



## Political Structures of Bodh Tribe and their Participation in Political Institutions in Himachal Pradesh

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**ABSTRACT:** The objective of the present study was to analyse the political participation Bodh tribe and its impact on their standard of living in Himachal Pradesh. A pretested questionnaire was used to study the perception and participation of tribal people in Himachal Pradesh. The results revealed that 86.66 percent respondents in Lahaul region and 75.33 percent respondents in Spiti region accept that if they do not get satisfaction and justice in biradari panchayat or in statutory panchayat then they have no shame or hesitation to go to the court and get justice. 80.67 percent respondents of Lahaul region and 68 percent of respondents of Spiti region are not in favour of continuation of Biradari panchayat. Only 10.67 percent respondents in Lahaul region and 16 percent in Spiti did not use their vote. Major changes in the social structures and the adoption of the political institutions are bound to effect the traditional processes which led to the emergence of modern political leadership among tribal's as well.

**Keywords:** Politics, tribal people, perception, leadership, change

### INTRODUCTION

The concept of a tribe has undergone a change from that of a political unit of olden days to a group of people identified with poverty and backwardness. Centuries old exploitation and oppression has resulted in a complete loss of their nerves. It is difficult to reconcile their glorious past with the present state of misery (Verma, 1990). A tribe generally resides within a larger political unit called state but do not possess political autonomy. In other words, the tribe as a political unit usually acts to maintain internal cohesion and territorial integrity. As tribe often live within more highly developed state unit, they do not always enjoys political autonomy. In general, however, they follow customary or tribal law rather than state law (Anonymous, 1970).

From 242-240 BC, the *Tribal Assembly* (comitia tributa) in the *Roman Republic* was organized in 35 tribes (4 Urban Tribes and 31 Rural Tribes). The Latin word as used in the Bible translates as Greek *phyle* "race tribes clan" and ultimately the Hebrew. In the historical sense, "tribe", "race" or "clan" can be used interchangeably. The English word tribe occurs in 13<sup>th</sup> century *Middle English* literature as referring to one of the *Twelve Tribes of Israel*. The World is from old French tribu, in turn from Latin tribus, referring to the original tripartite ethnic division of *Roman state*: Tities (Titienses), Ramnes (Ramnenses) and Luceres corresponding, according to Varro, to the *Latin*, *Sabines* and *Etruscans* respectively. The Romanes were named after *Romulus* leader of the Latin, Tities after *Tatius*, leader of the Sabines, and Luceres after Lucumo, leader of an Etruscan army that had assisted the Latins. According to Livy, the three tribe were in fact squadrons of knights, rather than ethnic division (<http://en.Wikipedia.Org/wiki/tribe>).

Tribal are called variously in different countries. For instance in the United states of America they are known as 'Red Indian' in Australia as 'Aborigines' in the European countries as 'Gypsies' in the African and Asian countries as ' Tribals (Verma, 2002). In the ancient literature of India their names, in the ancient language the Sanskrit, would appear to have been respectively (i) Nishadas, Sarbaras, Bhils and Kollas, (ii) Kirats and (iii) Dasas,

Dasyus, Sudras, Dramidas and Dravidas. The ancient and epic literatures, the Vedas the Puranas, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, present good accounts about the peopling of India All these emphasize that India is inhabited by several types of tribes or people (Vidayarthi and Ray 1985).

When the Aryan immigrants entered the country they found in the land non Aryan people and called them 'Dasyus'. The word dasyus was to denote the people other than themselves i.e. the Aryans. The Rigveda teems with different names of the people which denotes the mixed population of India. The Dasyus of vedic antiquity. The non-Aryans, are mainly of two stocks viz. the kolarians and the Dravidians. The names of a number of Dasyu warriors and their Aryan opponents have been preserved in the Rig- Veda. The ancient Sanskrit works suggest that the mundas and other cognate tribes occupied northern India before the forfather of Aryan Hindus entered the country. In the Aitareya-Brahmana and in a few Puranas, like the Bhagawt Purana, the Brahma Vaivarta Purana, Parasara Sanhita, most of Dasyu tribes are the descendents of the cursed younger son of Viswamitra Muni (Idayarthi and Ray 1985).

The Ramayana also tells us some tribal people. It endorses that there were only two group of people-the Aryan and non Aryans. Among the non Aryans the important tribes were the Rakshasas and the Vanaras, both being the aboriginal tribes of the Deccan. The other tribes were the Nishadas, the Gardhraj, the Sabaras, the Yaksas and the Nagas. The Rakshas as are regarded by Vyas as the earliest inhabitants of southern India and Sri Lanka. Racially they were perhaps identical with the Dasyus of the Rig-Veda. It is also believed that the Dravidian tribes of the Deccan descended from them. The Vanaras are also regarded as the non- Aryan hill tribes of southern India. Their chiefs were Bali and Sugriva. The number of Ram's army was the people, the Vanaras, that are generally seen in the forests of India. The Nishadas chief Guha, helped Ram to cross Ganga. The Gridhas or the Suparnas were some of the Indian nomadic tribes of the Ramayana age who were called after the names of birds on account of their migratory habit. The Gridhas frequented the Western Ghats and western sea board of the country. They were ruled by the brothers Sampati and Jatayu. The reference of Sabari in the Ramayana as a devotee of Ram is also attached to a group of people. Apparently she belonged to the tribe of Sabaras. The Kols of middle India regard Sabari as their mother (Vyas, 1967).

The Mahabharata also mentions a few tribes. It is believed that Shiva Mahadeva took the form of a Kirata and went to meet Arjun. From the vedic period the word "Kirata" had been used for the non-Aryan tribes living in the mountains, particularly in the Himalayan region. In the accounts of the Mahabharata, the great war we hear Sanjay describing the arrangements of the kaurva Army mention the Mundas to the Danavas in the Mahabharata would seem to indicate that reference was to an aboriginal people of the name of Mundas (Chatterji, 1968).

The tribals in the early historical period appeared to have lived in a state of internal movement cutting across the country and their movement were generally guided by the river valleys and destination were the hill and the forest regions of the country. From 242-240 BC, the Tribal Assembly (comitia tributa) in the Roman Republic was organized in 35 tribes (4 "Urban Tribes" and 31 "Rural Tribes"). The Latin word as used in the Bible translates as Greek phyle "race tribes clan" and ultimately the Hebrew. In the historical sense, "tribe", "race" or "clan" can be used interchangeably. The English word tribe occurs in 13th century Middle English literature as referring to one of the Twelve Tribes of Israel. The word is from old French tribu, in turn from Latin tribus, referring to the original tripartite ethnic division of Roman state: Tities (Titienses), Ramnes (Ramnenses) and Luceres corresponding, according to Varro, to the Latin, Sabines and Etruscans respectively. The Romanes were named after Romulus leader of the Latin, Tities after Tatius, leader of the Sabines, and Luceres after Lucumo, leader of an Etruscan army that had assisted the Latins. According to Livy, the three tribes were in fact squadrons of knights, rather than ethnic division.

Tribals are called variously in different countries. For instance in the United States of America they are known as 'Red Indian' in Australia as 'Aborigines' in the European countries as 'Gypsies' in the African and Asian countries as 'Tribals'.

Above description about tribes is literary and may have exception to it. But tribes often are associated with a static and primitive society that is self sufficient in itself and gives priority to maintain its cultural identity by maintaining the age old customs and traditions. But all this cannot be stated as true completely in today's world. Tribes have started joining the plural society breaking down the isolationist tendencies. The major force deriving tribals to get assimilated in the mainstream or to come in contact with non tribal society is the force of modernization. The constitution of India has defined "schedule tribes" as such tribes are tribal communities or parts of or group with in such tribes are tribal communities as are deemed under article 342 to be schedule tribes for the purpose of this constitution. There are 212 tribes declared by the president in exercise the powers conferred by clause (1) of article 342 of the constitution in different states of India (Thakur, 1986).

The aim of the study is to analyze political structures of both tribe and their participation in political institutions in Himachal Pradesh.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *A. Study Area*

Himachal Pradesh was constituted as a separate administrative unit by merging Punjab hill states except Nalagarh and the princely states of Sirmour, Chamba and Suket on April 15, 1948. Mandi was merged on May 1, 1948. It was then administratively divided into four districts of Chamba, Mandi, Mahasu, and Sirmour. The district of Chamba and Sirmour comprised of the area of the erstwhile princely state bearing same name. Mandi district was formed by grouping the erstwhile states of Mandi and Suket and the rest of the Punjab Hill States were grouped to form Mahasu district.

On July 1, 1954 the Part C, State of Bilaspur comprising of the erstwhile state of Bilaspur was also merged into Himachal Pradesh through an Act of Parliament called the Himachal Pradesh, Bilaspur (New State) Act, 1954. Bilaspur was added as the fifth district to Himachal Pradesh in 1954. And yet another new district, the sixth one was carved out of the district of Mahasu on May 1, 1960. The entire Chini Tehsil and 14 villages from Rampur Tehsil of Mahasu District formed the new Kinnaur District. Under the Punjab re-organization Act, 1966, (Act No. 31 of 1966) more territories were transferred from Punjab to Himachal Pradesh.

### *B. Data Collection*

**1) Primary sources:** The relevant data has been collected from the sample of respondents from Lahaul and Spiti subdivision respectively. The information was gathered from the respondents with the help of questionnaire and interview schedule.

**2) Secondary sources:** Secondary sources have been collected from published and non-published sources. It includes various books, articles, reports of the various departments, Journals pertaining to the tribal development, modernization and political development, the statistical data of the economic and statistical department, Tribal development and Department of social and tribal welfare are the main sources of secondary data.

### *C. Tools of Data Collection*

**1) Questionnaire:** Keeping in view the undertaken problem researcher has conducted a pilot survey before preparing a questionnaire. Questionnaire was prepared on the basis of information collected during pilot survey, So that relevant and meaningful information may be collected from the respondents during the course of field investigation. To elicit the information from the respondents both close ended and open ended questions have been prepared by the researcher.

### *D. Personal Interview*

Personal interview has also been conducted with the respondents to know more about the socio, economic and political life of the people of Both tribes. Separate interview schedule was also be fixed with the leaders of Both tribe to know about the emerging pattern of leadership among the Both tribe.

### *E. Observation*

Observation technique, was also applied by the researcher to know about their social, economic and political values system, Mechanism of conflict resolution and socio-economic interaction. Both participatory and non-participatory techniques were used by the researcher.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### *A. Literacy Rate of Scheduled Tribes Population*

The proportion of literates to total Scheduled Tribes population excluding 0-6 years population was 47.1 percent in 1991 census which rose to 65.5 percent yielding net change of 18.4 points during the decade in the state. This literacy rate among the Scheduled Tribe is quite low as compared to literary rate of Scheduled Castes. All districts show increase in the proportion of Scheduled Tribes literates except Kangra where literacy rate has declined from 78.9 to 64.0, Hamirpur from 96.2 to 60.6 and Una from 90.6 to 46.7 percent during 1991-2001. This decline in literacy rate in these districts appears to be effected by the migration of tribal population. The literacy rate in districts varies between 46.7 percent in Una and 87.0 percent in Shimla district as per 2001 census.

**Table 1 : Distribution of respondents regarding filing petition or reporting after the final judgement of Biradari or Statutory Panchayat.**

S.No.	Response	Number of Respondents in Lahaul Region	Number of Respondents in Spiti Region	Total
1.	Yes	130 (86.66)	113 (75.33)	243 (81.00)
2.	No	18 (12.00)	31 (20.67)	49 (16.33)
3.	No Response	2 (1.34)	6 (4.00)	8 (2.67)
	Total	150 (100.00)	150 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Note : Figures in parenthesis show percentage.

Table 1 shows that 86.66 percent respondents in Lahaul region and 75.33 percent respondents in Spiti region accept that if they do not get satisfaction and justice in biradari panchayat or in statutory panchayat then they have no shame or hesitation to go to the court and get justice. But they admit that they don't want to carry their personal and societal issues in the court publically. Although they have complete knowledge about the protection of their rights. It means Bodh are quite aware and do believe in the modern judicial system. But they don't want any clash of their traditional values with the modern values, it reveals that they are quite aware about their cultural values on one hand and wave of transformation through modernization and development on the other hand.

The analysis of above table reveals that role of biradari panchayat is decreasing mainly in Lahaul region than Spiti region, but an element of change can also be observed. Researcher feels that the Bodh tribal community believe in continuity and change because they have the balanced approach to their traditional value system as well as the modern value system. They are not hostile to the modern value system and even follow them when the need and situation arises. Table 2 shows the responses regarding continuation of Biradari panchayat or move to statutory panchayat.

**Table 2 : Distribution of respondents regarding continuation of Traditional or Biradari Panchayat**

S. No.	Response	Number of Respondents in Lahaul Region	Number of Respondents in Spiti Region	Total
1.	In Favour	26 (17.33)	48 (32.00)	74 (24.67)
2.	Not in Favour	121 (80.67)	102 (68.00)	223 (74.33)
3.	No Response	3 (2.00)	-	3 (1.00)
	Total	150 (100.00)	150 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Note : Figures in parenthesis show percentage.

Table 2 depicts that 3 percent respondents of Lahaul region and 32 percent of respondents of Spiti region are in favour of continuation of Biradari panchayat. 80.67 percent respondents of Lahaul region and 68 percent of respondents of Spiti region are not in favour of continuation of Biradari panchayat. It shows that there are only 24.67 percent respondents in favour of Biradari panchayat. When further enquiry was made from the respondents, who responded in favour, researcher found that the respondents who are in favour of Biradari panchayat are in the age group of 40 and above. There are very few young generation respondents in favour of Biradari panchayat.

Researcher further feels that spread of education and skill, prevalence of modern democratic institutions, like political parties, availability of media and its exposure which are the objective forces of change and transformation are playing their own role and having their impact on the traditional socio-economic structures and values of the Bodh tribal community. With the results their tribal society is under transformation because of the fact that the traditional mechanism of conflict resolutions are very much under change and the modern institutions are replacing them. Perception and attitude of the people is changing with the time and more and more people are adopting new value system. Researcher is in the opinion that number will increase further due to the effect and impact of modernization and development processes which are already operating in the district of Lahaul and Spiti.

Biradari Panchayat of Bodh society of Lahaul and Spiti does not pressurize their people to follow particular party or to cast their vote to particular candidate. Bodh people are completely independent in their political life.

In the modern time political awareness of an individuals or a community is a one of the parameter for the successful functioning of the political democratic institution. Researcher has also made an attempt to gauge the level of awareness and the participation of the Bodh tribal community of Lahaul and Spiti. An enquiry was made to know the awareness of the respondents regarding national political parties. The responses of the respondents have been tabled in the table 3.

**Table 3 : Distribution of respondents regarding their awareness of political parties.**

S. No.	Political Parties	Region	Aware	Not Aware	No Response	Total
1.	Congress	Lahaul	150 (100.00)	-	-	150 (100.00)
		Spiti	150 (100.00)	-	-	150 (100.00)
2.	BJP	Lahaul	150 (100.00)	-	-	150 (100.00)
		Spiti	150 (100.00)	-	-	150 (100.00)
3.	CPI (M)	Lahaul	45 (30.00)	98 (65.34)	7 (4.66)	150 (100.00)
		Spiti	27 (18.00)	119 (79.33)	4 (2.67)	150 (100.00)
4.	CPI	Lahaul	29 (19.33)	121 (80.67)	-	150 (100.00)
		Spiti	36 (24.00)	114 (76.00)	-	150 (100.00)
5.	BSP	Lahaul	56 (37.34)	91 (60.66)	3 (2.00)	150 (100.00)
		Spiti	41 (27.33)	99 (66.00)	10 (6.67)	150 (100.00)
6.	JD (U)	Lahaul	23 (15.33)	127 (84.67)	-	150 (100.00)
		Spiti	29 (19.33)	121 (80.67)	-	150 (100.00)

Note : Figures in parenthesis show percentage.

Data of the table 3 indicates that 100 percent respondents of Lahaul and Spiti are aware about the two national political parties, which are Indian National Congress and Bhartiya Janta Party. 30 percent in Lahaul and 18 percent of respondents in Spiti region are aware about the CPI (M), 19.33 percent respondents in Lahaul and 24 percent respondents in Spiti are aware about CPI, 37.34 percent in Lahaul and 27.33 percent of the respondents from Spiti are aware about BSP where 15.33 percent from Lahaul and 19.33 percent from Spiti region, respondents are aware about JD (U).

Analysis of the above table suggests that people of Bodh community are aware about the only two national political parties, which are Indian National Congress and Bhartiya Janta Party, whereas very few percentage of the respondents are aware about the other national political parties like CPI (M), CPI, BSP and JD (U). Researcher feels that 100 percent awareness of the respondents regarding INC and BJP is due to the fact that in Himachal Pradesh there is almost two party system exists. Other political parties has no organized platform to share a political space of the Himachal Pradesh political environment and that is why the people of Bodh community of Lahaul and Spiti are not aware about the other national political parties except Indian National Congress and Bhartiya Janta Party. But researcher is in the opinion that people of Bodh community of Lahaul and Spiti are by and large politically aware.

As analysed above, the awareness level of the respondents is further analysed by inquiring their sympathy and membership taken by the respondents with the various political parties. Responses regarding this inquiry have been tabulated in the table 3.24.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents regarding their being member/sympathizer of any political party.**

S.No.	Name of the Political Party	Number of Respondents in Lahaul Region	Number of Respondents in Spiti Region	Total
1.	Congress	61 (40.67)	64 (42.67)	125 (41.67)
2.	Bhartiya Janta Party	59 (39.33)	67 (44.67)	126 (42.00)
3.	Communist Party of India (M)	9 (6.00)	5 (3.33)	14 (4.66)
4.	Any other	-	-	-
5.	No response	21 (14.00)	14 (9.33)	35 (11.67)
	Total	150 (100.00)	150 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Note : Figures in parenthesis show percentage.

Data of the table 3.24 reveals that 40.67 percent in Lahaul and 42.67 percent in the Spiti region respondents are either sympathizer or member of Indian National Congress, 39.33 percent from Lahaul and 44.67 percent from Spiti region respondents are sympathizer or member of Bhartiya Janta Party, 6 percent in Lahaul and 3.33 percent respondents in Spiti region are sympathizer of CPI (M) and 14 percent in Lahaul, 9.33 percent of the respondents in Spiti region did not respond to the question.

Analysis of the above table suggests that majority of respondents are sympathizer or a member of either Indian National Congress or BJP, and very few are sympathizer of CPI (M). Researcher is in the opinion that people of Bodh community are a very much part of political environment of Himachal Pradesh, where there is a very limited political scope and space for the other political parties to share. Hence the people are aware about only two political parties either INC or BJP.

Another enquiry was put into the respondents to know about the role of their leader to whom they elect for the democratic institution from grass root level to national level. The responses of the respondents are tabulated in the table 5.

**Table 5 : Distribution of respondents regarding role of their leaders.**

S.No.	Name of the Political Party	Number of Respondents in Lahaul Region	Number of Respondents in Spiti Region	Total
1.	For the welfare of the society	28 (18.66)	30 (20.00)	58 (19.33)
2.	Solve disputes and maintain peace in the society	24 (16.00)	32 (21.33)	56 (18.67)
3.	Both 1 and 2	98 (65.34)	86 (57.34)	184 (61.33)
4.	No response	-	2 (1.33)	2 (0.67)
	Total	150 (100.00)	150 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Note : Figures in parenthesis show percentage.

Data of the above table reflects that 61.33 percent of the total respondents from both region feel that role of the elected leader is to bring welfare about their tribal society and to solve disputes and maintain peace in the society. 18.67 percent of the respondents from both region, are in the opinion that elected leaders must solve the disputes of the tribal people and should work to maintain peace in the society. 19.33 percent of the total respondents from both the regions are in the opinion that elected leaders must work for the welfare and prosperity of the tribal society of Lahaul and Spiti. Only 0.67 percent (which is negligible) respondents did not respond to the quarry.

Analysis of the above table suggests that majority of the Bodh tribal community feels that elected leaders, for the various democratic institutions must work honestly for the welfare of the people of tribal society of Bodh of Lahaul and Spiti. Leaders must maintain peace and formulate policies for the development of the area and socio-economic upliftment of the tribal people of Lahaul and Spiti.

Today the people of Bodh Community of Lahaul and Spiti have become aware about, how to defend their exploitation by the political parties. They are now not ready to get exploited silently. They have started evaluating political parties manifestos. The various aspects of modernization and change are responsible for the awareness. The

pace of change is slow but Bodh are not static in political arena. The participation level in parliamentary as well as state assembly and panchayat Raj election can be seen in table 6.

**Table 6 : Distribution of respondents about their participation in Parliamentary as well as State Assembly and Panchayati Raj elections.**

S.No.	Response	Number of Respondents in Lahaul Region	Number of Respondents in Spiti Region	Total
1.	Yes	134 (89.33)	126 (84.00)	260 (86.67)
2.	No	16 (10.67)	24 (16.00)	40 (13.33)
3.	No Response	-	-	-
	Total	150 (100.00)	150 (100.00)	300 (100.00)

Note : Figures in parenthesis show percentage.

The table 6 shows that 89.33 percent respondents in Lahaul region and 84 percent respondents in Spiti region have used their vote in Parliamentary, State Assembly and Panchayati Raj election. Only 10.67 percent respondents in Lahaul region and 16 percent in Spiti did not use their vote. The use of right to vote and the participation in modern political processes gets indicated through the above table. The participation level of Bodhs in use of right to vote is equally good as in any other society.

High percentage of participation reveals the faith of Bodh tribe in democratic institutions and their working process. Bodh society is completely a rural society but their interaction towards modern political system is incredible. They have achieved good modern political values with the passage of time. The wave of modernization and change may be less or more in their area but the real fact is that these waves have effected them deeply so they are also ready to get such type of changes and transformation to walk step in step with the modern world.

Socio-economic and political perspectives of Bodh society is clearly presented by the above data. The Bodhs tribe are honest, simple and co-operative peoples by nature so they are always ready to adopt the modern values and ways. Such type of broad openness is their own quality and not forced by any pressure group or government agency. Bodh society because of being agriculturist, cash crops are sold to different type of peoples of different societies and this leads to contact with various religions, castes, communities and societies. They are open and broad minded learnt from their own experience. Thus attitude of Bodh show a modern element of transformation and timely change. They participated in every field of society and get position according to their income status. They do fear a little for the loss of their traditional culture values through the touch of new modern values and change aspects, but they are not rigid and conservative and they do understand the needs of modern values change and transformation. They have proper knowledge to maintain balance between traditional and modern value system.

Pattern of emergence of leadership is an another criterion to judge political awareness and changing political values. When, Researcher asked respondents to furnish information regarding pattern of emergence of leadership among the bodh community, in the past and in present time, than majority of respondents responded that in the past, experiencable and old age leaders were preferred to hold the posts in traditional Biradari Panchayat. But the trends have been changed in the present time.

## CONCLUSION

The analytical study concluded that the socio-economic and political perspectives of the Bodh tribe community. The various social aspects of Bodh tribe have been influenced by the introduction of different political atmosphere as well. Bodh tribe community has adopted modern ways and secular value system in their socio-economic and political life. The people of Bodh community are flexible in attitude and aptitude, so they are not hostile to modern values and political scenario . Pattern of emergence of leadership in Bodh people is an another criterion to judge political awareness and changing political values. So the Bodh people have learnt to keep good balance between the modern value system of mainstream society and traditional values system of their own tribal society. people of Bodh community are a very much part of political environment of Himachal Pradesh, where there is a very limited political scope and space for the other political parties to share. Hence the people are aware about only two political parties either INC or BJP. Major changes in the social structures and the adoption of the political institutions like the parliamentary form of government, universal franchise and political parties in competition to acquire power are bound to effect the traditional processes which led to the emergence of modern political leadership among tribal's as well.

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