



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayaonlinejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

EMERGENCE OF TRIBAL LITERATURE IN 20TH CENTURY

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www.vidhyaya.naejournal.org

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ABSTRACT

The last decade of the 20th century witnessed major political and social movement in the emergence of the marginalized literature. Various literatures came up with their voices into main stream to raise their identities into society. Tribes, Dalits, Women and Peasants were the ethnic groups who came up with the issues of their identity in the society. Tribes and Dalits held their culture and traditions. They usually formed their literature into oral form. Ethnic group called Tribal held the major parts of India. They settle down at the out-skits of the cities. They are supposed to be the earliest settlers in the territory of India. Indian oldest tradition is manifested in the culture of Tribes. India is the country which has witnessed the most industrialization in the tribal belt resulting in major changes in the tribal culture. But of all the aspects of culture religion is one of the least changeable. Tribal literature, imbued with Tribal consciousness, is also trying to carve out a place for itself in the world of literature and criticism. For the present study, the presenter is trying to study the history, cultures and religion of different tribal groups of India which emerged in the latter half of the 20th century.

Keywords: Tribes, Tribal Groups, History, Culture



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INTRODUCTION

India is the home to large number of indigenous people, who are still untouched by the lifestyle of the modern world. With more than 84.4 million, India has the largest population of the tribal people in the world. These tribal people also known as the adivasi's are the poorest in the country, who are still dependent on hunting, agriculture and fishing. Some of the major tribal groups in India include Gonds, Santhals, Khasis, Angamis, Bhils, Bhutias and Great Andamanese. All these tribal people have their own culture, tradition, language and lifestyle. During the period of British rule in the Indian subcontinent, they were known as the Depressed Classes. The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes comprise about 16.6 percent and 8.6 percent, respectively, of India's population (according to the 2011 census). The Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950 lists 1,108 castes across 25 states in its First Schedule, and the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 lists 744 tribes across 22 states in its First Schedule.

MEANING OF THE WORD ADIVASI

Although terms such as atavika, vanavāsi ("forest dwellers"), or girijan ("hill people") are also used for the tribes of India, adivāsi carries the specific meaning of being the original and autochthonous inhabitants of a given region and was specifically coined for that purpose in the 1930s. Over time, unlike the terms "aborigines" or "tribes", the word "adivasi" has developed a connotation of past autonomy which was disrupted during the British colonial period in India and has not been restored. In India, opposition to usage of the term is varied, and it has been argued that the "original inhabitant" contention is based on the fact that they have no land and are therefore asking for a land reform. They argue that they have been oppressed by the "superior group" and that therefore they require and demand a reward and more specifically a land reform. In Northeast India, the term adivasi applies only to the Tea-tribes imported from Central India during colonial times, while all tribal groups refer collectively to themselves by using the English word "tribes". The fact that tribal people need special attention can be observed from their low social, economic and participatory indicators. Whether it is maternal and child mortality, size of agricultural holdings or access to drinking water and electricity, tribal communities lag far behind the general population.

These indicators underline the importance of the need of livelihood generating activities based on locally available resources so that gainful employment opportunities could be created at the doorstep of tribal people.



HISTORY

Since the 1850s these communities were loosely referred to as Depressed Classes, or Adivasis ("original inhabitants"). The early 20th century saw a flurry of activity in the Raj assessing the feasibility of responsible self-government for India. The Morley-Minto Reforms Report, Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms Report and the Simon Commission were several initiatives in this context. A highly-contested issue in the proposed reforms was the reservation of seats for representation of the Depressed Classes in provincial and central legislatures.

In 1935 the British passed the Government of India Act 1935, designed to give Indian provinces greater self-rule and set up a national federal structure. The reservation of seats for the Depressed Classes was incorporated into the act, which came into force in 1937. The Act introduced the term "Scheduled Castes", defining the group as "such castes, races or tribes or parts of groups within castes, races or tribes, which appear to His Majesty in Council to correspond to the classes of persons formerly known as the 'Depressed Classes'.

MUGHAL AND COLONIAL PERIODS

MUGHAL PERIOD

Although considered uncivilised and primitive, adivasis were usually not held to be intrinsically impure by surrounding (usually Dravidian or Aryan) caste Hindu populations, unlike Dalits, who were. Thus, the adivasi origins of Valmiki, who composed the Ramayana, were acknowledged, as were the origins of adivasi tribes such as the Grasia and Bhilala, which descended from mixed Rajput and Bhil marriages. Unlike the subjugation of the Dalits, the adivasis often enjoyed autonomy and, depending on region, evolved mixed hunter-gatherer and farming economies, controlling their lands as a joint patrimony of the tribe. In some areas, securing adivasi approval and support was considered crucial by local rulers, and larger adivasi groups were able to sustain their own kingdoms in central India. The Gond Rajas of Garha-Mandla and Chanda are examples of an adivasi aristocracy that ruled in this region, and were "not only the hereditary leaders of their Gond subjects, but also held sway over substantial communities of non-tribals who recognized them as their feudal lords."

This relative autonomy and collective ownership of adivasi land by adivasis was severely disrupted by the advent of the Mughals in the early 16th century.



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

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An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

BRITISH PERIOD

From the very early days of British rule, the tribesmen resented the British encroachments upon their tribal system. They were found resisting or supporting their brethren of Tamar and Jhalda in rebellion. Nor did their raja welcome the British administrative innovations. Beginning in the 18th century, the British added to the consolidation of feudalism in India, first under the Jagirdari system and then under the zamindari system. Beginning with the Permanent Settlement imposed by the British in Bengal and Bihar, which later became the template for a deepening of feudalism throughout India, the older social and economic system in the country began to alter radically. Land, both forest areas belonging to adivasis and settled farmland belonging to non-adivasi peasants, was rapidly made the legal property of British-designated zamindars (landlords), who in turn moved to extract the maximum economic benefit possible from their newfound property and subjects. Adivasi lands sometimes experienced an influx of non-local settlers, often brought from far away (as in the case of Muslims and Sikhs brought to Kol territory) by the zamindars to better exploit local land, forest and labor. Deprived of the forests and resources they traditionally depended on and sometimes coerced to pay taxes, many adivasis were forced to borrow at usurious rates from moneylenders, often the zamindars themselves.[28][29] When they were unable to pay, that forced them to become bonded labourers for the zamindars.[30] Often, far from paying off the principal of their debt, they were unable even to offset the compounding interest, and this was made the justification for their children working for the zamindar after the death of the initial borrower. In the case of the Andamanese adivasis, long isolated from the outside world in autonomous societies, mere contact with outsiders was often sufficient to set off deadly epidemics in tribal populations, and it is alleged that some sections of the British government directly attempted to destroy some tribes.

Land dispossession and subjugation by British and zamindar interests resulted in a number of adivasi revolts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as the Santal Hul (or Santhal rebellion) of 1855–56. Although these were suppressed ruthlessly by the governing British authority (the East India Company prior to 1858, and the British government after 1858), partial restoration of privileges to adivasi elites (e.g. to Mankis, the leaders of Munda tribes) and some leniency in tax burdens resulted in relative calm, despite continuing and widespread dispossession, from the late nineteenth century onwards.[34] The economic deprivation, in some cases, triggered internal adivasi migrations within India that would continue for another century, including as labour for the emerging tea plantations in Assam.



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www.vidhyayaonlinejournal.org

CONCLUSION

Most tribes are concentrated in heavily forested areas that combine inaccessibility with limited political or economic significance. Historically, the economy of most tribes was subsistence agriculture or hunting and gathering. From the above findings and discussion it can be said that despite the drastic changes due to urbanization and industrialization the different tribes of India is still maintaining its religion and culture. We can conclude that in spite of the fast pace of modernization the tribal people are still maintaining their traditional religion, values and culture.



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