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Changes in Tribal Culture in India

Jyotirmoyee Sarma

The Indian population is divided into people speaking many languages, and practising many religions. There are also many physical racial stocks, and many groups have been completely amalgamated. The people known as Hindu are divided into many castes. There is no uniformity in the number or the nature of castes from one area of India to another. "Caste" provides several ways of social mobility, and many of those outside of the Hindu social order entered the system through the bottom levels, and moved their way upwards.

Historians say that the Hindus are the descendants of the Aryan speaking people who came from the Mediterranean regions and the near-eastern regions of Asia several thousand years ago and settled in India. They may have come in conflict with the residents already living in the land. When the latter were overpowered, they drew themselves more and more into the forests, hills, and the more inaccessible areas. Scholars now agree that many of the indigenous people were amalgamated with the new settlers and became absorbed into the caste system of the latter.

Those who are the descendants of the indigenous dwellers of India and still adhere to their ancestral culture, and are described as "Adivasi" or original settlers, are called "tribes." Theoretically, a tribe is an extended kinship group, members of which share a homogeneous culture, speak a common language, have the same religious faith, and transact among themselves for their economic necessities. They occupy a common territory which is theirs by usage. Some tribes have been known to change the territory of their habitation without changing their identity.