

ECONOMIC ORGANISATION

The simple societies of different places in the world passed through various stages of socio-economic development in due courses of time. It can be mentioned that hunting-gathering, horticulture, cattle herding, shifting cultivation, settled agriculture, etc. are different stages of socio-economic development among different tribes in India.

Food gathering and hunting is said to be the oldest type of economic activity. During 2 to 5 million years of human existence on this planet Earth, 99 percent of the time was spent in food gathering, hunting and fishing. Agriculture is said to have originated some 10,000 years ago. Industrial economy is said to have been in existence for the past 400 years only.

Human communities of the world practice various types of economic activities. When we say economic activity, it includes subsistence technologies, division of labour, organisation of labour, various customary ways of distribution of goods and services and consumption and utility and decision-making at various stages in the processes of production, distribution and consumption. Basing on the subsistence technologies, the economic activities can be broadly categorised into food collection and food production. Under food collection, hunting gathering, intensive foraging and fishing are the major activities. Under food production, we can include horticulture or incipient cultivation, pastoralism and intensive cultivation or plough cultivation.

Many communities studied by anthropologists practice more than one of the above economic activities. Most of the tribes dwelling in the forest and hills like Kadar of Kerala, Birhor and Kharia of Bihar, Nagas of Nagalands, Kukis of Manipur, etc. depend on food gathering, hunting small games, fishing, shifting cultivation activities for their sustenance. These activities form their main source of subsistence economy. In the same way, the Konda Reddy and the Savara of Andhra Pradesh depend on horticulture, shifting cultivation and hunting and gathering. The Todas known for buffalo herding also practice cultivation of crops. The Santals, the Oraon, and the Gonds practice settled agriculture along with hunting gathering. Each type of economic activity is organised more or less systematically so that goods and services are produced, distributed or exchanged and consumed or utilised in order to satisfy a variety of wants.

According to Hoebel and Weaver (1979: 453), “Economic organisation involves the behaviours that center upon the production, the allocation and distribution, and the use and consumption of goods”. The above authors emphasise culturally defined behavioural networks that operate in various economic activities. Achieving some rhythm and order in the provision of material goods and services for the satisfaction of wants is essential for the survival and continuity of society. In almost all societies, economic organisation exists in one form or the other.

Simple societies have simple mode of production which include simple technology and most of the labour constitute family members or relatives. It varies from society to society. The mode of economic organisation is very simple mostly embedded in direct face to face relationship. Each type of economic organisation ensures some role to all members of the community by means of creating some space in the pursuits related to economic activities. Every member has a purpose to participate in such organised activities.

The major types of distribution of goods and services are reciprocity, redistribution, and market. Reciprocity is further divided into 3 types: generalised reciprocity, balanced reciprocity and negative reciprocity. Let's examine some of the other components of economic organisation which are very important in understanding the basic concept of economic organisation in anthropology.

Communal Ownership

In every society, simple or complex, property has important functions. Property signifies social or economic status of a person or a group. Property can be either individually owned (private property) or communally owned (communal property). The concept of property keeps changing with the changes of time. Among simple society, communal ownership is more prevalent over land resources, forest

resources, etc. It can be mentioned that these simple society enjoys the available resources from the forest, river, etc. Hunting and gathering societies do not have personal properties of their own except some objects like hunting tools, etc. but the cattle rearing societies consider their cattle as their property.

In some societies, both communal ownership as well as individual ownership of land is present. The Podu or Jhuming land or shifting cultivation land are community owned where as the wet land and horticulture lands are individually owned. The people are issued with *pattas* (a legal document assigning ownership) with regard to the individual lands.

Major Economic Activities

As pointed out earlier, the tribal societies practice various types of economic activities, it must be remembered that each tribe may pursue a major economic activity supplemented by other types of economic activities. The following account gives a brief description of each of the major economic activity.

- **Hunting-Gathering**

A hunter-gatherer society is a society whose primary subsistence method of livelihood is based on the direct procurement of edible plant, animals, birds, etc. from their surrounding forest and water bodies. They depend on the nature for their subsistence. The tribes in the dense forests use bows and arrows, spears, net for catching the animals. They also have customs of hunting in group as a collective activity. They hunt wild birds, fowl, rabbits, deer, rats, etc. During the rainy season, they carry out fishing from the streams and other water bodies. They share the hunt equally among themselves. Some important features of hunting gathering society are; lowest population density; small community size; nomadic or semi-nomadic; infrequent food shortage; minimal trade; no full-time craft specialists; least or no individual differences in wealth; informal political leadership; no domesticated animals except dog; day to day consumption and little storage of food; minimal planning for the future (the last three are not true with some communities who are in contact with pastorals or agriculturists). Surplus foraging is very much limited though some minor forest produce is collected for exchange or sale in the local /weekly markets or government run agencies.

- **Horticulturalists**

Horticulture in anthropology means growing of all types of crops with relatively simple tools like hoe and methods like sprinkling of seeds on unploughed fields. These fields are cultivated for a few years and then abandoned for new fields. Thus permanently cultivated fields are absent in horticulture. Horticultural communities are said to lie in the transition stage of human communities from nomadic community i.e. hunting-gathering to horticultural communities by domesticating different varieties of crops like tubers, yams, maize, wheat, rice, pulses, vegetables, etc. around their dwelling or in a particular plot for their domestic consumption. They select different useful trees, vegetable crops, etc and plants for their uses. As discussed under political organisation in such societies land is usually communal property and for horticulture the land is redistributed among the group members. In such a society, women are equally engaged in horticultural activities. In some case, women are more specialised in growing crops. Some important feature of horticultural communities are: low – moderate population density; small - moderate community size; more sedentary but may move after several years;

infrequent food shortage; minimal trade; none or few craft specialists; minimal wealth differences; part-time political functionaries and exhibit incipient social differentiation.

Horticulture includes shifting cultivation and growing tree crops like plantain, coconut, breadfruit tree etc. The latter type of horticulture can be seen among the Samoans.

- **Shifting Cultivation**

Shifting cultivation is an age old socio-economic practice among many tribal communities inhabiting the world. It is a distinct type of agricultural practice generally practiced on the hill slopes. Since the days of early civilisation several groups of tribal communities in India are practicing this method of cultivation as their primary source of subsistence. The beginning of shifting cultivation goes back to the Neolithic times i.e. 8,000-10,000 years ago (Hasnain, 1994: 193). This process resulted in a new socio-economic situation for the Neolithic people when they shifted from nomadic way of living to settled way of life. These groups tried to emerge as food producers from food gathering stage.

Shifting cultivation is considered as the natural way of eking out livelihood by some tribal groups. In fact, it is considered as a traditional technique of farming adopted by different tribal communities in many parts of the Indian Sub-Continent. Shifting cultivation is prevalent in other parts of the world, especially Sumatra, North Burma, Borneo, New Guinea, and in many parts of the African continent.

Shifting cultivation is also referred to as *slash-and-burn* or *swidden* cultivation. In India, shifting cultivation is known by different names in tribal regions. In North East India, it is denoted as *jhum*, in Orissa as *podu*, *dabi*, *koman* or *bringa*, in Bastar as *deppa*, in Western Ghats as *kumari*, in South East Rajasthan - the Matra and Maria tribal groups call it *penda*, in Madhya Pradesh as *bewar* or *dahia*, (Bhowmick P .K., 1990: 102).

Shifting cultivation is an impermanent cultivation practiced on hill slopes, often steep, rugged and elevated places. After cutting and burning the vegetation known as slash and burning method, seeds are sown by using the simple digging stick. They raise crops for few years and then abandon the field as the soil loses its fertility due to burning of the vegetation. The people then move on to another

- **Pastoralism**

Pastoralism is a type of subsistence technology in which procuring food is based directly or indirectly on maintenance of domesticated animals. Hoebel and Weaver writes, “ Historically this (pastoralism) occurred in the Neolithic Age,

at the same time that incipient agriculture was developing in regions more suitable to the raising of crops” (1979: 224). Pastoralist is concerned with the raising of livestock like tending and use of animals such as goats, sheep, yak, buffalo, etc. They are usually found in many variations in different parts of the world with different composition of herds, social organisation and management practices. They move the herds from one place to another in search of fresh pasture and water for their animals. They also tend to adapt to the changing environment due to their frequent movement from one place to another. So, the territory of pastoral nomads far exceed than that of most horticulturalist societies. Pastoralism is quite popular in Africa and Asia.

Some important features of pastoral communities are: low population density; small community size; generally nomadic or transhumant; frequent food shortages; trade is popular; presence of some full-time craft specialists; moderate individual differences in wealth; presence of part-time and full-time political leaders.

PRODUCTION

Economic anthropologists, particularly the substantivist scholars, have generally displayed a tendency towards over-emphasising on the study of exchange processes and relations, with the result that study of production modes has not been accorded much priority. To cite Honnigman (1973), ‘they do not analyse or theorise about the forces and relations of production or about the creation of commodities, but invariably restrict themselves to the circulation and destination of commodities already produced’. He further opines that Polanyi’s tripartite scheme of reciprocity, redistribution, and market exchange presupposes production modes but does not link up with them; the social concomitants of transactional modes, not of production modes are of dominant concern to him and his followers.

In economic anthropology, production has been given its due importance by the Marxian anthropologists, with Marx emphasising on the centrality of production to the economy. According to Dalton (1961:6), Marx perceives the economy as a process of interaction between men and their environment, a process through which men as producers ‘integrate the use of natural resources and techniques and assure continuous cooperation in the provision of material goods’. Also, according to Marx (1904a:11), the economic base or mode of production in every society is made up of two components: (i) the force of production, the

physical and technological arrangement of economic activity, and (ii) the social relations of production, the interpersonal and intergroup relationships that men must establish with one another as a consequence of their roles in the production process.

We would now be looking into the various modes of production ranging from the 'simple'-hunting, gathering and fishing, where human beings occupy and wrest from nature their sustenance without transforming it, to the more complex such as animal husbandry and followed by cultivation, which involves the transformation of nature. In the evolutionary scheme of society, cultivation and animal husbandry invariably appear after hunting, gathering and fishing (Lowie 1938:282). Production, for the purpose of simple societies, may be basically studied under the two heads: food collection and food production.

- **Food Collection**

Food collection, encompassing the production strategies of hunting, fishing and gathering, refers to all forms of subsistence technology in which food is secured from naturally occurring resources such as wild plants and animals, without significant domestication of either. Food collection is the oldest survival strategy known to man. But in the present day, there are very few communities left in the world who are entirely dependant on hunting and gathering for livelihood such as the Australian aborigines, the Inuits living in the arctic regions of Canada, the Andamanese tribes like the Onge and Jarawa etc. However, a number of communities continue to practice hunting-gathering and fishing to supplement their nutrition from agriculture. For instance, in the state of Assam, many of the tribes such as the Karbis, Tiwas, Mishings, Rabhas etc. are experts in the art of fishing and hunting, which they practice in conjunction with agriculture.

While the study of exclusively hunter-gatherer communities may help us arrive at some understanding of man's life in the past, Ember and Ember (1994) cautions against the excessive use of contemporary observations to draw inferences about the past for a number of reasons. In their view, we must understand that the earlier hunter-gatherers lived in almost all types of environments, including some very bountiful ones and not like the contemporary ones who live mostly in marginal areas and, therefore, are not comparable. Moreover, the contemporary hunter-gatherers are not relics of the past and like us have evolved continuously. Nor in the past did hunter-gathering communities have the opportunity to interact with agriculturists, pastoralists, industrial/capitalist societies.

Contemporary hunters-gatherers live in a variety of geographical locations and climates but mostly in marginalised areas where agriculture is not feasible.

- **Food Production**

The origins of food production began about 10,000 years ago in the Neolithic period when man took the first steps from merely utilising to transforming nature through the cultivation and domestication of plants and animals. Archaeological data indicate that various forms of domestication of plants and animals arose independently in six separate locales worldwide during the period from 8000 to 5000 BC, with the earliest known evidence found throughout the tropical and subtropical areas of southwestern and southern Asia, northern and central Africa and Central America (Gupta, 2010). According to anthropologists, on its own, the physical environment has more of a limiting rather than a determining impact on the kinds of subsistence choices made. For instance, according to Binford (1990), further away from the equator, food collectors depends much less on plants for food and much more on animals and fish.

Food production systems may be generally divided into three main kinds: horticulture, pastoralism and intensive agriculture.

TRADITIONAL ECONOMIC SYSTEM

Traditional economic system is usually associated with the simple societies like the tribal societies, rural societies, etc. It is chiefly characterised by subsistence mode of production with little surplus production. This economy is usually supplemented by other minor occupations like collection of forest produce etc. However the most important features of the traditional economic system is that of various modes of exchange.

Let us now discuss different mode of exchanges prevailing among different societies.

- **Barter System**

Barter system is the direct exchange of goods and services i.e an exchange may be goods for goods, goods for services, service for service etc. It is considered to be the earliest form of exchange in Human society. Barter usually replaced money as the method of exchange during crisis like war, natural calamity, etc.

- **Silent Trade**

Silent trade (also known as silent barter or trade and dumb barter) is a peculiar form of exchange where the exchanging parties do not come into face to face interaction during the process of exchange. The exchanging partners could be enemies or antagonised. One group of people leaves certain quantity of products at a customary place to be taken by another group, who in turn leaves back

some other products. The pygmy Semang and Sakai of Malaya and the Vedda and Sinhalese of Sri Lanka practice silent trade.

- **Jajmani System**

William H Wiser (1988) has introduced the term Jajmani system in his book, *The Hindu Jajmani System: A Socio-Economic System Interrelating Members Of A Hindu Village Community In Services*, where he described in detail how different caste group interact with each other in the agriculture based system of production, distribution and exchange of goods and services. In different parts of India different terms are used to describe this economic interaction among the castes, for example in Maharashtra the term *Balutadar* or *bara batute* and *mera* or *mirasi* in rural Rayalaseema of Andhra Pradesh, *jajmani* in North India, *mirasi* in Tamil Nadu and *adade* in Karnataka.

Jajmani system, (Hindi: deriving from the Sanskrit yajamana, “sacrificial patron who employs priests for a ritual”) is reciprocal (usually asymmetrical and some scholars term it non-reciprocal) social and economic arrangements between families of different castes within a village community in India for the exchange of goods and services. Here, one family exclusively performs certain services for the other, such as ministering to the rituals or providing agricultural labour, or some goods such as agricultural implements, pots, baskets etc in return for payment, protection, and employment security. These relations are supposed to continue from one generation to the next, and payment is normally made traditionally, in the form of a fixed share in the harvest rather than in cash.

Distribution and Exchange

Distribution and exchange has consistently remained the central focus of anthropologists interested in the study of economic systems and their working in society. While being closely related concepts, the main point of distinction between the two is that while distribution determines the proportion of total output that the individual will receive, exchange determines the specific products into which the individual wants to convert the share allocated to him by distribution (Honigmann 1973). He further opines that distribution implies a reward system in which produce is channeled out among individuals or groups by reason of their control over the factors of production or for the labour they expended in the productive process. Exchange, on the other hand, refers to the various processes by which goods (and services) move or are being transferred between individuals or groups, as, for example, between producer and consumer, buyer and seller, donor and recipient. Firth’s (1965a) work among the Tikopia is a seminal study on distribution. In his view, every society has

explicit or implicit norms on how the total pool of products is to be shared among its members and that these norms are geared to address the issue of division of a joint product and the compensation of the factors of production, especially labour. His observation of the principles of distribution in the Tikopia economy, which hold equal relevance for many pre-industrial economies, led him to certain conclusions. According to him (1965a:313), there is a 'definite concept that all participants in a productive activity should receive a share of the product, but that social considerations do not make it necessary for this share to be exactly proportionate to the contribution in time, labour, or skill that each individual has made'. Such inequalities in terms of allocation are particularly evident in tribal and peasant societies, where social and/or political achievement entitles some individuals to more than an equal share of material reward. Sahlins' (1968) study indicates that despite these 'inequalities' in distribution, the relationship between a chief and the followers in most tribal societies is not exploitative in nature but based on the principle of generalised reciprocity (we will come to it later in our discussion).

Now, we shall discuss the 'action, or act, of reciprocal giving and receiving' (Gregory, 1998) or exchange. According to Commons (1954), the concept of exchange, from the anthropological viewpoint, embraces two distinct kinds of transfer events: physical transfers and jural transactions. While the former involves locational movement and physical control; the second involves the transfer of culturally defined ownership and use rights. It is the latter aspect which has aroused the interests of anthropologists from the very beginning. Significant understanding on exchange and the motives for it came from Malinowski's (1922) work on trade and gift giving among the Trobriand Islanders and Mauss's classic essay *The Gift* published in 1922. Malinowski studied the ceremonial exchange system- the *Kula* ring spread over eighteen island communities of the Massim archipelago, including the Trobriand Islands and involved thousands of individuals. Members of the *Kula* ring travelled long distances by canoe to exchange Kula items - red shell-disc necklaces (*veigun* or *soulava*) traded to the north in clockwise direction and white shell armbands (*mwali*) traded in the southern or counter clockwise direction. If the opening gift was an armshell, then the closing gift must be a necklace and vice versa. Malinowski (1922: 177) came to the conclusion that exchange among Trobrianders was better seen as a social act than a transmission of useable objects. Exchange, in his view, did not result in economic gain; quite the contrary, it represented a superiority of the giver over the receiver and placed a burden upon the receiver. Similarly, the basic argument of Mauss's essay is that gifts are never free and that they always give rise to reciprocal exchange. According to Gregory (1998), an important notion in Mauss' conceptualisation of gift exchange is 'inalienability' or the fact that the object is never completely

alinedated from giver; hence, the act of giving creates a social bond with an obligation to reciprocate on part of the recipient. To not reciprocate means not only loss of honour and status, but may also have spiritual connotations in some societies.

Later on, Polanyi and a group of scholars (eds., 1957) tried to distinguish between two kinds of processes involved in exchange among simple communities- goods- handling and goods- receiving, and raised a number of pertinent questions: ‘Who passed on goods to whom, in what order, how often, and with what response among those listed under whom?’ Based on the answers arrived at after analysing a number of ethnographic cases, they identified three kinds of exchange: (1) reciprocative sequence among fixed partners; (2) redistributive sequence between a central actor and many peripheral actors; (3) random market sequence (1957: vii-ix). In a later work, Sahlins (1965b) reduced these three kinds of exchange into two broad types: (1) ‘reciprocity’ or ‘vice-versa’ movements between two parties and (2) ‘pooling’ or ‘redistribution’ involving collection from members of a group, and redivision within this group. We will now try to understand the concepts of reciprocity and redistribution with a few ethnographic examples. We will also spend some time understanding market exchange, as in today’s monetised economy, almost all societies of the world are coming within its ambit.

i)Reciprocity

Reciprocity constitutes the main basis of exchange in most non-market economies. According to Sahlins (1965b:145-49), reciprocity may be defined into three types based on the criterion of the stipulation of material returns, which are as follows:

a)**Generalised reciprocity**, involving unstipulated reciprocation, is gift giving without consideration of any immediate or planned return. In such a case, the value of the gift is not calculated and the time of repayment not specified. Such type of reciprocity generally occurs only among close kin or people sharing close emotional bonds such as between parents and children, between siblings, close friends etc.

b)**Balanced or Symmetrical reciprocity occurs when someone gives to someone else, expecting a fair and tangible return - at a specified amount, time, and place (Bonvillian, 2010). Here, the exchange occurs owing to the desire or need for certain objects. Giving, receiving and sharing constitute a form of social security and according to Honigmann (1973), it promotes an egalitarian distribution of wealth over the long run. While generally practiced among equals who are not closely related, balanced reciprocity principles may also be evident in gift giving among kin. To cite a particular example, among**

relatives in many parts of India, it is common practice for kin to give valuable items and even monetary contribution when a relative's daughter is being married off. The implicit expectation being that when their own daughter is married off, similar contributions could be expected from the receivers.

Sometimes there is a fine line between generalised and balanced reciprocity particularly gift giving in urban society, where though it might appear to be generalised reciprocity, there may be strong expectations of balance. For instance, two families residing in the same neighbourhood in Delhi may try to exchange gifts of fairly equal value, say based on calculations of what last year's Diwali gift's cost.

While balanced reciprocity generally operates on egalitarian principles, it could also take on a competitive form. Normally, it might be a means for villagers to 'bank' surplus food by storing up 'social credit' with fellow villagers by giving feasts, with the expectation that the credit will be returned. But affluent villagers might use this mechanism to enhance their social status by throwing lavish feasts and giving costly gifts. This seems to be the primary objective of chiefs among many Native American groups of the Northwest coast in holding a *potlatch* (ceremonial festival), where he would give away gifts, food and even destroy items of value in a spirit of competition with rival chiefs .

c) **Negative reciprocity** is the exchange of goods and services where each party intends to profit from the exchange, often at the expense of the other (Bonvillian, 2010). Practiced against strangers and enemies, it could range from barter, deceitful bargaining to theft, and finds social sanction among many societies. For instance, among the Navajo, to deceive when trading with foreign tribes is considered morally acceptable (Kluckhohn, 1972). Barter is believed to fall within the realm of negative reciprocity, as it is a means by which scarce items from one group are exchanged for desirable goods from another group. According to Honigmann (1973), relative value is calculated and despite an outward show of indifference, sharp trading is more the rule.

While talking about the kinds of reciprocity, Sahlins (1965b: 149-74) points out that reciprocity leans toward generalised extreme on the basis of close kinship and that it moves towards the negative extreme in proportion to a diminution in kinship propinquity, and that it varies with other factors such as social rank, relative wealth and need, and type of goods.

ii) Redistribution

Redistribution refers to a kind of economic exchange characterised by the accumulation of goods (or labour), with the objective of subsequent distribution within a social group according to culturally-specific principles. While,

redistribution exists in all societies within the family where labour or products or income are pooled for the common good, it emerges as an important mechanism in societies with political hierarchies. In the latter, it requires a centralised political mechanism to coordinate the collection and distribution of goods. While it serves as a mechanism for dispensing goods within a society, it could also be a means for a chief to consolidate his political power and gain in prestige. This seems to be an objective of the *potlatch* where chiefs compete with each other to give away and destroy goods of value.

In less centralised societies that do not have formal chiefs, the economic entrepreneur or the 'big man' may carry out such acts. In modern market economies, redistribution takes place through taxation by the state, whereby resources are allocated back to individuals or groups within society, either through the provision of public services or directly through welfare benefits.

iii)Market/Market Exchange

In very broad terms, a market/ market exchange involves the buying and selling of goods, labour, land, rentals, credit etc. by persons, using an intermediary token of common exchange value. According to Honigmann (1973), such a two party market transaction could very well become a form of negative reciprocity, unless some sort of arrangement has been made to ensure at least an approach to balance. Although market exchange need not necessarily involve money, most commercial transactions, particularly nowadays do involve money (Ember & Ember, 1994). Again, while most of such transactions take place in a specifically designated market place, a market may exist without a designated physical place. This is more so in the contemporary world, where significant market transactions take place on the internet. On the other hand, in simple societies, a market place may signify much more than a place where economic transactions are performed. In rural and tribal India, even today, weekly *haats* or markets provide an opportunity for people to renew friendships, exchange local gossip, arrange marriages, while some may also have deep cultural significance. Reliance on the market and the use of general purpose money is increasing universally, with traditional subsistence giving way to commercialisation due to factors like demand, increased interaction with other societies etc. According to Plattner (1985), the substantivist stance in economic anthropology is rendered redundant in the context of markets in the present day. In his words, 'the pretense that theories of markets and marketing were irrelevant became less viable' in a world that increasingly resembles a market system. At the same time, according to Dilley (1992), over-simplistic notions of economic man as individual maximiser of economic value, as enunciated by the formalist position, have now receded in the face of theoretical criticism that

such assumptions provide few convincing explanations of socio-economic status.

Example of distribution of goods and services

Kula

According to Malinowski (1922), Kula is a ceremonial exchange among Trobriand Islanders of New Guinea. Kula is also known as kula exchange or kula ring. It is a complex system of visits and exchange of two kinds of ornaments as well as trading of food and other commodities with the people of other (nearby or far-off) islands. Because the islands are differentially endowed with different natural resources, each island could produce only a few specialised products or commodities and have to depend upon other islands for other essential things and objects. The Trobrianders have worked out *kula* for a safe and secure trade by establishing trade partnership by means of exchanging *kula* ornaments and also gift giving. The essence of such trade relations is not the trade in itself but it is subdued or embedded in a ceremonial exchange of valued shell ornaments.

The Kula ornaments are of two types. One consists of shell-disc necklaces (*veigun* or *Soulava*) that are traded to the north (circling the ring in clockwise direction) and the other are shell armbands (*Mwali*) that are traded in the southern direction (circling counter-clockwise). *Mwali* was given with the right hand, the *Soulava* given with the left hand, first between villages then from island to island. If the opening gift was an armband, then the closing gift must be a necklace and vice versa. These are exchanged in a ceremonial ambience purely for purposes of enhancing mutual trust relationships, securing trade, and enhancing one's social status and prestige. The Kula ornaments are not in themselves remarkably valuable. However, these ornaments are loaded with folklore, myths, ritual, history etc which generate a lot of enthusiasm and bind together the trading partners. Exchange of these ornaments facilitates trading of goods with ease in the island visited as the trading partner in the host island helps the visitor(s). However, people participating in the Kula ring never indulge in any bargaining on the objects given and taken. Individual members trade goods while circulating the *Soulava* and *Mwali* in a cordial atmosphere. (Malinowski, 1922 Sixth Impression: 1964)

Potlatch

Potlatch is an elaborate feast among the American Indian groups of Northwest Coast at which huge quantities of food and valuable goods (such as blankets, copper pieces, canoes, etc.) are pompously and competitively distributed to the guests in order to humiliate them as well as to gain prestige for the host. Burning huge quantities of goods is also common. Potlatches are organised by individuals like village chiefs or a group of individuals or villages. The chief of a village invites a neighbouring village to attend the potlatch which the latter invariably has

to accept. The guests in turn invite the hosts to attend the potlatch to be given by them. Though such distribution of gifts take place in a competitive way, it also serves as a leveling mechanism where food and gifts get equally distributed among various villages in a wide area in the long run.

Similar feasts are organised among the Melanesian societies (New Guinea) wherein large number of (in hundreds) pigs are slaughtered. Several villages attend these feasts. It appears that such large scale feasts are a waste. But these feasts serve the mechanism of 'storing' surplus food produced during good seasons, not by storing in bins, but by feeding the pigs. Thus pigs become food-storing repositories which can be used as food during lean seasons. If successive years are also good, there will be over production of food that goes to pigs. As a result, the size of drove grows into an unmanageable proportion, pigs destroy crops. In order to reduce the drove size, a large number of pigs are slaughtered and a huge feasts is organised by inviting guests from other villages. As a result, the pig population gets drastically reduced and their menace on the fields also gets reduced. Such feasts take place between villages reciprocally and the excess food (pigs) gets redistributed. These feasts are not necessarily competitive but in a few cases, in order to keep up one's status, some 'Big men' of Melanesian societies organise such huge feasts.