

INDIGENEITY AND THE INDIAN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM

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Abstract

India's indigenous communities, also known as Adivasis or tribals, have significantly contributed to the country's knowledge system across various domains. They have contributed to Cultural Heritage, Medicine, Agriculture, and Languages, among other areas. Adivasis have played a vital role in the development of Medicine, Agriculture, and Forestry by maintaining the ecosystem of their surroundings. They possess deep knowledge of medicinal plants, crops with potential nutrients, forest fruits and roots as a healthy diet, and traditional art forms ranging from painting to dance and music, most of which are of Adivasi origin. Adivasis invented aboriginal trumpets or musical instruments such as Bansuri, Dhol, Tasha, (Drums), etc. Folk dances and ballads are their best-skilled practices. It is believed that regional languages like Marathi, Oriya, and Bengali emerged from the fusion of tribal languages with Pali and Sanskrit. In the field of warfare techniques, Archery, being the by-product of Adivasis, has helped many in the past. Many Adivasi ruling Clans had their kingdoms, leading to socio-political developments such as the Gond Kingdom of the 10th Century.

Keywords: Adivasis, Agriculture, Forest, Culture, Indian Knowledge system, Disciplines, Women.

INTRODUCTION

The word Adivasi denotes the inhabitants of this planet. The Adivasi is a heterogeneous tribal group across the Indian subcontinents. The term Adivasis is a Sanskrit word coined by political leaders in the 1930s to convey the tribal and indigenous identity to them. The present study of Adivasi and their impact or contribution to the Indian knowledge system will study the basic aspects of their contribution and addition to the discipline-wise knowledge domains. The study also focuses on the acts of appreciation by the Adivasis. Despite their invaluable and substantiated contribution to knowledge addition, they have faced the challenge of environmental degradation, exploitation, and marginalization.

The Indigenous community has contributed to the IKS as follows:

Substantial knowledge of ecology: Adivasis possess a wide knowledge of traditional ecology. This includes sustainable farming practices, Herbal medicines, and forest conservation technologies. The Adivasis keep a deep knowledge of the local flora and fauna, and all the seasonal changes or weather patterns. Concerning that they keep changing the crops and way of farming. However. Protecting the ancestral lands has been the biggest challenge for them.

Traditional forest management and its conservation: Adivasi or tribals have a long history of managing and conserving Jungles and this has added up to maintaining the ecological balance of the surroundings. These people have brought much to the safety of the forests such as selective logging, agroforestry, sustainable forest management, fire management of the jungles, and shelters for animals, etc. Majuli Island is the finest example of the above management and conservation. Devrai, Devpada, Vandev, Vanrai, and Van (Ban) are all the finest examples of forest management and conservation maintained by the Adivasis. These are reserved forests in Adivasi terminology, wherein they are believed to have gods' residence, and therefore such places are not touched by them. They are never hurt. This tradition has perfectly worked in balancing the ecology of the surroundings.

Medicinal Knowledge: The tribals have a rich history of using plants and roots as medicinal resources. Right from Tulsi to Pudina and others, all such plants are preserved by the Adivasis. They have been mostly believed

in such plants for the medication of the community and wider use these days. For a simple cut to a burn, they still use a traditional medication and it has been in use for longer.

Festivals, cultural and social practices: Tribals have a rich practice of celebrating traditional festivals which makes us responsible towards our social responsibility. Celebrating social practices, rituals, and customs has marked their contribution to environmental protection. Each of the festivals maintains an ecological balance. Marriages still advocate a sense of togetherness and protecting their people. Animals too even worshiped like bulls, cows, and buffalos. However, the tribals have proved it to be full of traditional knowledge sources and the entire country has benefitted from it at large.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- Preservation of indigenous ideals and knowledge: The key objective of the study is to preserve and integrate tribal knowledge, tribal practices, and age-old learning methods into the present educational structures ranging from various domains like philosophy, mathematics, agriculture, medicine yoga, astronomy, etc.
- To incorporate this knowledge into education: It is to incorporate the IKS and Indigenous studies into the school and higher educational institutes and its curriculum in a scientific way. This may include forest management, tribal medicinal practices, traditional crop cultivation, natural farming, and the like.
- To promote cultural understanding in the curriculums: It is to expose the learners to the cultural understanding and the rich diversity of Indian cultural roots. This would also aim to integrate the educational tours and sightseeing for students with the verticals provided. This would enable learners to understand traditional Indian knowledge in general.
- Digitization and modernization of Adivasis customs and literature: The study also aims to suggest that the digitalization and modernization of Indian traditional and indigenous texts would enhance the knowledge picture of the present generation. This would make all the cultural heritage accessible to the learners.
- Promoting collaborations and research: This also aims to suggest that the modern sciences can work in collaboration with traditional knowledge holders and may amalgamate a new knowledge system for the generations to come. This would bring a revitalization of traditional knowledge and comprehensive developments in the learning processes.

METHODOLOGY

The present research is a constructive approach to the IKS learned and inherited from the Adivasis. It uses the methodology of a literature review on Adivasis and IKS. It has also evolved with reviews of existing research papers, books, and articles as secondary sources on the topic for comprehensive understanding. The data collected for the research is through personal experiences, interactions with local Adivasis, and the focus areas visits. IKS is located through their practices. The paper includes an introduction, methodology, objectives, and discussion part along with a conclusion relating to IKS for comprehensive understanding.

DISCUSSION

Indian Knowledge system has been popularized by the inclusion of NEP 2020 in the higher education system around the latest a couple of years. This is a crucial aspect of the new curriculum framework. It is being under the limelight, many of the areas have been in discussion for their importance and inclusion. This knowledge is not as recent as this new education policy and hence, the importance is given to the age-old phenomenon to be widely read and spread. In this regard, the researchers here have tried to build a discourse on the contributions of the indigenous people to this knowledge domain.

The Indigenous communities are crucial in contributing to the Indian knowledge system in a variety of aspects such as agricultural development, food security, and cultural heritage preservation. Adivasis from India plays a pivotal role in preserving and contributing to the IKS. These unique knowledge acts and traditions have substantially brought the development and maintained the biodiversity.

Adivasis have a close connection with the land and surroundings, which has enabled them to know about agriculture, herbal medicines, and other resources. Rahibai Popere, an Adivasi woman from Akole, the tribal tehsil of Ahmednagar district says, that she could bring out the chosen seeds of rice just because she loves Mother Earth. Additionally, she says that nature has taught her the way of choosing the seeds. She is the one, who brought a variety of rice seeds with healthy nutrients in them. Considering herbal medicines, it is not just a piece of knowledge but it benefits society in a broader sense. There are many herbal centers around run by the Adivasis these days. Honey, Arks, slimming remedies, hair fall medicines (Shikhhahi), and the like are the products helping society.

The relationship is still wide, talking about the art of painting and colorings, Adivasis have played a pivotal role in shaping the art. The tribals from Maharashtra have invented the Warli paintings, which are demanded worldwide. A Mumbai-based (Arey Colony) Konkna Adivasis has been a star painter of these paintings. Such tribals have substantially helped in contributing to IKS. However, their contribution to Paintings is not associated with one art but in linear order. Bambu arts, wood arts, leaf arts, colors made from woods, leaves, and fruits, etc. are also their contributions.

In the historical context, Lord Buddha has chosen the administrative management of the indigenous people and the way of management of their clans. Budha was inspired by indigenous participation in society welfare, caring nature, and pursuit of knowledge; hence, he developed his Sanghs based on the tribal nature for his world peace expedition. As mentioned above, Lord Budha has observed a model for the kind of society he wished to advocate, he is repulsed by how greed for personal profits can cause poverty, social inequality, and unending warfare. However, he saw hope for human society in the tribal republic where it was caste and discrimination-free. Hence, he modeled his Sanghs on tribal patterns of social interaction that have gender equality, respect for each member of the society, and respect for plurality.

Since India is a place for a multitude of Tribal communities, each of the communities has its own cultural and artistic practice, language, and historical trajectories. Being in a marginal state, they mostly have survived by maintaining a close relationship with their inherited lands. Therefore, many agricultural reforms have been visible with those tribals having a credit of.

In terms of local governance, we have learned many traditional management systems from the locals. Tribals have their local governments. To refer to Hansda Sovwendra Shekhar's, 'My Father's Graden,' 'The Mysterious Ailments of Rupy Baskey', and 'Adivaisis Will not Dance' are the finest examples of the local government in the Santhal community. The Khorda' is the leader of the village, who looks after all the people of his clan. He is also responsible for the entire Gods of the community to be worshiped and looked after. He also looks after the sacrifice and welfare of his community. However, this tradition is different for each clan and community ranging across India. Indeed we, have inherited this tradition of local management as a knowledge of such communities in general.

This local management is also a part of studies put forth by Dr. Govind Gare (IAS) From Nimgiri, a tribal village in the Pune district of Maharashtra state into his writings. The Warli Paintings, The Adivasi Jan Jati's, the Local Government, and other issues are mainly handled by him. His doctorate entitled, Tribal in an Urban Settings A Study of Mahadev Koli, has been instrumental in understanding the contributions of Tribals in IKS.

It is the tribals who built the foundation of equality concerning all forms of life be it a plant, animal, or land. There has been a deep recognition of mutual dependence on nature and human society. Hence, the Adivasis have many pioneering endeavors to their credit.

Sharing and caring is an integral part of any society and philosophy, tribals have shared it amongst themselves. The Adivasi Mullakurumba of south India, go for hunting, he shares it with all even those who are absent or sick and cannot join the hunting. A share for guests is also provided. However, not sharing remains difficult with him.

To talk about the domain of respect, the tribals have followed a highly evolved system of honor. It's always the entire race chipping in to honor and agreement is made by an individual member of the tribe. The individual dishonesty or deceit is punished severely. Doing such practice is banished from the family members and society.

Mahasweta Devi has shown in her writings, that both Shiva and Kali have tribal origins and Lord Krishna and Ganesha as well. She asserts that, in the 8th century, the tribal forest goddess or harvest goddess was absorbed and adopted as Siva's wife.

In societal stratification too, the Adivasis have played an important role. In a study of Brahmin lineages in Maharashtra Kosambi points out that many Brahmins gotras (Kashyapa) arose from tribal totems such as Kachhapa (Tortoise). Talking about Rajasthan Kosambi says, that Rajput rulers recognized the Adivasi Bhils as their chief allies hence they are the chiefs in some Rajput coronation ceremonies.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion drawn from the above discussion and discourse made in Indigeneity and IKS is that we understand the transformative potential of embracing India's Adivasis have a potential and rich cultural heritage, and possess traditional knowledge of varied domains. The IKS introduced in the NEP 2020, propelled us to investigate the traditional values and teachings that lead us to the holistic development of society and have made us look at the Adivasi and tribal communities and their contribution to the IKS. The Adivasis and IKS

have an integral participation in fostering of intellectual empowerment and societal rejuvenation. By integrating the IKS into the contemporary education system, we will undergo a profound transformation that would benefit the citizens and the global community in general. However, in this respect, Tribal contribution has been recognized. The researchers tried to reclaim the role of indigenous people in holding the position of inevitable aspect in preserving, cultivating, and disseminating IKS to the county and its overall development. Adivasis has given rise to substantial subjects of discussion in the Indian knowledge system. They too ushered it in a variety of domains mentioned and discussed above. This indigenous wisdom and cultural resilience will certainly position the tribals in recognition of IKS.

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