

Changing Wind *Versus* the Primeval Voices (A Reconceptualization of Indian Adivasis in Contemporary Context)

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How to cite this paper: Dr. Santosh Kumar Nayak "Changing Wind Versus the Primeval Voices (A Reconceptualization of Indian Adivasis in Contemporary Context)" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-3 | Issue-3, April 2019, pp.1268-1271, URL: <https://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd23300.pdf>



ABSTRACT

This paper tries to unveil the different tribes of Odisha and their cultural significance. Synchronously attempts have been taken to unfurl the impacts of globalization, homogenization and so called politics on the indigenous culture, society, people and values. Especially, the impact of all these things on the tribal women and solutions of those problems are also given. The special qualities and specialties of the Adivasi people have been discussed here. Meticulously light has been thrown to the different tribes of Odisha.

KEYWORDS: Adivasi, Jaaheraathan, Glocal, Crystallization, Homogenization, Podu

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1. Introduction

Adivasis are the original source of human civilization as well as human culture. These people are the real and the most primitive races lived here much before the Aryan. "Their roots in the soil date back to a very early period.[...] they are at least among the oldest inhabitants of the land." (Dube 1998, p. 04) Hence, these people are the indigenous socio-cultural and socio-political agents at our hands. Particularly, in Indian context, it can firmly be said that we all are more or less related to these tribal or Adivasi people culturally, racially, socially and in many other respects. In fact, "adivasi traditions and practices pervade all aspects of Indian culture and civilization" (Rani 2016, p. 02) yet it needs more popular consciousness for its philosophical, linguistic and socio-cultural contributions. There are different terms used for these people like 'Aatabika' (Mohanti, *et.al.*, 2006, p. 15) which means who live in jungles and may be originated from the jungles, 'Girijana' (Mohanti, *et.al.*, *ibid*) which implies that mountains and hills are the real abode or the habitats of these people, 'Scheduled Tribe' which means they have been categorized constitutionally, and similarly many other typical terms are used for them. But the exact term which gives the justice and adequate respect is 'Adivasi'. The culture of these Adivasi people is thousands and thousands years old as it is the first culture of human civilization. They

are very conservative and stringent to their socio-cultural norms, indigenous doctrines, and pious values and ethics. They have defeated diversity and overcome from its clutches beautifully sowing the seed of unity everywhere in their land, head, heart and spirit individually as well as collectively. But the time has come today to reevaluate the culture, people, tradition and their value system and things happening to them with the blizzard of modernism and especially post-colonialism. This is the call of the hour to rethink about *them* (the indigenous), *us* (the hybrid) and *our world* we live in and *the future* of altogether.

2. Adivasis of Odisha

Like other tribals the Adivasis of Odisha are too conservative and significant from various angles. Really, "... tribals are known as a symbol of self-assertion." (Joshi 2015, p. 98) After addition and deletion, with reference to different surveys and researches and as per the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes order, 1950 as amended by different orders and Amendment Acts and by the notification number 7799/L dated 07.06.2003 of Law Department, Govt. of Odisha, we ensure about 62 types of tribes or Adivasis in Odisha. They are racially, culturally, linguistically, phonetically and traditionally different from each other and

they preserve different typical specialties in their activities and way of living. These tribes are spread over Odisha in different districts and mainly in three major districts and they are: Koraput, Mayurbhanj and Sundargarh. The different Scheduled Tribes of Odisha are: 1. Baagataa, Bhaktaa, 2. Baaigaa, 3. Banjaaraa, Banjari, 4. Baathudi, Bathuri, 5. Bhottadaa, Dhottadaa, Bhotraa, Bhatraa, Bhattaraa, Bhotaraa, Bharataa, 6. Bhuiyan, Bhuiya, 7. Bhumiaa, 8. Bhumij, Teli Bhumij, Haladipokhariala Bhumija, Haladipokhariala Bhumija, Desi Bhumija, Desiaa Bhumija, Tamaariaa Bhumija, 9. Bhunjiaa, 10. Binjhal, Binjhwaar, 11. Binjhiaa, Binjhoaa, 12. Birhor, 13. Bondaa Parajaa, Bondo Parajaa, Bandaa Parajaa, 14. Chenchu, 15. Dal, 16. Desuaa Bhumija, 17. Dhaaruaa, Dhuruba, Dhuruba, 18. Didayee, Didaaye Parajaa, Didaai, 19. Gadabaa, Bodo Gaadabaa, Gutob Gaadabaa, Kapu Gaadabaa, Ollaraa Gaadabaa, Parengaa Gaadabaa, Saano Gaadabaa, 20. Gandiaa, 21. Ghara, 22. Gond, Ganda, Rajgonda, Maariaa Gonda, Dhur Ganda, 23. Ho, 24. Holvaa, 25. Jaatapu, 26. Juaanga, 27. Kandha Gauda, 28. Kawaar, Kanwaar, 29. Khadiaa, Khadiaan, Bergaa Khadiaa, Dhelki Khadiaa, Dudh Khadiaa, Erengaa Khadiaa, Munda Khadiaa, Oraon Khadiaa, Khandiaa, Paahaadi Khadiaa, 30. Kherwaar, 31. Khonda, Konda, Kandha, Nanguli Kandha, Sithaa Kandha, Kondh, Kui, Budaa Kondh, Bura, Kandha, Desia Kandha, Dungariaa Kondha, Kutiaa Kandha, Kandha Gauda, Muli Kondha, Malua Kondha, Pengo Kandha, Raja Kondh, Raj Kondh, 32. Kisan, Nagesar, Nagesia, 33. Kol, 34. Kolah Loharas, Kol Loharas, 35. Kolha, 36. Kol, Koli, Malhar, 37. Kondadora, 38. Koraa, Kora, Khaira, Khayara, 39. Koruaa, 40. Kotiaa, Kutiaa, 41. Koyaa, Gumbaa Koyaa, Koitur Koyaa, Kamar Koyaa, Musara Koyaa, 42. Kulis, Kulisa, 43. Lodhaa, Nodhaa, Nodha, Lodha, Lodh, 44. Maadiaa, 45. Maahaali, 46. Maankidi, 47. Maankirdiaa, Maankriaa, Maankidi, 48. Maatyaa, Maatiaa, 49. Mirdhaas, Kudaa, Koda, 50. Munda, Munda Loharaa, Munda Maahaalis, Naagabanshi Munda, Odiaa Munda, 51. Mundaari, 52. Omaanaatya, Omaanaaty, Amaanaatya, Omajaatya, 53. Oraon, Dhaangar, Uraan, 54. Paarengaa, 55. Parojaa, Parjaa, Bodo Parojaa, Barong Jhodia Parojaa, Chhelia Parojaa, Jhodia Parojaa, Konda Parojaa, Parajaa, Ponga Parojaa, Sodia Parojaa, Sano Parojaa, Solia Parojaa, 56. Pentiaa, 57. Rajuaar, Ijuar, 58. Saantaal, 59. Saoraa, Savar, Sauraa, Saharaa, Arsi Saoraa, Based Saoraa, Bhima Saoraa, Bhimma Saoraa, Chumuraa Saoraa, Jara Savar, Jaadu Saoraa, Jaati Saoraa, Juaari Saoraa, Kaampu Saoraa, Kampaa Souraa, Kaapo Saoraa, Kindaal Saoraa, Kumbi Kancher Saoraa, Kalaapithia Saoraa, Kiraat Saoraa, Laanjiaa Saoraa, Lambaa Laanjiaa Saoraa, Luaraa Saoraa, Luar Saoraa, Lariaa Savar, Maliaa Saoraa, Malla Saoraa, Uriyaa Saoraa, udiaa Saoraa, Raikaa Saoraa, Sudda Saoraa, Sarda Saoraa, Tankala Saoraa, Patro Saoraa, Vesu Saoraa, 60. Shabar, Lodhaa, 61. Sounti, 62. Thaarua, Thaarua Bindhani.

All these Tribes and sub-tribes are located in different districts of Odisha like: Koraput, Ganjam, Sundargarh, Sambalpur, Phulbani, Puri, Balangir, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Mayurbhanj, Kalahandi, Balasore, Cuttack, Malkangiri, Nawrangpur, Raygada, Nuapada, Gajapati, Sonepur, Boud, Nayagarh, and Deogarh. Similarly, about the north-eastern region says B. Singh, "an outstanding feature of the region is its kaleidoscopic demographic scene. Perhaps nowhere else in the country does one come across swift shifts of race, ethnicity, culture, language, within such a short spatial compass." (Singh 1998, p. 05) Odisha is also an equally important land with acute diversity and unity within.

3. The Great Adivasi Heritage: Possibilities and Specialties

The Adivasi are not only the indigenous tribes or people of this land but also they are the preservers of the great Indian and indigenous culture, science, technology and socio-political doctrines. A few things in this regard may be discussed here. The Adivasi people are they who-

1. discovered paddy for the first time in the world. (People of Koraput, Odisha). Even if, they have preserved the breed (*Kunda*) of paddy (*Oryza sativa*) which requires very less amount of water. This is an asset for the entire world in the present day and future context.
2. know and preserve the concrete knowledge about a large number of varieties of breeds of paddy and the conventional storing techniques.
3. (The Saora people) have discovered the pattern of even distribution of water in hilly area. The 'step cultivation' technique has been discovered by them only. So the entire credit goes to them.
4. have discovered the 'mixed cultivation technique' which is also a priceless gift to us, especially, in these present scenarios like radical climate change, ecological imbalance etcetera.
5. have 'good governance' and well advanced socio-political system in their society which runs selflessly and more smoothly than ours. (A happy blending of 'direct democracy' and 'monarchy/sovereignty' is found.)
6. are eco-friendly and live with the doctrines and attitudes and values which directly or indirectly help in protecting the environment. Different tribes have different socio-cultural doctrines, e.g. '*jaaheraathan*', (Das 2007, p. 07) different festivals, pre and post-festive rituals etcetera. Different "tribal movements" (Singh 1998, p. 2-3), their 'crystallization', 'conceptualization' and 'contexts' especially may be made out and chalked out thoroughly once more.
7. have a functionally true and valid democracy system which runs in the cultural and socio-political practice of the concerned tribe. Take for instance of distribution of land (forest area) by the clan leader for the sake of *Podu* cultivation. The leader decides the amount of land required depending on the requirements of the family on the basis of certain factors like:
 - a. Total member of the family,
 - b. Total number of earning heads of the family,
 - c. Total number of members fit for other physical labour and hard work, and
 - d. Total number of members unfit for work etcetera.

In this case, "the protection of forest and welfare of the forest dependant people" (Mishra 1998, p. 14) is required. So, steps must be taken in this regard by the public as well as the government.

8. preserve different typical combinations of herbs and medicines in general as well as special herbs and herbal product as food and medicines for different diseases. The indigenous knowledge and more research on this may open several new vistas in the field of medicine and health welfare.
9. give true liberty to both men and women in every sphere of life, i.e., starting from birth to death. In different socio-cultural and socio-economic steps like 'marriage', 'agriculture', 'family planning' and several other rituals both man and woman take the joint decision with a great bonding of understanding. From

this 'functional unit of any society' (family) one can easily observe and measure the societal health of the particular community.

10. in fact, preserve the indigenous art, architecture and cultures of the mainland. They are the only way to find and know our land before the pre-historic time (means the time before the *Aryan* came to this land).
11. are the source of several indigenous linguistic tools like sentence structure, words etcetera syntactically, morphologically and semantically. Who knows, the language they are using may be more advanced and more scientific and flexible than us. Hence, immense possibilities and alternative options are there with them.
12. have a beautifully balanced market system called 'weekly market'. Weekly markets of the Adivasi villages play a significant role in controlling and producing a balanced economical condition among the people or the members of the village. No man in an Adivasi village is found to be so poor and no man is found so rich. That means a large difference is not seen economically between the people of the village. That leads to a healthy and sound socio-economic life as a result. Another facet of the weekly village market of Adivasi village is they, mostly, don't export thing or products from outside. This implies that the total production and profit/loss remains within the system, i.e., within the village. This leads to an economic equilibrium.

Ergo, these tribes are our original wealth and indigenous property. Hence, these must be taken care of by each and every citizen. They are our silent ancestors who have never liked to come into lime light and try to be modern beyond a cultural circumference unlike us.

They always loved to stick to their own culture, tradition and indigenous practices. So, they remained within the same cultural matrix and thus got isolated in the trend of changing time. In fact, we have no root within our hand and hence we have been blown away by the changing wind. We do not have any root because we are not at all rigid about our own culture and customs and thus we accept various changes in the trend of time.

4. Some Typical and Eco-Friendly Habits

Some of the tribes believe that Sal (*Shorea robusta*) tree is their god and hence they protect the particular tree as well as the offspring of the tree and thus the population of this valuable and precious plant grows safely. Similarly, some of tribes (in general), have a sacred and sentimental concept of '*jaaheraathan*' which is again nothing but the group trees or a jungle. The Adivasi take the jungles as their sacred and religious institution like the Hindus, Christians and Muslims think their Temple, Church and Masjid. They believe the earth, the sun, the sky and the jungle and the hills and mountains are their deities, their mother and father in general and the genealogical parents are just a means to their existence. They believe that the birth of a baby in the clan is totally controlled by the willingness of the spirit of their ancestor and of course not by them. In many of the cases we can see that they are having many superstitious attitudes but in some cases we cannot ignore their scientific temper and the well organized pattern of society and social customs. They strongly protest to cut the jungles which directly and indirectly helps and affects our ecosystem and our environmental life.

5. Changing Winds versus Adivasi Socio-Cultural Values

Change is the fundamental law of Nature. But so far the nature of Adivasi people concern it is comparatively more rigid, more conservative and more devout, observant, orthodox and more prudent. But today, we encounter those people changing and accepting the new things in the trend of time and of course in the flow of change. There are different factors of change in socio-cultural values and economical, political facets of those indigenous people called Adivasi.

1. Globalization: By this major factor the "land, language and identity" (Gautam 2014, p. 170), the golden trio of cultural identity, have undergone the process of 'homogenization', produced a 'glocal' culture but lost the originality and the indigenous characters. Because, "one immediate impact is that all the rich variations in the cultural legacies will be eliminated in order to create the homogenized product." (Gautam, p. 171)

2. National and Regional Politics:

These play a significant role in it. However, education has also played crucial role in this process. For example, we can take the case of Nicobar island. "The impact of modern education is one of the most remarkable turning point, in change of social and cultural spheres of Car Nicobar. Apparently, spread of Christianity may be taken as a vital factor for bringing about changes in Car Nicobar culture." (Chattopadhyay 2001, p.123)

3. Growth of Modern Science and Technology: It is another major cause of disturbance in the purity and originality of the language, culture and socio-religious values. But contemporaneously, science and technology has eradicated many superstitions and negative attitudes and doings of the tribes.

4. Similarly, Religion, Education, Economy are three *trios* which inter-connectedly move the tribes and their cultural substrata in various ways which is needless to say. N.K. Bose, the then Minister of Tribal Affairs and professor of sociology describes "the decay of tribal people in east India in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and their assimilation into Hindu culture, cites the large tribal groups to the north of the Konds," (Boal 1982, p. 221) when he had a little knowledge about the demography of the Kond people, that "... a factor which helped the process of decay of aboriginal cultures was the virtual absence of any pride among either the Juangs or the Mundas with respect to their own culture." (Bose 1961, p. 72)

Like the tribal men the tribal women are also facing several problems. Tribal women are more creative and enjoy more liberty than women of any other religion or race. Dr. Lipi Mukhopadhyay says in this regard that:

"The life of tribal women folk has been deteriorating over the decades. Poverty, lack of basic necessities and exploitation by non-tribals have been the problems faced by all tribes, along with environmental degradation. Destruction of forests, the lifeline of tribal economy, has hit the tribals hardest." (p. 143)

Further, she has pointed out a serious problem to the tribal women and says, "There has been a significant erosion in their status due to the influence of Hinduism on tribal

culture. The status of tribal women has gone down as a result of the impact of social changes which affected the social structure of the tribal society. In social matters they have lost their freedom of choice, in economic matters, their independence and gained nothing significant in political and educational fields. Tribals are in a flux today, where they, and in particular, tribal women, have lost their original world but cannot derive any benefit from the 'new world' which only adds elements of agony and melancholy to the whole episode." (p. 144-45) Tribal women has lost her dignity and self-esteem comparatively than that of before and again "the status of women in the tribal societies is comparatively better than that of the women in general society" (Joshi 2015, p.98). It drags them to a psychological calamity. Therefore, they must be empowered through education and health consciousness programmes and also socio-economically and emotionally through engaging them in various skill development programmes. On the other hand, the Adivasis have been transformed variously by means of colonial and post-colonial forces. Different laws have been enforced in this regard in the name of 'nation building' (Bhengra, et. al. 1998, p. 33) of which the Adivasis again have been victimized. There have been "conflicts also with the traditional Adivasi system of self governance" (Bhengra, et. al. 1998, p. 33). However, in between these tussles the indigenous culture is still breathing underneath.

6. Conclusion

Ergo, on the basis of above criteria and factors-based situations it can firmly be concluded that the Adivasi people, their culture, societal pattern, economic, and most significantly their political motif and swatch etcetera are not only priceless indigenous property of any nation but also different assets for us economically, socio-politically, culturally, ecologically and even for our afar future concern. Their indigenous and scientific techniques must be adopted by us and more and more deep studies must be done on them in order to unveil a number of natural secrets where the answer of our secure future existence lies. Now, the time has come to re-think and re-conceptualize those doctrines, cultural values and rituals of the bonafied folk of the land.

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