UNIT 4 IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC CULTURE AND GLOBALIZATION ON THE TRIBALS

Contents

4.0 Objectives

4.1 Introduction

4.2 Ethnobotany

4.3 Economic and Cultural Situation of Tribals Today

4.4 Alienation of Adivasi Territories

4.5 Hope for Tomorrow

4.6 Let Us Sum Up

4.7 Key Words

4.8 Further Readings and References

4.0 OBJECTIVES

- To conclude the course of metaphysics with a deeper understanding of Being;
- To identify the notion of Absolute with that of God cautiously;
- To become aware of the tragic situation of tribals, especially due to globalization;
- To draw hope for *adivasi* by ongoing dialogue and democratic process.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This unit, that deals with the impact of science and culture, first talks of ethnobotany, an emerging branch of science, where tribal life style has significant contribution to make. Then we talk about the impact that globalisation, together with science, has on the Indian tribal society.

4.2 ETHNOBOTANY

Since the beginning of civilization, people have used plants as medicine. Perhaps as early as Neanderthal man, plants were believed to have healing powers. A discussion of human life on this planet would not be complete without a look at the role of plants. A complete record of the many thousands of plant species used for human functioning would fill volumes, yet historians have often tended "to dismiss plants as less than fundamental in history." In recent years, however, there has been a reawakened scientific interest in the fundamental role plants play in many cultures, including medicinal purposes. That is the story of today's ethnobotany. Ethnobotany is the study of how people of a particular tribe and region make of use of indigenous plants.

Ethnobotanists explore how plants are used for such things as food, shelter, medicine, clothing, hunting, and religious ceremonies.

The Task of Ethnobotany

Ethnobotany has its roots in botany, the study of plants. Botany, in turn, originated in part from an interest in finding plants to help fight illness, especially from tribal dominated areas. In fact, medicine and botany have always had close ties. Many of today's drugs have been derived from plant sources. Pharmacognosy is the study of medicinal and toxic products from natural plant sources. At one time, pharmacologists researching drugs were required to understand the natural plant world, and physicians were schooled in plant-derived remedies. However, as modern medicine and drug research advanced, chemically-synthesized drugs replaced plants as the source of most medicinal agents in industrialized countries. Although research in plant sources continued and plants were still used as the basis for some drug development, the dominant interest (and resulting research funding) shifted to the laboratory.

The 1990's has seen a growing shift in interest once more; plants are re-emerging as a significant source of new pharmaceuticals. Industries are now interested in exploring parts of the world where plant medicine remains the predominant form of dealing with illness. The tribal areas. for example, has an extraordinary diversity of plant species and has been regarded as a treasure grove of medicinal plants. The tropical jungles contain an incredibly diverse number of plant species, many still unexplored, many unique and potentially useful as medicinal sources. Scientists have also realized the study of the tribal cultures which inhabit these regions can provide enormously valuable clues in the search for improved health. To uncover the secrets of the rain forest with the help of tribal medical practitioners, is the challenge of ethnobotanists. And ethnobotany as a field is on the rise, which can hopefully provide better health system based on our traditional and tribal practices.

Folk Medicine

Coming to the Indian science, it is reported that India hopes to popularise the "folk medicine" of tribals. The Government of India has decided to "document, validate and popularise folk medicine practices of tribals across the country and even start institutes for their study to save these traditions from extinction." "Folk medicine is different from ayurveda, homeopathy or unani. These are local medicinal procedures practised by tribals across India. We are trying to document, digitise and scientifically validate them," said Verghese Samuel, joint secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. "Due to modern systems of medicine, this health heritage is losing its popularity. We are trying to save these good practices through the initiative," he added. The department of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Sidha and Homeopathy) of the Government of India is also involved in this project. Its director Sanjeev K. Chadha added: "Because of folk medicine practices, tribals in India have a very good immune system. If they are getting benefits out of these practices then there must be something good about these practices. These age-old traditions should not be lost in the wilderness. We will do research on these practices and record them. All the good practices would also be considered from patenting" (Lakra 2008).

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is Ethnobotany?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) How is folk medicine related to ayurveda?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.3 ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL SITUATION OF TRIBALS TODAY

The Constitution of India, which came into existence on 26 January 1950, prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth (Article 15) and it provides the right to equality (Article 14), to freedom of religion (Articles 25-28) and to culture and education (Articles 29-30). STs are specially affirmed and protected. Despite this, and after the largest "modern democracy" of the world has existed for more than half a century, the struggles for survival of Adivasis - for livelihood and existence as peoples - have today intensified and spread as never before in history. In this section, I base myself exclusively on the well-documented article of social scientist C.R Bijoy (2003) to focus on the problems faced by and possibilities offered by globalisation. We first begin with a historical analysis of the colonial and pre-coloinal times.

Dominated by the British

Over centuries, the Adivasis have evolved an intricate convivial-custodial mode of living. Adivasis belong to their territories, which are the essence of their existence; the abode of the spirits and their dead and the source of their science, technology, way of life, their religion and culture (Bijoy 2003).

Back in history, the Adivasis were in effect self-governing 'first nations'. In general and in most parts of the pre-colonial period, they were notionally part of the 'unknown frontier' of the respective states where the rule of the reign in fact did not extend, and the Adivasis governed themselves outside of the influence of the particular ruler.

The introduction of the alien concept of private property began with the Permanent Settlement of the British in 1793 and the establishment of the "Zamindari" system that conferred control over vast territories, including Adivasi territories, to designated feudal lords for the purpose of revenue collection by the British. This drastically commenced the forced restructuring of the relationship

of Adivasis to their territories as well as the power relationship between Adivasis and 'others'. The predominant external caste-based religion sanctioned and practiced a rigid and highly discriminatory hierarchical ordering with a strong cultural mooring (Bijoy 2003).

This became the natural basis for the altered perception of Adivasis as the 'others' in determining the social, and hence, the economic and political space in the emerging larger society that is the Indian diaspora. Relegating the Adivasis to the lowest rung in the social ladder was but natural and formed the basis of social and political decision making by the largely upper caste controlled mainstream. The ancient Indian scriptures, scripted by the upper castes, also further provided legitimacy to this.

It is sad that the significant role played by the adivasis in fighting the British is not recognised by the larger India. "In the early years of colonization, no other community in India offered such heroic resistance to British rule or faced such tragic consequences as did the numerous Adivasi communities of now Jharkhand, Chhatisgarh, Orissa and Bengal." (Lakra 2008)

Subjugated by Religions

The subjugated peoples have been relegated to low status and isolated, instead of being absorbed by the majority communities. Introduction of capitalism, private property and the creation of a countrywide market broke the traditional tribal and village economy based on use value and hereditary professions. All tribal communities are not alike. They are products of different historical and social conditions. They belong to four different language families, and several different racial stocks and religious moulds. They have kept themselves apart from feudal states and brahminical hierarchies for thousands of years.

In the Indian epics such as Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas there are many references to interactions and wars between the forest or hill tribes and the Hindus. Eminent historians who have done detailed research on the epic Ramayana (200 B.C to 500 B.C) have concluded that 'Lanka', the kingdom of the demonic King Ravana and 'Kishkinda', the homeland of the Vanaras (depicted as monkeys) were places situated south of Chitrakuta hill and north of Narmada river in middle India. Accordingly, Ravana and his demons were an aboriginal tribe, most probably the Gond, and the Vanaras, like Hanuman in the epic, belonged to the Savara and Korku tribes whose descendants still inhabit the central Indian forest belt. Even today, the Gond holds Ravana, the villain of Ramayana, in high esteem as a chief. Rama, the hero of Ramayana, is also known for slaughtering the Rakshasas (demons) in the forests (Bijoy 2003)

The epic of Mahabharata refers to the death of Krishna at the hands of a Bhil Jaratha. In the ancient scriptures, considered to be sacred by the upper castes, various terms are used depicting Adivasis as almost non-humans. The epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata, the Puranas, Samhitas and other so-called 'sacred books' refer to Adivasis as *Rakshasa* (demons), *Vanara* (monkeys), *Jambuvan* (boar men), Naga (serpents), *Bhusundi Kaka* (crow), Garuda (King of Eagles) etc. In medieval India, they were called derogatorily as Kolla, Villa, Kirata, Nishada, and those who surrendered or were subjugated were termed as *Dasa* (slave) and those who refused to accept the bondage of slavery were termed as *Dasyu* (a hostile robber).

Ekalavya, one of the tribal archers was so skillful that the hero of the Aryans, Arjuna, could not stand before him. But they assaulted him, cutting his thumb and destroying his ability to fight - and then fashioned a story in which he accepted Drona as his Guru and surrendered his thumb as an offering to the master! The renowned writer Maheshwata Devi points out that Adivasis predated Hinduism and Aryanism, that Siva was not an Aryan god and that in the 8th century, the tribal forest goddess or harvest goddess was absorbed and adapted as Siva's wife. Goddess Kali, the goddess of hunters, had definitely a tribal origin, claims Bijoy (2003).

Pushed into the Periphery

Little is known about the relationship between the Adivasis and non-Adivasi communities during the Hindu and Muslim rules. There are stray references to wars and alliances between the Rajput kings and tribal chieftains in middle India and in the North-East between the Ahom Kings of Brahmaputra valley and the hill Nagas. They are considered to be ati-sudra meaning lower than the untouchable castes. Even today, the upper caste people refer to these peoples as *jangli*, a derogatory term meaning "those who are like wild animals" - uncivilised or sub-humans (Bijoy 2003).

The Adivasis have few food taboos, rather fluid cultural practices and minimal occupational specialization, while on the other hand, the mainstream population of the plains have extensive food taboos, more rigid cultural practices and considerable caste-based occupational specialisation. In the Hindu caste system, the Adivasis have no place. The mainstream society of India has evolved as an agglomeration of thousands of small-scale social groups whose identities within the larger society are preserved by not allowing them to marry outside their social groups.

The subjugated groups became castes forced to perform less desirable menial jobs like sweeping, cleaning of excreta, removal of dead bodies, leather works etc - the untouchables. Some of the earliest small-scale societies dependent on hunting and gathering, and traditional agriculture seem to have remained outside this process of agglomeration. These are the Adivasis of present day. Their autonomous existence outside the mainstream led to the preservation of their socio-religious and cultural practices, most of them retaining also their distinctive languages. Widow burning, enslavement, occupational differentiation, hierarchical social ordering etc., are generally not there. Though there were trade between the Adivasis and the mainstream society, any form of social intercourse was discouraged. Caste India did not consciously attempt to draw them into the orbit of caste society.

But in the process of economic, cultural and ecological change, Adivasis have attached themselves to caste groups in a peripheral manner, and the process of de-tribalisation is continuously taking place. Many of the Hindu communities have absorbed the cultural practices of the Adivasis. Although Hinduism could be seen as one unifying thread running through the country as a whole, it is not homogenous but in reality a conglomeration of centuries old traditions and shaped by several religious and social traditions which are more cultural in their essence (and including few elements of Adivasi socio-religious culture).

Adivasis are not, as a general rule, regarded as unclean by caste Hindus in the same way as Dalits are. But they continue to face prejudice (as lesser

humans), they are socially distanced and often face violence from society. They are at the lowest point in every socioeconomic indicator. Today the majority of the population regards them as primitive and aims at decimating them as peoples or at best integrating them with the mainstream at the lowest rung in the ladder. This is especially so with the rise of the fascist Hindutva forces (Bijoy 2003).

Ignored by the Mainstream

Scientific culture and education made available to some tribals have improved them economic situation. Some of the new technologies like radios, mobiles and TVs also have changed their life-style. Such facilities along with the constitutional privileges and welfare measures benefit only a small minority of the Adivasis. These privileges and welfare measures are denied to the majority of the Adivasis and they are appropriated by more powerful groups in the caste order. The steep increase of STs in Maharashtra in real terms by 148% in the two decades since 1971 is mainly due to questionable inclusion, for political gains, of a number of economically advanced groups among the backwards in the list of STs.

The increase in number of STs, while it distorts the demographic picture, has more disastrous effects. The real tribes are irretrievably pushed down in the 'access or claim ladder' with these new entrants cornering the lion's share of both resources and opportunities for education, social and economic advancement. Despite the Bonded Labour Abolition Act of 1976, Adivasis still form a substantial percentage of bonded labour in the country (Bijoy 2003).

Despite positive political, institutional and financial commitment to tribal development, there is presently a large scale displacement and biological decline of Adivasi communities, a growing loss of genetic and cultural diversity and destruction of a rich resource base leading to rising trends of shrinking forests, crumbling fisheries, increasing unemployment, hunger and conflicts. The Adivasis have preserved 90% of the country's bio-cultural diversity protecting the polyvalent, precolonial, biodiversity friendly Indian identity from bio-cultural pathogens. Excessive and indiscriminate demands of the urban market have reduced Adivasis to raw material collectors and providers.

It is a cruel joke that people who can produce some of India's most exquisite handicrafts, who can distinguish hundreds of species of plants and animals, who can survive off the forests, the lands and the streams sustainably with no need to go to the market to buy food, are labeled as 'unskilled'. Equally critical are the paths of resistance that many Adivasi areas are displaying: Koel Karo, Bodh Ghat, Inchampalli, Bhopalpatnam, Rathong Chu ... big dams that were proposed by the enlightened planners and which were halted by the mass movements.

Such a situation has risen because of the discriminatory and predatory approach of the mainstream society on Adivasis and their territories. The moral legitimacy for the process of internal colonisation of Adivasi territories and the deliberate disregard and violations of constitutional protection of STs has its basis in the culturally ingrained hierarchical caste social order and consciousness that pervades the entire politico-administrative and judicial system. This pervasive mind set is also a historical construct that got reinforced during colonial and post-colonial India (Bijoy 2003).

The term 'Criminal Tribe' was concocted by the British rulers and entered into the public vocabulary through the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 under which a list of some 150 communities including Adivasis, were mischievously declared as (naturally) 'criminal'. Though this shameful act itself was repealed in 1952, the spectre of the so-called 'criminal tribes' continue to haunt these 'denotified tribes' - the Sansi, Pardhi, Kanjar, Gujjar, Bawaria, Banjara and others. They are considered as the first natural suspects of all petty and sundry crimes except that they are now hauled up under the Habitual Offenders Act that replaced the British Act! Stereotyping of numerous communities has reinforced past discriminatory attitudes of the dominant mainstream in an institutionalised form (Bijoy 2003).

There is a whole history of legislation, both during the pre-independence as well as post-independence period, which was supposed to protect the rights of the Adivasis. As early as 1879, the "Bombay Province Land Revenue Code" prohibited transfer of land from a tribal to a non-tribal without the permission of the authorities. The 1908 "Chotanagpur Tenancy Act" in Bihar, the 1949 "Santhal Pargana Tenancy (Supplementary) Act", the 1969 "Bihar Scheduled Areas Regulations", the 1955 "Rajasthan Tenancy Act" as amended in 1956, the 1959 "MPLP Code of Madhya Pradesh", the 1959 "Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation" and amendment of 1970, the 1960 "Tripura Land Revenue Regulation Act", the 1970 "Assam Land and Revenue Act", the 1975 "Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act" etc. are state legislations to protect Adivasi land rights.

In Andhra for example, enquiries on land transfer violations were made in 57,150 cases involving 245,581 acres of land, but only about 28% of lands were restored despite persistent militant struggles. While in the case of Kerala, out of a total claim for 9909.4522 hectares made by 8754 applicants, only 5.5% of the claims have been restored. And this is happening in spite of favourable judicial orders - orders which the state governments are circumventing by attempting to dismantle the very protective legislation itself.

The callous and casual manner with which mainstream India approaches the fulfillment of the constitutional obligations with reference to the tribes, and the persistent attempts by the politico-administrative system to subvert the constitution by deliberate acts of omission and commission, and the enormous judicial tolerance towards this speak volumes on the discriminatory approach that permeates the society with regard to the legal rights of the Adivasis.

Fragmented by Race, Religion and Language

The absence of neat classifications of Adivasis as a homogenous social-cultural category and the intensely fluid nature of non-Adivasis are evident in the insuperable difficulty in arriving at a clear anthropological definition of a tribal in India, be it in terms of ethnicity, race, language, social forms or modes of livelihood. The major waves of entry into India divide the tribal communities into Veddids, similar to the Australian aborigines, and the Paleamongoloid Austro-Asiatic from the north-east. The third were the Greco-Indians who spread across Gujarat, Rajasthan and Pakistan from Central Asia. The fourth is the Negrito group of the Andaman Islands - the Great Andamanese, the Onge, the Jarawa and the Sentinelese who flourished in these parts for some 20,000 years but who could well become extinct soon. The Great Andamanese

have been wiped out as a viable community with about only 30 persons alive as are the Onges who are less than a 100 (Bijoy 2003).

In the mid-Indian region, the Gond who number over 5 million, are the descendants of the dark skinned Kolarian or Dravidian tribes and speak dialects of Austric language family as are the Santhal who number 4 million. The Negrito and Austroloid people belong to the Mundari family of Munda, Santhal, Ho, Ashur, Kharia, Paniya, Saora etc. The Dravidian groups include the Gond, Oraon, Khond, Malto, Bhil, Mina, Garasia, Pradhan etc. and speak Austric or Dravidian family of languages. The Gujjar and Bakarwal descend from the Greco Indians and are interrelated with the Gujjar of Gujarat and the tribes settled around Gujranwala in Pakistan.

There are some 200 indigenous peoples in the north-east. The Boro, Khasi, Jantia, Naga, Garo and Tripiri belong to the Mongoloid stock like the Naga, Mikir, Apatani, Boro, Khasi, Garo, Kuki, Karbi etc. and speak languages of the Tibeto-Burman language groups and the Mon Khmer. The Adi, Aka, Apatani, Dafla, Gallong, Khamti, Monpa, Nocte, Sherdukpen, Singpho, Tangsa, Wancho etc of Arunachal Pradesh and the Garo of Meghalaya are of Tibeto-Burman stock while the Khasi of Meghalaya belong to the Mon Khmer group. In the southern region, the Malayali, Irula, Paniya, Adiya, Sholaga, Kurumba, etc., belong to the proto-Australoid racial stock speaking dialects of the Dravidian family.

The Census of India 1991 records 63 different denominations as “other” of over 5.7 million people of which most are Adivasi religions. Though the Constitution recognises them as a distinct cultural group, yet when it comes to religion those who do not identify as Christians, Muslims or Buddhists are compelled to register themselves as Hindus. Hindus and Christians have interacted with Adivasis to civilize them, which has been defined as sanscritisation and westernisation. However, as reflected during the 1981 census it is significant that about 5% of the Adivasis registered their religion by the names of their respective tribes or the names adopted by them. In 1991 the corresponding figure rose to about 10% indicating the rising consciousness and assertion of identity!

Though Article 350A of the Constitution requires primary education to be imparted in mother tongue, in general this has not been imparted except in areas where the Adivasis have been assertive. NCERT, the state owned premier education research centre has not shown any interest. With the neglect of Adivasi languages, the State and the dominant social order aspire to culturally and socially emasculate the Adivasis subdued by the dominant cultures. The Anthropological Survey of India reported a loss of more than two-thirds of the spoken languages, most of them tribal (Bijoy 2003).

Some of the ST peoples of Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, W. Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram have their counterparts across the border in China (including Tibet), Bhutan, Myanmar and Bangladesh. The political aspirations of these trans-border tribes who find themselves living in different countries as a result of artificial demarcation of boundaries by erstwhile colonial rulers continue to be ignored despite the spread and proliferation of militancy, especially in the north east, making it into a conflict zone.

The Adivasi territories have been divided amongst the states formed on the basis of primarily the languages of the mainstream caste society, ignoring the validity of applying the same principle of language for the Adivasis in the formation of states. Jharkhand has been divided amongst Bihar, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa though the Bihar part of Jharkhand has now become a separate state after decades of struggle. The Gond region has been divided amongst Orissa, Andhra, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. Similarly the Bhil region has been divided amongst Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan (Bijoy 2003).

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) Who were the self-governing "first nations"?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) How is the adivasi territory fragmented by language?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.4 ALIENATION OF ADIVASI TERRITORIES

Today land alienation marginalization of tribals is the main problem of adivasis. The total forest cover in India is reported to be 765.21 thousand sq. kms. of which 71% are Adivasi areas. Of these 416.52 and 223.30 thousand sq. kms. are categorised as reserved and protected forests respectively. About 23% of these are further declared as Wild Life Sanctuaries and National Parks which alone has displaced some half a million Adivasis. By the process of colonisation of the forests that began formally with the Forest Act of 1864 and finally the Indian Forest Act of 1927, the rights of Adivasis were reduced to mere privileges conferred by the state (Bijoy 2003).

Tribal Dependence on Land

This was in acknowledgement of the tribal dependence on the forests for survival and it was politically forced upon the rulers by the glorious struggles that the Adivasis waged persistently against the British. The Forest Policy of 1952, the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 downgraded these privileges of the peoples to concessions of the state in the post-colonial period (Bijoy 2003).

With globalisation, there are now further attempts to change these paternalistic concessions to being excluded as indicated by the draft "Conservation of

Forests and Natural Ecosystems Act" that is to replace the forest act and the amendments proposed to the Land Acquisition Act and Schedule V of the constitution. In 1991, 23.03% of STs were literate as against 42.83% among the general population. The Government's Eighth Plan document mentions that nearly 52% of STs live below the poverty line as against 30% of the general population (Bijoy 2003).

In a study on Kerala, a state considered to be unique for having developed a more egalitarian society with a high quality of life index comparable to that of only the 'developed' countries, paradoxically shows that for STs the below poverty line population was 64.5% while for Scheduled Castes it was 47% and others 41%. About 95% of Adivasis live in rural areas, less than 10% are itinerant hunter-gatherers but more than half depend upon forest produce. Very commonly, police, forest guards and officials bully and intimidate Adivasis and large numbers are routinely arrested and jailed, often for petty offences (Bijoy 2003).

Only a few Adivasi communities which are forest dwellers have not been displaced and continue to live in forests, away from the mainstream development activities, such as in parts of Bastar in Madhya Pradesh, Koraput, Phulbani and Mayurbanj in Orissa and of Andaman Islands. It is tragic that thousands of Korku children below the age of six died in the 1990s due to malnutrition and starvation in the Melghat Tiger Reserve of Maharashtra due to the denial of access to their life sustaining resource base. Adivasis of Kalahandi-Bolangir in Orissa and of Palamu in south Bihar have reported severe food shortage. According to the Central Planning Committee of the Government of India, nearly 41 districts with significant Adivasi populations are prone to deaths due to starvation, which are not normally reported as such.

Invasion of Adivasi Territories

The "Land Acquisition Act" of 1894 concretised the supremacy of the sovereign to allow for total colonisation of any territory in the name of 'public interest' which in most cases are not community notions of common good. This is so especially for the Adivasis. The colonial juristic concept of res nullius (that which has not been conferred by the sovereign belongs to the sovereign) and terra nullius (land that belongs to none) bulldozed traditional political and social entities beginning the wanton destruction of traditional forms of self-governance (Bijoy 2003).

The invasion of Adivasi territories, which for the most part commenced during the colonial period, intensified in the post-colonial period. Most of the Adivasi territories were claimed by the state. Over 10 million Adivasis have been displaced to make way for development projects such as dams, mining, industries, roads, protected areas etc. Though most of the dams (over 3000) are located in Adivasi areas, only 19.9% (1980-81) of Adivasi land holdings are irrigated as compared to 45.9% of all holdings of the general population. India produces as many as 52 principal, 3 fuel, 11 metallic, 38 non-metallic and a number of minor minerals.

Of these 45 major minerals (coal, iron ore, magnetite, manganese, bauxite, graphite, limestone, dolomite, uranium etc) are found in Adivasi areas contributing some 56% of the national total mineral earnings in terms of value. Of the 4,175 working mines reported by the Indian Bureau of Mines in 1991-92,

approximately 3500 could be assumed to be in Adivasi areas. Income to the government from forests rose from Rs.5.6 million in 1869-70 to more than Rs.13 billions in the 1970s. The bulk of the nation's productive wealth lay in the Adivasi territories. Yet the Adivasi has been driven out, marginalised and robbed of dignity by the very process of 'national development'.

The systematic opening up of Adivasi territories, the development projects and the 'tribal development projects' make them conducive for waves of immigrants. In the rich mineral belt of Jharkhand, the Adivasi population has dropped from around 60% in 1911 to 27.67% in 1991. These developments have in turn driven out vast numbers of Adivasis to eke out a living in the urban areas and in far-flung places in slums. According to a rough estimate, there are more than 40,000 tribal domestic working women in Delhi alone! In some places, development induced migration of Adivasis to other Adivasi areas has also led to fierce conflicts as between the Santhali and the Bodo in Assam (Bijoy 2003).

4.5 HOPE FOR TOMORROW

The struggle for the future, the conceptual vocabulary used to understand the place of Adivasis in the modern world has been constructed on the feudal, colonial and imperialistic notions which combines traditional and historical constructs with the modern construct based on notions of linear scientific and technological progress (Bijoy 2003).

Historically the Adivasis, unfortunately, are at best perceived as sub-humans to be kept in isolation, or as 'primitives' living in remote and backward regions who should be "civilized". None of them have a rational basis. Consequently, the official and popular perception of Adivasis is merely that of isolation in forest, tribal dialect, animism, primitive occupation, carnivorous diet, naked or semi-naked, nomadic habits, love, drink and dance. Contrast this with the self-perception of Adivasis as casteless, classless and egalitarian in nature, community-based economic systems, symbiotic with nature, democratic according to the demands of the times, accommodative history and people-oriented art and literature.

The significance of their sustainable subsistence economy in the midst of a profit oriented economy is not recognised in the political discourse, and the negative stereotyping of the sustainable subsistence economy of Adivasi societies is based on the wrong premise that the production of surplus is more progressive than the process of social reproduction in co-existence with nature. Bijoy concludes the article by asserting that for the adivasis, "with globalisation, the hitherto expropriation of rights as an outcome of development has developed into expropriation of rights as a precondition for development" (Bijoy 2003).

But some of the hopeful signs emerging from contemporary globalised and scientific culture. Some of them are:

English Education

The role of English education popularised by Lord Macaulay (1800-1859) has significantly contributed to the education of Indians in general and tribals in particular. English education was introduced by the British with the twin purpose of impressing upon the natives the value of western thought and of

preparing them for taking up jobs to assist in the administration of the country. Today's Indian economy and culture of today is significantly influenced by the English and it is hoped that English will further contribution to the development of tribal, since it acts as a means of getting out of their subjugation, both cultural and economic.

Emergence of Democratic Spirit

One of the positive significant features of globalisation is the spread of democratic ideas, not merely in the running of the state, but also in daily activities. Truly, democracy concerns collective decision making, by which decisions that are made for groups and that are binding on all the members of the group, just as it happened in the tribal societies earlier. The power of number that tribals and other marginalised sections of the society has liberating potential for them.

Scientific Temper

Our worldview and culture promotes scientific spirit and temper. The basic tenets of scientific culture are as follows: the world is understandable, scientific ideas are subject to change, scientific knowledge is durable and incomplete, science demands evidence, science is a blend of logic and imagination, science is not authoritarian, science is a complex social activity, generally accepted ethical principles. Coming to the tribal situation, we can hope that scientific culture and temper enables one to respect humans as humans, irrespective of their origin and culture. In this sense, scientific temper has led to humanistic ideals, which does not allow any human being to be exploited on account of their status.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answers.

1) What is the main problem of the *adivasis* in India?

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) How does scientific temper empower the tribals?

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we saw the impact of earlier domination and current globalisation on the culture and economy of tribals. We also saw some of the hopeful signs that emerge out of globalisation and scientific culture of today. [The student

is not expected to learn by heart the technical names and the data given in this unit. General familiarity with the content and situation is enough.]

4.7 KEY WORDS

Ekalavya : In the Hindu epic Mahabharata, Ekalavya is a young prince of the Nishadha tribes, and a member of a low caste, who nevertheless aspires to study archery in the gurukul of Dronacharya. After being rejected by Drona, Ekalavya embarks upon a program of self-study in the presence of a clay image of Drona. He achieves a level of skill far superior to that of Arjuna, Drona's favorite and most accomplished pupil. Drona eventually comes to know this and demands that Ekalavya turn over his right thumb as a teacher's fee. The loyal Ekalavya cripples himself, thereby ruining his prospects as an archer.

Ethnobotany : The scientific study of the traditional knowledge and customs of a people (especially tribals) concerning plants and their medical, religious, and other uses

4.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

Bhattacharya, K. *Silent Departure: A Study of Contemporary Tribal Predicament in Bengal Duars*. Kolkata: Papyrus, 2007.

Bijoy, C.R. (2003) "The Adivasis of India: A History of Discrimination, Conflict, and Resistance" PUCL Bulletin February 2003, *http://www.pucl.org/Topics/Dalit-tribal/2003/adivasi.htm*

Jha, A. *Traditional Indian Medicine: With Specific Reference to Buddhist and Tribal Medicine*. New Delhi: Research India Press, 2011.

Kabra, KN. *Dependence and Dominance: Political Economy of a Tribal Commodity*. New Delhi: Indian Institute of Public Administration, 1983.

Kujura JMa, Jha V. *Tribal Women Domestic Workers in Delhi*. New Delhi: Indian Social Institute, 2008.

Kulkarni, MG. *Problems of Tribal Development: A Case Study*. Aurangabad: Parimal Prakashan, 1974.

Lakra, Manav. "Adivasis and the Freedom Movement," *The Tribal Blood*, June 21, 2008 *http://the-tribal-blood.blogspot.com/2008/06/adivasis-and-freedom-movement.html*

Mahalingam, S. *Institutional Finance for Development of Tribal Economy*. New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1995.

Mahapatra, LK. *Tribal Development in India: Myth and Reality*. New Delhi: Vikas Pub. House, 1994.

Mahapatro, PC. *Economic Development of Tribal India*. New Delhi: Ashish Pub. House, 1987.

Patel, ML. *Changing Land Problems of Tribal India*. Bhopal: Progress Publishers, 1974.

Prasad, A. *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*. Gurgaon: Three Essays Collective, 2011.

Veilleux, Connie and Steven R.King, Ph.D. Linda Morganstein, (ed) (2009)An Introduction to Ethnobotany. *http://www.accessexcellence.org/RC/Ethnobotany/page2.php*