

Paper – Sociology of Religion, B.A. Honours

Topic: Primitive Economy

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Introduction:

Social anthropologists have dealt with primitive economy in a very scant way, there is no dearth of literature pertaining to tribal ethnography, particularly by the British anthropologists. But all of them have looked at tribal economy in a very restricted way. They are milestones in the literature on social anthropology, but the economic life of the tribal's has been totally ignored.

Indian social anthropologists followed the British pattern. D.N. Majumdar, the doyen of social anthropology, has altogether neglected a separate discussion on tribal economy. Quite like Malinowski and other British counterparts, he links economy with habitat and society.

Concept:

Primitive economic order was depend upon weather conditions like rain, sun, flood. The division of labour was based on age and sex. The concept of personal property was at initial stage. The primitive society was self-sufficient in fulfilling its economic needs. Therefore the system of commerce did not develop in these societies as from whatever was left from the hunting and collection of food, developed the customs like gift or present, hospitality, free lending, free borrowing and common use. In these communities individual prestige or familial prestige was considered more valuable than property. In primitive society exchange was chiefly based on barter system. Primitive means relating to denoting or preserving the character of an early stage in the evolutionary or historic development of something, or something lacking in sophistication or not advanced or bare-bones condition or instincts that resemble animal-instincts and don't require thought.

An economy is a system which tries to balance the available resources of a country land, labour capital and enterprises against the wants and needs of consumers. Economy within the society it deals with three key issues such as what is produced, how it is produced and who gets what is produced. An economy consists of the production, distribution or trade and consumption of limited goods and services by different agents in a given geographical location. Primitive economy is an underdeveloped economy in which communities use primitive tools and methods to harvest and hunt for food often resulting in little economic growth. Traditional economics are often found in rural regions with high level of subsistence farming.

Primitive economy is an economic system heavily influenced by habits, custom and religious beliefs. Children generally inherit. The occupations of their parents and difficult to introduce new ideas in economic system.

Nature of Primitive Economy:

1. Economic relationships are based on barter and exchange. There is no provision of currency. There are no banks and other credit societies.
2. Economic system is based upon social customs, physical conditions are faith in ancestors. Almost no primitive crosses their limits. Profit is suborn the motive of economic activities. Mutual obligations and unity perform the function of motivation. Give and take among primitives is the basis of economic system.
3. Mutual cooperation and collective enterprises are characteristics of primitive economy.
4. There are no regular markets. Weekly having markets are the bases of exchange. There is no monopoly and cut throat completion characteristic of civilized society.
5. There is institution of private property. All the land in collectively owned. Land is equally divided among families and each family cultivates land allotted to it. There is more consumption includes food, clothes and housing.
6. Economics value change in decades. Mostly, stability, equality and simplicity are the hall marks of primitive economy. This is particularly true about procedures and techniques. There is no specialization.

Characteristics of Primitive Economics	1. Shifting Cultivation
	2. Exchange
	3. Absence of profit Motivate
	4. Virtual absence of Innovation
	5. Communal Nature of Economy
	6. Absence of Division of Labour
	7. Concept and Nature of Property Rights

Shifting cultivation:

Primitive economic organisation were of the subsistence type. That is they fall into the broad category of production – consumption economics. One important reason for this is the absence of technological aids in their attempts to exploit nature, as is illustrated by shifting cultivation. Shifting cultivation means that the some plots of land are not cultivated for long and that cultivator’s move from one plot to another. The reasons for doing so are understandable. The decreasing field of land as a result of continues cultivation can be counteracted. Through proper manuring. But manuring represents a rather advanced scientific level of cultivation. The primitive people were not aware of the various ways of conserving the fertility of soil through Mannering. Shifting cultivation was thus the only alternative open to them. This was facilitated by the fact that the primitive people did not experience the problem of pressure of population on soil. They could, therefore easily

explore and exploit Virgin lands. Obviously, such cultivation is wasteful inefficient and uneconomic.

Exchange:

In the absence of money as a store and measurement of value and a medium of exchange economic transactions were always based on exchange. There were various forms of exchange prevalent in a primitive society.

Absence of Profit Motive:

The profit motive that is generally associated with economic transactions is generally absent in a primitive economy. A sense of mutual obligation sharing and solidarity provide the necessary incentive in all economic pursuits.

Virtual Absence of Innovation:

The rate of innovation in simple societies is very low, giving the appearance of an unchanging social structure over a period of time stability and uniformity of social structure are also the outcome of simple and uniform techniques of production used in these societies.

Communal Nature of Economy:

Primitive societies have strongly developed features of communal economic. All activities starting from construction of shelters to production of primary consumption goods are carried on through cooperative and collective efforts of the members of the community.

Absence of Division of Labour:

There is virtually no division of labour except specialization based on sex. While men generally participate in activities outside home, women take care of the infants and of preparation of food. These activities naturally force women to stay longer at home.

Concept and Nature of Property Rights:

It will be wrong to apply to primitive society modern conceptions of property. There is no property in a food – gathering society. There can be no property or any type of an economic surplus like cattle wealth. Among herdsman, there is no ownership of land. Pastures are held jointly. Similarly cultivators may own their lands jointly.

Conclusion:

Economic system is based upon social customs, physical conditions and faith in ancestors. Almost no primitive crosses their limits. Profit is seldom the motive of economic activities. Mutual obligations and unity perform the functions of motivation. Give and take among primitives is the basis of economic system.