyishi-tribes.jpg](https://718028b8cbb704f6f7e406eeaf59b62b.nyishi-tribes.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

The Nyishi tribes are the largest inhabitants of the mountainous state of Arunachal Pradesh and are mostly spotted in the districts of Papum Pare, Lower Subansiri, Kurung Kumey, East Kameng, parts of Upper Subansiri. Whilst a majority of them have converted to Christian, their religion still involves a belief in spirits associated with nature. The Nyokum Festival, which is dedicated to goddess Nyokum, held in the month of February, is a major attraction where one as a traveller can seek the interesting cultural heritage and ethnicity of the Nyishi tribes.

## 15. Bodo Tribes



Source: [b1eaeb5f1b840a936bcb060f9442baa2.bodo-tribe.jpg](http://b1eaeb5f1b840a936bcb060f9442baa2.bodo-tribe.jpg) (755x378)  
([nitrocdn.com](http://nitrocdn.com))

Believed to be the early settlers of Assam, the Bodo tribes today are found in Udalguri and Kokrajhar of Assam and parts of West Bengal and Nagaland. If one is keen to seek the traditional colours of the Bodo people, then travel to North East during the time of the Baishagu Festival, dedicated to Lord Shiva (locally known as Bathou), which is celebrated during the spring season every year. Further, the Bodo tribes are meat – eating people. Weaving is one of the most intrinsic part of Bodo culture and hence one can buy some handloom products.

## 16. Warli Tribes



Source: [a6418e63008e46af53b15157303da543.warli-tribes.jpg](http://a6418e63008e46af53b15157303da543.warli-tribes.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

The Warli or Varli tribes of Maharashtra and Gujarat display a unique form of art and painting that reflects the mural paintings of 500 – 10,000 BC carved in the Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka in Madhya Pradesh. Their form of art follows the rudimentary technique with mixture of earth and cow dung, branches, red ochre, rice paste, bamboo stick and more. If one wants to seek such grandeur then visit during the Warli Folk Art Dancing People Festival, which is held during the month of March every year. The Tarpa Dance, which is a folk dance performed during the harvest seasons.

## 17. Toda Tribes



Source: [ef559af8d6c396bef82de466e9ce0e81.toda.jpg](http://ef559af8d6c396bef82de466e9ce0e81.toda.jpg) (755x378)  
([nitrocdn.com](http://nitrocdn.com))

Dominating parts of the Nilgiri Mountains, the Toda tribes are largely dependent on cattle-herding and dairy-work. They are also skilled in art and architectural works like embroidery products and dogles, type of oval and pent – shaped huts made of bamboo canes and thatched roof. If one is travelling to Ooty, which is one of the popular hill stations in South India, he or she will come across several such Toda huts as well as people inhabiting the area.

## 18. Kurumban Tribes



Source: [5a7fcf53d79b99b21f4d8b8a4e4201c3.kurumban-tribes.jpg](https://nitrocdn.com/5a7fcf53d79b99b21f4d8b8a4e4201c3/kurumban-tribes.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

Another major tribe dominating parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the Kurumban tribe exhibits a simple lifestyle, depending largely on agricultural products. Moreover, they are widely known for witch-craft and magical performances as well as traditional herbal medicines.

## 19. Soliga Tribes



Source: [780e38d5d45219033ac325804bacf49c.soliga-tribes.jpg](https://nitrocdn.com/780e38d5d45219033ac325804bacf49c/soliga-tribes.jpg)  
(755x378) (nitrocdn.com)

Inhabiting the dense forest of BR Hills of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, the Soliga tribes are yet another indigenous group of people, further divided to five sub groups – Male Soliga, Urali Soliga, Pujari, Kadu and Burude. Even one's heels towards Bandipur National Park, one may chance upon the Kadu Soliga tribes and hence can experience little bit of their lifestyle.

## 20. Siddis Tribes



Source: [1487bc631d6e4c8d3790305c2d146966.siddis.jpg](http://1487bc631d6e4c8d3790305c2d146966.siddis.jpg) (755x378)  
([nitrocdn.com](http://nitrocdn.com))

The Siddi tribes of Karnataka are believed to have descended from the Bantu people of Southeast Africa who were treated as slaves by Portuguese merchants. Today, the Siddi people are predominantly found around Yellapur, Haliyal, Ankola, Joida, Mundgod, Sirsi, Belgaum and Dharwad in Karnataka apart from some pockets of Pakistan. The Siddi people are mostly Roman Catholic but some follow Hinduism and Islam. Other than mulling over their historical facts, the major attraction remains the ritual practices, dance and music.