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SOCIAL CHANGE IN INDIAN TRIBES

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Abstract: *The tribal communities did not evince significant social change till the commencement of British rule in India because due to the inaccessibility and remoteness of the areas generally inhabited by the tribals, it was not possible for them on the part of others to establish contacts. Due to lack of contact and interaction, tribal communities remained within the bounce of their social contours and cultural boundaries of long long years. In socio-cultural change, contact with 'reference groups' is a major factor, in other words tribal communities did not have contact with significant others whom they could have accepted as reference groups in situations of culture contact.*

Keywords: *tribal communities, social change, establish contacts, culture*

INTRODUCTION

Due to this and other inherent limitations it is not easy to study the progress of education among them, prior to independence. There is no doubt that a few anthropologists, welfare workers, missionaries and government officers posted in these areas, who established contacts with the tribals, have left valuable information about the conditions in which the tribals were living, but the information is rather scanty and does not give complete account of the deplorable conditions prevailing at that time. It appears that the colonial government in India also never thought seriously of taking any constructive steps for the educational and for that matter even social and economic development of the tribal people. For this reason, the tribals- remained educationally extremely backward. Educational backwardness accounted for their socioeconomic backwardness. Lack of education is a retarding factor.

DISCUSSION

A number of States initiated certain steps to introduce school education among the tribal communities living in different provinces. An idea of poor educational development amongst the tribal's can be had from what Shri A. B. Thakkar observed in 1931, as indicated in the following extracts reproduced from the report of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, "Educational grants to aboriginal areas have been meagre and inadequate hitherto. Middle School, Higher School and college education among the Adivasis is, of course, negligible, if not altogether zero. We can find a few aborigines who have received or are now receiving university education among the Khasis of Assam and the Mundas and Oraons of Chhotanagpur. At present, many Christian missionary organization and a few non-Christian Indian Bodies are conducting schools for aborigines with government aid in most cases. Their work is commendable as it, appears to be a drop in the ocean." Thus, the tribal's living in remote hills and forests remained influenced by the main currents of development attitude and did not get a fair deal, all along, either at the hands of the government or at those of their civilized neighbours.

TRIBE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In real effect, it was only after independence that the government focussed its attention on the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The makers of the constitution took special note of the condition in which these weaker sections lived and provided a number of safeguards for the promotion of their interests, including educational, in the constitution. Special mention, in this connection, must be made of the Article - 46 of the constitution in which it has been made one of the Directive Principles of State Policy to promote with special care, inter alia, the educational interests of weaker sections of the people, particularly the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. However, the usual social change was taking place in all tribal societies; but the pace of social change was faster among the settled agricultural tribes who were in frequent interaction with their neighbouring peasant communities and in some cases with the urban population. Such tribal communities were certainly ahead of others in respect of culture contact and social change. Conversely, the pace of social change is tardy among the primitive tribal communities who are more vulnerable, have less opportunity of interaction with advanced tribal communities and/or peasant communities. Therefore, when one looks at the total tribal scenario one notices that tribal communities are in different levels of acculturation. It is interesting to note the process of peasant village communities, by and large, their acculturation has been somewhat towards the Hindu

pole. Anthropological literature is replete with copious examples of peasantisation of certain tribes/Hinduisation of tribal communities, and thereby emulating certain caste features.

Hinduisation or caste formation among certain tribal communities, like the Kandha, Shabara, Bathudi, Bhuiyan, Gond, Juang, Jhadia Paraja in Orissa have imbibed a lot of characteristics of caste society. Within the context of tribal social milieu these tribal communities in their day to day life exhibit both structural and cultural features of caste system. More or less this was the general trend of acculturation among the Orissan tribes but also among the advanced tribal communities of other parts of the country, starting from Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan to Assam and Manipur through Bihar and Uttar Pradesh as well as in Central and South-Central India. Hinduisation is an upward process of acculturation. Along with Hinduisation, the process of tribalisation also took place. Non-tribal's who settled down in tribal areas under some socio-cultural constraints imbibed certain tribal characteristics. Some of them inter-married, particularly, non-tribal males married tribal women. They gradually learnt and spoke tribal language and practised tribal economy and participated in tribal rituals and ceremonies. Though for name sake the non-tribal's retained their caste identity, slowly they lost their caste endogamy, caste-based occupation and the distinguishing features of purity and pollution. In some cases the non-tribal's have adapted the tribal totems which is a symbol of clan exogamy.

CONCLUSION

Interaction between tribal communities and castes increased after independence manifolds with the expansion of communication facilities. The relationship between tribal communities and castes have been always cordial, reciprocal and homeostatic, although castes always maintained a big-brotherly attitude towards tribal communities because of their better education and economic well-being. This relationship has undergone change after the enactment of 73rd amendment of the constitution. Tribes are integral parts of Indian society and their culture comprises an important dimension of Indian civilization. However, the trend of horizontal and vertical mobility in Indian society is from folk -> peasant -> urban. These three segments can be analytically segregated in Indian civilization but in reality they constitute a complex of unity in diversity.

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