

## **Conceptualizing Tribe in the Indian Context**

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In the Indian context, the term 'tribe' has been used and is being used somewhat indiscriminately. Several groups of the inhabitants of India before the advent of the Aryans were referred to as tribes. The Aryan invaders themselves were described as tribes by some. In later historical writings the extant small republics were referred to as belonging to particular tribes. Some writers have called even the Rajputs and the Jats as tribes. Still later the term was restricted to the autochthonous, the aboriginal, and the primitive groups.

Since the origin of the tribal people can be traced back to the earliest stages of human evolution, some scholars refer to them by the term adivasis which means the original inhabitants on the land. Oxford Dictionary of Sociology defines the term tribe usually denotes a social group bound together by kin and duty and associated with a particular territory, members of the tribe share the social cohesion associated with the family, together with the sense of political autonomy of the nation. According to Risley, the tribe represents a collection or group of families, bearing a common name, which as a rule does not denote any specific occupation, generally claiming common descent from a mythical or historical ancestor and occasionally from an animal, but in some parts of the country, they are held together rather by the obligation of blood bond than by the tradition of kinship, usually speaking the same language and occupying or claiming to occupy a definite tract of country.