UNIT 1 WOMEN, TRIBE AND REGION

Grace Don Nemching

Structure
1.1 Introduction
1.2 Objectives
1.3 What is Tribe: A Background
1.4 Women, Tribe and Society
1.5 Role of Women in Tribal Economy
1.6 Social and Religious Status of Tribal Women
   1.6.1 Marriage and Property Inheritance
   1.6.2 Practice of Bride Price
1.7 Role of Tribal Women in the Political Structure
1.8 Let Us Sum Up
1.9 References
1.10 Suggested Readings

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In India, the tribal population is concentrated predominantly in the North-East, the Himalayan region, parts of Central and Western India and in Andaman, Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands. Tribal communities are considered to be matriarchal and the woman occupies a central place in the social structure of the tribal society. With the onset of modernization and formation of the so called mainstream civilized society, it has adopted some of the features of the caste based society and an integral part of the Indian society.

1.2 OBJECTIVES

After going through the unit, you will be able to:

- Define tribe and discuss women’s position in the context of tribe;
- Comprehend customary practices associated with tribal women in specific contexts; and
- Analyze the economic situation of tribal women in a changing context.

1.3 WHAT IS TRIBE: A BACKGROUND

The idea of ‘indigenous people’ is an issue of considerable debate in India today. Social workers, administrators, politicians and even scholars widely used the term ‘indigenous’ to refer to the ethnic and cultural communities.
Indigenous can be interpreted in different perspectives; in a normative sense, it covers people who feel rooted in their surroundings, enjoy a custodial sense of their territory and resources, and are bound together through the notion of reciprocity and egalitarian ethos (Sengupta, 2012). The term indigenous is extended further to signify the tribal and folk communities. Sociologists like G.S. Ghurye (1963) had some reservation regarding the use of such terms; the expression he used was ‘so called aborigines’. This was obvious from the use of criteria that were adopted. These ranged from such features as geographical isolation, simple technology and primitive conditions of living, the practice of animism and tribal language (Xaxa, 2007).

Tribes are primarily seen as a stage and type of society. In administrative term, Article 342 of the Indian Constitution relates to a special provision in respect of ‘Scheduled Tribes’ which are defined as the “tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribal communities which the President of India may specify by public notification”. Let us look at the composition of tribal population in India. According to 2011 Census of India, Madhya Pradesh has the largest of tribal population (15,316,784), followed by states like Maharashtra, Odisha, Gujarat and North-eastern regions.

### Table 1.1: State Wise Scheduled Tribe Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>State /Union Territory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jammu and Kashmir</td>
<td>1,493,299</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Uttarakhand</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>NCT of Delhi</td>
<td>NST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>9,238,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
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<td>Bihar</td>
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<td>Sikkim</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Nagaland</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>1,036,115</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>1,166,813</td>
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<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Assam</td>
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<td>West Bengal</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Jharkhand</td>
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<td>Odisha</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>Chattisgarh</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>15,316,784</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Dadar and Nagar Haveli</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>Karnataka</td>
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<td>Goa</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>Lakshadweep</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>Puducherry</td>
<td>NST</td>
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<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Daman and Diu</td>
<td>28,530</td>
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<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Andaman and Nicobar Islands</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>INDIA Total Scheduled Tribe Population, 2011</td>
<td>104,281,034</td>
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Source: [http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201306061001146927823STProfileataGlance.pdf](http://tribal.nic.in/WriteReadData/CMS/Documents/201306061001146927823STProfileataGlance.pdf)

### 1.4 WOMEN, TRIBE AND SOCIETY

One of the ways to analyze the status of tribal women in a society is to ascertain it in terms of their mode of descent, inheritance and succession, authority and residence, within the broad structural framework of patriliny and matriliny. The tribal women, as women in all social groups, are less literate than men, and the low educational status is reflected in their lower literacy rate, lower enrolment rate and their presence in school (Bhasin, 2007). In the second block of this course you have seen how family has described in its various forms, now we will learn about the kinship structure that is a significant feature of the tribal society. Most of the tribes in India are Patrinymic (denoting or relating to a name derived from the name of
Tribe

father or male ancestor), patrilineal and patrilocal in nature, (you have already read in the second block: ‘Family’ of this course as forms of family) and share the features of a caste-based society. In the context of patrilineal structure, members trace their descent through a male, normally to an original male ancestor. The property is inherited in the male line and it is always a son who succeeds his father as the head of a clan or a lineage. In patrilocal family, the wife is expected to reside/stay at the natal home of her husband and adjust to their demands and norms.

In contrast, the Khasis, Garo and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya represent a matrinymic, matrilineal, matriarchal and matrilocal kind of kinship structure. In this case, the descent is traced through a female line, succession and inheritance of property descend in the mother’s line. The residence in most of the cases is matrilocal in nature. In these societies, the household property is inherited from mother to daughter, however the management of property is always vested in the hands of a male. Therefore, the women’s power is limited to their ownership and the management of property and decision making in the production process are controlled by the men folk. In the Karbi society of Assam, women do not inherit property and after marriage the bride goes to live with her husband. There are other restrictions too; women cannot be members of the village council and in certain socio-religious occasions women’s participation is considered to be a taboo. But they are allowed to possess personal property like ornaments. The men folk in no circumstance can dispose off the property of the women folk without the latter’s permission.

The Abujh Maria tribe or Hill Maria is one of the most prominent tribe in Bastar. Among the Abujh Maria, clans (katta) are unilinear descent groups. Each clan has a clan god (pen) whom they worship. Under a clan god, members of different clans are tied by bhaiband relations. All the members of a clan (katta) are called bhaiband or dadabhai (brothers-clan). Marital alliance within the same clan is prohibited, and they practice clan exogamy. They are permitted to settle marriage only with a member of the wife’s clan, called akomama. They are patrilocal and prefer cross-cousin marriage. Monogamy is widely practiced. Marriage by negotiation (pendul) is a matter of norm and marriage rituals are performed by their elders in the community. The Bonda tribe of Odisha is patrilineal in nature, but women’s voice is highly respected due to their economic importance in the society.

Among the Girahya tribals of South Rajasthan, women do not inherit any property. The jewellery of women also belong to their husband and cannot be passed on from mother to daughter. Like women of upper caste, Girahya women observe the practice of ‘laaj kadna’ (veiling the face) from the elder male relatives of their husband. Husbands exercise control over their
wives with the practice of bringing co-wives. Polygamy practice and patriarchy see women and children essential as labourers on agricultural field. Among the Paliyans, a Hill -Tribe of the Palni Hills in South India, women are subjugated under patriarchy and lead a miserable life.

The Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh have their own way of inheritance which is quite different from the Hindu Succession Act. There are two ways of inheritance- Mundaband and Chundaband. Munda means boy. In the Mundaband system, if a father has one wife the property is distributed in equal shares among the male children. As per the Chundaband system, if a father leaves behind more than one wife, the property is equally distributed between the wives. In case there is no male child in the family, the widow is entitled to property for her entire life. Right of inheritance of property is not given to the daughters of the family (Mukhopadhyay, 2002).

Oraon tribe exhibits features of caste society and inheritance of property is from father to son. A girl is entitled for her maintenance from her natal home till she gets married. A widow is entitled to maintenance if she lives in her husband’s family. The Bhil society is also male-dominated. The birth of a male child is cause for big celebration. The purdah (veil) system is prevalent among the Bhils. The social status of Bhil women is determined by her status as a mother. Her position is intermittently linked with the idea of reproductive labour or her status as mother. The customary practices discussed above relate to the institution of marriage and inheritance of property which demarcates the social existence of tribal women in the society.

1.5 ROLE OF WOMEN IN TRIBAL ECONOMY

Economic role is associated with the status of tribal women as they are primarily seen as economic units. Analysis of the economic role helps us to understand not only the extent of women’s participation in tribal economy but also the nature of work they are engaged in.

In the traditional societies which lack market system, the business of everyday living is usually carried on the basis of gender division of labour. Among Gaddis and Bhutias, the men are shepherds and women grow crops for food. It is equally valid for Bhils and Bodhs, there too, men are out on different duties and women grow crops for food. However the boundaries are not so clearly marked, as there is overlapping and deviations from the rule. There are also cases where the rule is inflexible and times when change is possible. The major portion of agriculture is done by women who do weeding, hoeing, planting, harvesting and threshing except ploughing (which is done by men) in the fields adjacent to houses or far off fields. The other activities of
women include looking after the house, children and cattle. Food processing and cooking are the women’s job. It is the women who with the assistance of children are largely responsible for the management of cattle and collection of water, fuel and fodder (Bhasin, 2007).

The young and grown-up men of tribe like the Birhors of Bihar, Kukis and Konyaks of Assam, Juangs of Odisha, Chenchus of Andhra Pradesh, Kadors and the Kurumbas, Mala Pantarms of Kerala go for hunting, fishing, honey collection while the women keep themselves engaged in collecting roots, fruits, firewood, etc. Among the hill cultivators like the Malers, males cut and prepare the Kurwa land (land for shifting cultivation). The males of agricultural tribes like the Munda, Oraon, and Gond plough and prepare the field while male in the pastoral communities like Todas milk the buffaloes and maintain the sacred dairy (Vidyarti and Rai, 1976).

The tribal women in general go out to collect roots, fruits and firewood. The women of hill and simple cultivators help in sowing, weeding and harvesting operations. Tribal women generally do not work with men in preparing the field or in ploughing. Old women of Bagotas of Vishakapatnam are however, an exception to this. Both young and old, irrespective of their sex, take part in weeding the field (Vidyarti and Rai, 1976).

In Bastar area of Madhya Pradesh, the practice of hunting and gathering was once a very important economic activity for the tribal communities. In this economy, women have worked alongside with men, from clearing jungles, to planting and finally harvesting. Along with their economic participation, their engagement with domestic chores amounts to increasing work burden. In the region, rice is the principal crop and women help in planting and harvesting and also contribute towards other major activities such as carrying paddy from the field to home. Their economic participation has been reduced in the settled agriculture. The hazardous tasks as well as those requiring physical strength have been assigned to men, and work which needs sustained effort and endurance has been assigned to women. This division is strengthened by taboos and beliefs. In India, the tribes are at different levels of economic development and in each, women have a significant role. In the Birhor community in Bihar, hunting is primarily led by men and collection of fruits, edible roots and tubers is assigned as women’s work. In the changing economy, the women of Birhor community play an important role in rope making to earn subsistence living for the family.

Among the tribal communities like Munda, Oraon, Santhal and the Gond, there is equal participation of women and men in the cultivation process. Women are exclusively responsible for transplanting and harvesting besides
weeding, reaping, husking and winnowing, while men do ploughing, leveling, irrigation and guarding the standing crops. In spite of their intensive participation in agriculture, tribal women suffer from certain forms of social disabilities. For instance, ploughing the field and thatching the roof are taboo for women. There are superstitions like touching plough by women can bring illness to humans and livestock or the village might face natural disaster. These are different ways and means to marginalize women folk from various productive resources. Among the sheep-rearing community of Gaddi, Himachal Pradesh, a woman’s job is to wash the sheared wool and spin while among the tribes like Khasa of Jaunsar-Bawar and Bhotia of Central Himalayas, women are engaged in hard labour. In Kinnaur, women assist men in horticulture. In contrast, in the matrilineal tribes like the Khasis, women are engaged in trade activities. They sell fish, stitch clothes in the market, and have recently become engaged in supplying tea and snacks in the offices.

The above description provides a brief picture about the economic role of women in the tribal economy. Tribal women traditionally had an important role to play in the economy, but their labour remained invisible and unmeasured in the economic analysis. This simply shows that their status was never equal to that of men in spite of the fact that they participated equally with men in the economy. For the reason of patriarchy, the expansion of mines and growth of industries in tribal areas, tribal women are brought into wage labour due to their social subjugation and cheap labour.

A Karbi woman earns her own income by selling fowls and other livestock. Rearing of Endi—a kind of silk worm is done by women in Karbi society to produce Endi Chaddar (scarves). Selling of Endi cocoons and scarves has emerged as an alternative livelihood for women in the Karbi society which enables them to enjoy autonomy over the income. Gaddi and Bhil women also work as labourers; Gaddis in the houses of landlords in Kangra and Bhils at construction sites or as field or forest labour. Bhutia and Bodh women take up small business, run shops or work as porters, as and when need arises apart from performing their household duties. Role of women is not only of importance in economic activities, but her role in non-economic activities is equally important (Bhasin, 2007).

In this section you studied the status of women in the traditional social structure and role of women in the tribal economy. Now, you should be able to answer some questions relating to this section given in Check Your Progress.
Check Your Progress:

Define the role of women in the tribal economy.

1.6 SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS STATUS OF TRIBAL WOMEN

With regard to the social sphere, it is believed that the tribal woman enjoys considerable freedom of movement and choice compared to the women in non-tribal communities. They enjoy freedom in matters relating to occupational mobility, marriage and divorce. The birth of a daughter in a tribal society is not considered to be a curse except in some patrilineal tribes like Khasa, where the arrival of a male child is considered to be a boon.

The role of tribal women in non-economic activities is equally important. Formation and continuity of family hearth and home is the domain of the women. Among Gaddis, as men are out for pastoral duties, the socialization of children automatically becomes mother’s duty, in the early years of life at least. Within the Gaddi family, some important decisions fall to the sphere of women’s intervention. The role of women in childbirth, funerals, fairs and festivals is an important part of village life. In the tribal areas, women are carriers of traditional information in the absence of written records. They are crucial actors in the preservation and dissemination of such knowledge. They are not only competent food producers and house
makers but are also the transmitters of rich local oral traditions (Bhasin, 2007).

1.6.1 Marriage and Property Inheritance

Different forms of marriage practices are prevalent in tribal societies. There are marriages by exchange, capture, purchase, service and probation which reflect the importance of men and women in choosing their life partners. Among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh, a woman has little say in the selection of marriage partner; on the other hand, Angami Naga women enjoy considerable freedom in selecting their spouses. The opinion and choice of Mizo woman holds significance in the selection of her life partner, whereas among the Bhil or Baiga tribes the practice of women’s choice over marriage partner is followed just in principle. According to K. Mann, the freedom enjoyed by the Bhil woman in the domain of marriage and divorce is limited due to the sanskritisation process (Xaxa, 2007). The woman may choose her partner but the bride-price determines the decision-making in the marriage. Even in case of the matrilineal Khasis, it is the maternal uncle who is regarded as the authority and influences the decision-making process in the marriage. Thus, even though a tribal woman exercises some amount of choice in choosing her spouse, the power of decision making primarily rests with the menfolk of the community. The incident reported in Birbhum district of West Bengal, where a tribal girl was raped illustrates women’s lack of choice in finding their own partners and the risk of brutal punishment at the hands of the community. Divorce or separation is a social indicator that reflects the powerlessness among the women in the tribal communities.

Among the Maria Gond tribe of Bastar, the consent of the girl is considered to be essential in marriage. There is a social practice, i.e., if a girl decides about her marriage and pours turmeric powder over a man, it is considered to be a socially valid marriage. Similarly, women in the Gond tribe are free to divorce their husbands in case of ill-treatment, abuse and other forms of violence. Widow re-marriage is permitted and women are permitted to marry their deceased husband’s younger brother. Among the Paliyans, a hill tribe of the Palni Hills in South India, the girl is free to choose her spouse and there is no custom of bride-price practiced. Among the Gaddis of Himachal Pradesh, there is no choice in the selection of spouse either for the boy or the girl. The Gaddis practice polygamy in case the wife is unable to bear a child.

With regard to property right, it is imperative to study the tribal women’s access to resources and land with the help of empirical studies and anthropological narratives. Gender stereotypes exist in the tribal societies which view women as not equal to the men. In the Naga community for
instance, the Naga customary law denies property rights to women. On the
death of the father with no heirs, the property and land are inherited by
the male kin. Divorced women have no maintenance rights and no women
can claim right over the ancestral property (Dzuvichu, 2012). Patriarchal
ideology is embedded in certain social practices and marginalizes tribal
women in other areas of life. With the change in the household economy,
the gender structure is slowly changing in the Naga society. Integration of
household economy in the market has improved the economic situation of
Naga women. As a result, women have been able to create self-acquired
property in which daughters are claiming their shares. The change in the
household economy has parallel impact on the social practices. Tribes in
Tripura follow male inheritance practice. If a man dies without a child, the
nearest male kinsman inherits his land. Girls cannot inherit paternal property,
however, the father can give property in the name of his daughter as a form
of gift.

Among the Jamatia, sons inherit property but the eldest often gets a
preferential share. Daughters inherit equal shares of the father’s property
in the absence of brothers. The widow enjoys her access to her husband’s
property but does not inherit it. Sons inherit their father’s property but the
eldest son receives the maximum share in the property. If the father is
without a male child, his property goes to the nearest male relative. In
order to bypass the rule, often the father makes a gift of his property to
his daughter during his lifetime, leaving a small portion to the male kith
and kin. Among the patrilineal Khakloo, Tipra, Noatia, Jamatia, Uching,
Riang and Halam tribes the couple who are without any child sometimes
adopt a boy within their kinship network.

1.6.2 Practice of Bride Price

Bride price and dowry are terms that refer to payments made at the time
of marriage in many cultures, primarily in Asia and Africa. Bride price is
typically paid by the groom or the groom’s family to the bride’s family.
Dowry is typically paid by the bride’s family to the bride or to the wedded
couple. Thus, bride price and dowry are not necessarily the converse of
each other. However, in the twentieth century, dowry payments in South
Asia have increasingly been demanded by and paid to the groom’s family
(and not just to the bride or the wedded couple). This suggests a usage of
the term dowry to mean a groom price, the reverse of a bride price. Bride
price and dowry need not be mutually exclusive, and marriage transfers in
both directions can occur simultaneously. A complex set of norms may then
govern the nature and the magnitude of payments in either direction.
(Maitra, 2007)

The payment of bride price can take several forms. Bride price or bride
wealth is typically a transfer in the form of livestock, goods, or money from
the groom (or his family) to the bride’s kinsmen. Bride service refers to a transfer in the form of labour or other services rendered by the groom to the bride’s family. Both these forms of payment can be substantial in magnitude. In contrast, a token bride price is usually a small symbolic payment made by the groom’s family to the bride’s family. The bride price may consist of moveable property such as money, ornaments, clothing, household goods or cattle. In some cases land is also provided as a part of the payment. The norms associated with bride price can be complex and vary largely across societies. These norms govern issues such as when the marriage payment is to be made and to whom, to what use the marriage payment may be put, and who inherits the payment in case of death or dissolution of the marriage. In some regions of South India, for example, a bride price is paid by the groom’s parents to the bride’s but then must be spent on the bride’s dowry. The payment may subsequently be claimed by the bride’s family, but only upon the death of the bride (Maitra, 2007).

Gifts from the husband’s kin to the wife’s or to the bride’s kin are called the bride-wealth. In the tribal societies of different parts of the world bride-price is practiced. However, the nature of gifts, in cash or kind vary according to tribe. For example, among the Nuer of America, as reported by Evans-Pritchard, the bride-wealth includes forty heads of cattle, which are distributed among the different kin groups of the bride. Among the Ollar-Gadba of Koraput, the bride price includes at least 10-20 monos of rice, one cow with or without a calf, one bullock and one goat or sheep, one kawdi of pendum (local drink), one sari (Gondei) and rupee in cash. These articles are brought by the groom in the form of bride-price and are handed over to the Naiko (the village political head) of the bride’s village. The pendum (local drink), goat, rice etc. are meant for the feast which is thrown to the villagers or to the kins of the bride’s village, while the other articles are give to the bride’s mother (Jha, 1994).

Among the Karbi community bride-price is also given. When a boy decides to marry a girl, he has to send his father or a close relative to the girl’s house for making a formal demand along with a golden ring and a gourd of rice beer. Among the Bonda of Odisha, the bridegroom’s family offers a cow, a bullock and about 20-30 kg of cereals as bride-price in the case of arranged marriage and in case of capture marriage, the amount goes up. Among the Girasia tribe of Sirohi, south Rajasthan, women of ‘higher’ status Girahya ‘jaths’ (exogamous groups) command higher bride price. The fixation of bride price varies in relation to the types of marriage and the social status of the bride.

The myth of gender equality or higher status of women in tribal societies has been critically viewed through an examination of customary laws in respect to property, marriage, and inheritance. It has been shown that
women in tribal societies are at a disadvantageous position compared to the men in their societies. It is interesting to note that the very practice that is indicative of higher social status for women is simultaneously oppressing for women in their everyday life situation. Bride-price prevails among the various communities in northeast India where the bridegroom has to pay certain amount of money to the girl’s parents. This custom of bride-price which is practiced among the tribes is based on the recognition of the importance of women’s role in the economic sphere. It is the ‘reflection of the fact that women are a productive worker in the economy of the tribe’ (Nembiakkim, 2008). Though bride price was paid to compensate the girl’s family for their loss of an ‘economically active member’, it has provided man with the ‘justification to treat his wife as a disposable commodity’ (Nongbri, 1998). The payment of bride price did not protect women against exploitation within the family (Krishna, 2005) rather it creates limitation on women’s right to initiate divorce as it ‘entails the obligation to return the bride price to the husband. So women prefer to suffer in silence even if she is ill-treated rather than take recourse to divorce’ (Nongbri, 1998).

Answer some questions relating to this section in Check Your Progress.

**Check Your Progress:**

*What do you understand by bride price? Explain it with the help of an example.*
1.7 ROLE OF TRIBAL WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The political life of tribal women is not different from their social life. The political structure of the tribes comprises of elders, village headman, village panchayat and the tribal chief. The entire structure is headed by the males who dominate the decision-making process. Among the Aos of Nagaland, the village affairs are entirely run by the council of elders which is an exclusively male dominated affair. Among the Padam Minyong of Arunachal Pradesh, women are prohibited to exercise any power in the political life of the tribal society. Among the matrilineal Khasis and Garos of Meghalaya, the chiefs (political headmen) are always the males. Among Kissans of Odisha, Irulas of Tamil Nadu and Bhils of Rajasthan (all patrilineal societies), women don’t take a prominent part in the political discussions and are denied the membership to the traditional village panchayat. The key positions in the council are held by the male members.

The case of Naga women is interesting to read in this connection. In the year 2006, the Naga Municipal Act was passed, ensuring 33 per cent reservation for women in municipalities and councils. With resistance from the male councillors, this Act has not yet been passed in the state. According to Rosemary Dzuvichu (2012), the concept of gender budgeting is accepted as a matter of policy decision, but has not been translated into reality for women at the grass-roots. In Nagaland, there is absence of women from the decision-making bodies. Putu mendem, the village council of Ao tribe excludes women in the decision-making level; as a result women are not included in the development programmes and disbursement of development funds and simply relegated to their reproductive roles like making tea at the Village Development Board (VDB) meetings (Dzuvichu, 2012). The heads of the tribe, paragana, village, clan, family are all males who take important decisions in all political, economic, social and religious matters. Though the traditional political system was the male’s sphere of activity, they helped in solving tribal women’s problem to certain extent, even if the problems were mainly social. The tribal women of Bastar did not have any political rights in the traditional political system, but at least their problems were heard and attempts used to be made towards their solution.

1.8 LET US SUM UP

Most of the tribes in India are patrinymic, patrilineal, patriarchal and patrilocal, which means that descent, inheritance and succession are through a male ancestor. Tribal women in the traditional political structure did not have important positions and their power was almost negligible. In social matters, it is believed that the tribal woman enjoys considerable freedom
of movement and choice compared to her non-tribal counterpart. Besides
this, by and large she also has freedom in matters relating to occupational
mobility, marriage and divorce. There is hardly any stigma with regard to
divorce or remarriage of a divorcee or a widow and these are permissible.
However, in recent times with land alienation, land dispossession and pressure
on land due to increased population, tribals have been looking for alternative
jobs. Dispossession of the tribal lands also rendered women’s subordination
to others as agricultural labourers which was accompanied by the loss of
her independence in the process of participation in agriculture.

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1.10 SUGGESTED READINGS
