

Tribal communities of India: A case study of Oraon community

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Abstract:

India is a democratic and sovereign country, where people of all religion live together. India is a land of religious harmony maintains the equilibrium of keeping all the communities in one place.

As per the Constitution of the Indian Republic; there are total of 645 district tribes. The term "Scheduled Tribes" refers to specific indigenous peoples whose status is acknowledged to some formal degree by national legislation.ⁱ

According to Cambridge Dictionary, "Tribe is a group of people, often of related families, who live together, sharing the same language, culture, and history, especially those who do not live in towns or cities. In a considerably developed and civilized country like India, Tribal community in India has not seen enough daylight as an accepted community". (Press, 2016)

The regime has established provisions for adequate representation of tribes in their servings. To facilitate their adequate representation certain concessions have been offered, such as:

- (i) Exemption in age limits,*
- (ii) Relaxation in the standard of suitability*
- (iii) Inclusion at least in the lower category for the purpose of promotion is otherwise than through qualifying examinations.*

This research paper concentrates on the social status and the tolerance of the Oraon tribe in India. A brief introduction of Oraon community is as follows:

The Oraon tribes उराँव or Kurukh कुड़ुख tribe is tribal aborigines inhabiting various states across central and eastern India, Bangladesh and Bhutan. Oraons are the tribes of the Chota Nagpur Plateau. Live in east-central India, which is in Jharkhand; in Raigarh, Surguja, Jashpur districts of Chhattisgarh; Ranchi District of Jharkhand; Jalpaiguri District of West Bengal; Sundargarh District of Odisha, and also in Bihar and Bangladesh.ⁱⁱ The irons are one of the largest tribes in South Asia, numbering 1,702,663 persons in the 1971 censusⁱⁱⁱ.

They speak a Dravidian language akin to Gondi and other tribal languages of central India. The tribe is divided into numerous clans associated with animal, plant, and mineral totems. Every village has a headman and a hereditary priest; a number of neighboring villages constitute a confederation, the affairs of which are conducted by a representative council.^{iv}

Key words: Constitution, special provision, reservation, scheduled tribe, social welfare.

Introduction:

The Dictionary of Sociology defines the tribe as a “social group, usually with a defined area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organization. The term ‘tribe’ has a Latin root. It has carried different connotations in different countries. (Nitisha, 2015)

According to the 1991 census, 67.76 % of persons belong to Scheduled Tribe (ST) in different States and Union Territories excluding Assam, Jammu, and Kashmir. This constitutes 8.08% of the total population. (Varghese, 1991)

"For the 85 million scheduled tribes in India, the struggle to retain their identities and seek empowerment through our Constitutional framework has not yielded commensurate outcomes," Vice President Hamid Ansari said after inaugurating an international seminar on 'Adivasi/ST Communities in India: Development and Change'. (Agency, 2009)

The aim of this research paper is to discuss the plight of being a tribe, society's perception towards the tribal community. The research paper will focus on the social eminence of tribes of Jharkhand, particularly of the Oraon tribe.

1.1 Objectives of the study:

The objectives of the paper are as follows:

- To find out the status of the tribes in today's parlance.
- To know the perception of people towards the tribes particularly oraon tribe.
- To find out the level of acceptance of Oraon tribe in Jharkhand.

2. Social prominence of Oraon Community:

2.1 Progression of Oraon Community:

Oraons are the most progressive tribes of India due to their development in terms of education and worship in churches. They have progressed over the years and have settled in Metro as well as two tier and three tier Cities. Few good examples of this tribe are as follows:

- An Indian Congress leader Kartik Oraon, former State Communication Minister of India was the most educated Oraon.
- Albert Ekka was given the Paramveer Chakra award which is considered to be highest award for bravery in India.
- The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Ranchi district, Cardinal Telesphore Placidus Toppo is an Oraon.
- The President of South Carolina Business Community and a board member of Coastal Carolina University Oraon P. Smith are of the Oraon tribal community.^v

These examples clearly reflect the progression made by the Oraon tribe, which sets them apart from other tribes. These people have risen over the other tribes due to their hard work, perseverance and dedication. They have brought the glory to the Oraon community by earning the name and fame in society.

According to an old proverb "All that shines in not gold", similarly few good examples of progression of Oraon community does not state the truth of entire Oraon population, it does not reflect the clear picture of Oraon community.

3. Background and Problem:

Is the tribe facing any threat in terms of social acceptance or they are given equal opportunity?

The Vice President Hamid Ansari said, "The literacy rate of the STs at 41.1 per cent in the 2001 Census is far below the national literacy rate of 64.84 per cent. Their children suffer from high dropout rates and low female literacy." "Low level of infrastructure endowments and growing gap in infrastructure creation in tribal areas, as compared to the rest of India, has further diminished prospects for progress," he added.

Under the belt of oraon tribe, the Sarna's are known to be a popular community, the people of this community are basically located in villages and due to limited facilities the villagers have remained backward. They are not given access to basic facilities of clean toilets, electricity and other necessities. The majority of Sarna community is facing the problem in search of the job; there are limited /no

opportunity. Naxalite impose unnecessary rules on the Sarna's to leave their own religion to adopt Christianity. They are threatened to change the caste and adopt the religion of Christianity. The people in Dehat have remained backward because the facilities are limited.

The general problems faced by the adivasis are affecting both men and women. Poverty, exploitation, displacement, land alienation, illiteracy, lack of health facilities etc are such problems.

Social significance of Oraon Tribe is in today's parlance?

In today's parlance the social significance of Oraon tribe remains unchanged after 67 years of independence. The condition of tribal's is unpalatable. They are not accepted as part of community; because of the caste and creed .People of schedule caste have a feeling that they are one of us, not like us. Government grants them monetary and social structure benefits, but the monetary benefit does not grant them equality in the society moreover such grants are not the part of social integration.

Different categories of scheduled caste are given relaxation in education system, reservation quotas in jobs to bring them at par with other communities of India. But the fact of the matter is that they will gain respect through quality, not quantity, they are given preferential treatment, considered to be different because of poor education background. Tribes in India have not been accorded with the equality of opportunity or treated with greater attention. Tribes in India are at par economically but there is disintegration due to the lack of merit. Scheduled caste in India has a bone of contention for not being equal to others.

To facilitate their adequate representation certain concessions have been granted to the tribes by Government of India, such as:

- (i) Exemption in age limits,
- (ii) Relaxation in the standard of suitability,
- (iii) Inclusion at least in the lower category for purpose of promotion is otherwise than through qualifying examinations. (Mondal, 2015)

What is the perception of people towards the tribes particularly oraon skill tribe?

The tribal development, their rehabilitation, security, grants, safeguards and the welfare has remained limited to literature and the text books. The community lacks the equality due to our lustrous social system where in two people are not treated at par due to their social income status; the biggest drawback is that the first nation of India have remained under developed due to lack of accessibility to the general facilities i.e. clean toilets. Compared to other population groups, there is high infant mortality rate and malnutrition among scheduled tribes, who also suffer geographical and social exclusion, high poverty rate and "lack of access to appropriate administrative and judicial mechanism.

What is the level of acceptance of Oraon tribe in Jharkhand ?

Oraon tribe in Jharkhand are not well accepted. "The Oraons are described as an agricultural society. Tradition on agricultural work is less surrounded by the Oraons, while the involvement working in mining, quarrying, manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs within the industrial sector has shown a rising trend. They also have a considerable quota of workers in household performance. The Oraon Adivasis are the followers of Sarna religion which has views alike to Hindu religion".^{vi}

In rural areas, livelihood system is primarily dependent on combinations of agriculture, forestry and labouring. Due to very small holding and very low productivity of land, most households eke out a living by maintaining a diversified pattern of occupations. There is however small artisan communities of tribal's who lend out their services or engage in small scale processing and marketing

Suggestions:

Tribes are the first national of any country, but have remained deprived of basic facilities .They are spread everywhere but are far away from the small facilities. Their livelihood is generally dependent on agriculture, forestry and labouring. They earn meagre income, which is insufficient to meet the demand. Few suggestions for the development of this community are as follows:

- It is suggested that Government of India inclusive of districts should make efforts for their overall development. Be it any tribes they must be educated and for their education, the government has to ensure that children from all the house hold are given education by motivating them.
- Till the people will remain uneducated, they will not be able to improve their status in society.

- The adivasi population are struggling for their rights to self determination. Their conditions, experiences and struggles need to be dealt with separately and deeply.
- The Government must lay greater emphasis for the development of tribal areas.
- The tribes must be provided marketing assistance and remunerative prices to tribal are for the forest produce and agricultural produce. The government has started enacting the scheduled tribes and other traditional dwellers act, 2006 which recognizes and vests the forest rights and occupation in forest land in forest dwelling.

Conclusion:

The chief measures taken by Government are as many but they have to be developed at the root level and should be dealt with extreme care for the overall development of Tribes in India. It cannot be a one man show; it has to be carried forward by one and all.

Constitutional provisions safeguards and the other measurements taken by Government has to be regularised and practiced from the bottom line.

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ⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Scheduled_Tribes_in_India

ⁱⁱ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kurukh_people#cite_ref-1

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.everyculture.com/South-Asia/Oraon.html>

^{iv} <http://www.tribalzone.net/history/oraon.htm>

^v <http://www.indianmirror.com/tribes/orantribes.html>

^{vi} , Ray B.C. (2002). Tribes of Orissa the Changing Socio-Economic Profile. New Delhi: Gyan Books Pvt. Ltd.