

## Adivasi Tribe : Nature And Concept

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### Abstract

In India Adivasi are called Scheduled Tribes. There are 573 Adivasi Tribes in India. Different definitions are applied for Adivasis. There are different stories include in relation with the creation of Adivasis. Adivasis have common ancestors and common leadership. The origin of Adivasis is living or non-living ancestors. Adivasis give more importance to drink, dance and music and these are interesting things of Adivasis. In the world Adivasi Tribes is different religion from any other religion.

**KEYWORDS:** Adivasi, Tribes, Indigenous, Territory, Language

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

The Adivasi Tribes live in many countries of the world. In India, the Adivasi Tribe is recognized by various names. There are 573 Adivasi Tribes in India. There are 47 Adivasi Tribes declared in Maharashtra. However, there are different views among the intellectuals as regards the concept of 'Adivasi'. Different concepts have been utilized for Adivasis. "Scheduled Tribes are called 'Adivasi', 'Mulvasi', 'Adim', 'Adimjati', 'Tolya'(Gangs), 'Vanyajati' and 'Girijan' etc."<sup>1</sup> Similarly the Adivasi are called 'Vanvasi', 'Ranvasi', 'Jangalche Raje', 'Langote', 'MulNivasi' [indigenous], 'Girijan', 'Bhumij' or 'Bhumijan', 'Aranyak', 'Scheduled Tribes' etc. These are the different names applied to Adivasi Tribe.

In an ancient literature and 'Smrutigranth' in India, there is a reference of Adivasi Tribe. According to Smrutikars, Adivasi tribes arose from 'Anulom-pratilom' anatomy relationship. In the epics, the 'Ramayana' and the 'Mahabharata', there is a reference of Adivasi Tribes entitled 'Shabar', 'Raks', 'Nishad', 'Kirat', 'Pulind' etc. All these are Adivasi Tribes. Valya Koli and Shabari in the Ramayana, Dashrath Koli, Ruggandha, Eklavya, Vyadh and Shikari [One who is responsible for Lord Krishna's death] were all Adivasis. In India, there were Gond Raje, Koli Raje, Bhill Raje etc. In the past Gondvan, Kolvan and Bhilwad, these territories were occupied by Adivasis tribes.

Adivasi are called Scheduled Tribes in India. There is no such definition for Adivasi in Indian Constitution. However, the President of India by order can include few groups in Scheduled Tribes.

Following are the definitions given by experts, thinkers and philosophers about Adivasi tribes:

### 2. Adivasi Tribe: Definition and Measures:

Section 342 of Indian Constitution, there is a term i.e. Scheduled Tribe. Indian Constitution does not give definition of Adivasi. Following are the different definitions of Adivasi tribes –

**i. Gillin and Gillin:** "Any collection of preliterate local groups which occupies a common general territory, speaks a common language and practices common culture is a Tribe."<sup>2</sup>

**ii. D. N. Mujumdar:** *“A tribe is a collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation.”*<sup>3</sup>

**iii) Dr. Revers:** *“A tribe is a social group of \simple kids, the members of which speak a common dialect and act together in such common purpose as welfare.”*<sup>4</sup>

**iv) Madan & Mujumdar:** *“A cluster of village communities which share a common territory, language and are economically interwoven is often also designated as tribe.”*<sup>5</sup>

**v) Bogardus:** *“The tribal group was based on the need for protection, on ties of blood relationship and on the strength of a common religion.”*<sup>6</sup>

**vi) E. B. Tylor:** *“A tribal group that lives in a special territory and speaks its dialect with cultural integration and integrated social organization is called Adivasi Tribe. They have common ancestors, common deity and common leadership. Moreover, people from their group are united with economic, familial and blood relations’.*<sup>7</sup>

**vii) W. J. Perry:** *“A tribe is a group speaking a common dialect and inhabiting a common territory.”*<sup>8</sup>

**viii) Imperial Gazettee:** *“A tribe is collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous though originally it might have been so.”*<sup>9</sup>

**ix) Pandit Mahadeoshastri Joshi:** *“Except the two big humanity groups i.e. Arya and Dravid, the people who existed before them and came from foreign countries and settled in hilly areas and forest are called Adivasi Tribe,”*<sup>10</sup>

**x) D. H. Mehta:** *“The difficulties are created due to the use of the word “Adivasi”. Adivasi is the different organization that has executed important role in the human history. Hence, its reference is made as origin.”*<sup>11</sup>

**xi) Dr. Govind Gare:** *“Adivasi means people living remote from each other geographically. They live in the hilly areas in the Nature.”*<sup>12</sup>

**xii) Dr. Gurunath Nadgonde:** *“After the end of Man’s situation of wandering, Man has settled here or there. Man has toiled a lot for the livelihood. From the ancient age to the modern era, man’s travelling shows this. Man has been settling from one place to another on any land. Few of them gave preference for living in the small villages in Nature. Few lived in the Industrious cities. Few being the native people lived in hills, remote mountains, rivers etc. The world of Adivasi is different and hence they are called as sons of land.”*<sup>13</sup>

**xiii) Sopandeo Chaudhari:** *“Adivasi people are the true sentiments of the mother. Adivasi are the relatives of forests, birds, trees etc.”*<sup>14</sup>

**xiv) Pandit Mahadeoshastri Joshi:** *“Except the races i.e. Arya and Dravid, the people who lived before them or those who came from other land are living in the forest or hilly areas are the local or forest communities are called Adivasi.”*<sup>15</sup>

**xv) Prof. Waman Shelmake:** *“Adivasi means one who kept first step on the earth and lived in hilly areas and valleys and one who secured his identity and all sadness of Mahagatha.”*<sup>16</sup>

**xvi) Adv. M. B. More:** *“Adivasi means people from hilly areas who lived among animals and who prayed animals and are the Girijan Vanwasis.”*<sup>17</sup>

**xvii) Dr. Vinayak Tumram:** *“Adavasi are the people who remain half naked, Vanwasi and wearing Langoty go for search of prey in jungles. Sometimes they are*

*called Jungly and Langote. Sympathetically, they are called Children of the earth and sons of jungles. Besides, they are called Giriraj and Adisantan of Bharatmata. Now a days, they are called Adiputra or Vanputra and Kings of Jungle. Indian Constitution has called them as Scheduled Tribes.*"<sup>18</sup>

**xviii) Dr. Maheshwari Gavit:** "Adim Community in which the ancestral mummies are found by the earliest people on the earth is called Adivasis. They have their existence in the primitive ages."<sup>19</sup>

**xix)** Adivasi Committee Council in Shillong in 1962 defined the term 'Adivasi' as follows –

'A group that uses the same language, evolved from the same ancestor, lived in a special territory, remained far behind in technology, illiterate, remained on blood relations and one that followed social and political norms honestly is called Adivasi Samaj'.<sup>20</sup>

**xx)** International Labour Organization recommended Adivasi as Indigenous and also called them 'Nonliterate'.

All the above anthropologists, Sociologists and Philosophers said that Adivasi lived remote from Cities and Modern world. Their language, marriage, territory, business, social and cultural norms seem to be of the same kind. Specific kind of lifestyle has been accepted by them. Adivasi came from different countries before the time of Arya and Dravid. Their specific identity is different from other castes. They found their Gods and religion among rivers, the valleys and hills in the nature. Every Adivasi Tribe is recognized by its own name. For example, Gond, Kollam, Bhill, Korku, Mahadev Koli, Tokre Koli, Malhar Koli, Pardhi Kokana, Varali etc. Every Adivasi considers himself as that of the same clan. Nevertheless, who is Adivasi? To whom shall we call Adivasi? are the critical questions. 'Aranyak', 'Langote', 'Dhartichi Lekare', 'Adiputra', 'Vanputra', 'Kings of Jungle', 'Criminal', 'Girijan' etc. are the titles for Adivasi. Gamson, Elvin, Ristley, Lasley, Shubert, Martin, A. V. Thakkar etc. called Adivasies as Aboriginal, Aborigines. Dr. G. S. Ghurve called Adivasis as Aborigines or Backward Hindu. Dr. Das called them 'Submerged Humanity', Dr. Bhau Mandavkar and Dr. Govind Gare called them 'Adim'. The Nargolkars called Adivasies as 'Kings of Jungle'. Dr. B. R. Ambedkar in his book 'Who Were Shudras?' called them Criminal Background Castes and forest Caste.

In Indian Constitution, they are called 'Tribe'. But they are not defined. The President of India under Section 342(i) can issue Notification and call an Adim Tribe as Scheduled Tribe and keep them in 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule. Hence, such a Tribe has got the rank of 'Scheduled Tribe'. British Government through the regulation of 1935 gave this Tribe a concept i.e. Scheduled Tribe.

With the above discussion, we come to the conclusion that today 'Adivasi Tribe' or 'Scheduled Tribe' is the concept used everywhere. Hence, the title 'Scheduled Tribe' is accepted and said that Adivasi Tribe means people having the characteristic the specific territory, same routine, same culture, same language or dialect, limited scope of land, different life-style, limited economy, limited knowledge, same ancestor, social integration etc.

Various philosophers, critics, thinkers have defined Adivasi Tribe. All these definitions and thoughts give few characteristics of Adivasi Tribe. Few characteristics of this Tribe are realistic. For example, Adivasies are illiterate, but today due to the contact with the literate people, they are becoming literate. Following are the few of the characteristics of this Tribe –

### **3. Adivasi Tribe : Characteristics:**

#### **1. Specific land or territory for living:**

Adivasi Tribe lives in a specific territory. This Tribe is far from the Modern world. *Tharu, Kumi, Naga, Khasi, Kachati* etc are the Nomadic Tribes who go from one territory to other territory. They live in Valleys, hilly areas. They lived in specific *Vade-pade* or locality.

## **2. Social Union with blood relations:**

Adivasi People consider that their origin and evolution are from the same ancestor. This ancestor is alive or dead? Who? When is our origin? All these questions are not answered to them. Still, they have belief that their origin and evolution are from the same clan. That's why, they consider themselves as blood relatives. They hence have social union.

## **3. Limited Scope of land:**

Adivasies have less scope of land in comparison to the modern world. This Tribe lives in a specific territory. The geographical territory is limited. Hence, Tribal relations are cordial and lovable. For example, *Tokare Koli* lives in Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka bordered Dhule, Jalgaon, Nashik, Pune, Thane, Dadra Nagar Haveli etc. They also live in Valley and Hilly areas.

## **4. Same Dialect:**

Language is the means of communication. It links two communities, groups etc. Every Adivasi Tribe has its own dialect. They have their own maxims, proverbs, *Ukhane*, Ballads, Folk Songs etc. They do not have written script. Hence, their dialect is transferred orally from one generation to other generation because all these people have deep interest in their literature. Now, few Adivasi Tribes write their literature in their own scripts. Folk Literature of Maharashtra Adivasi Tribe is written in Devnagri script.

## **5. Different Lifestyle:**

Every Adivasi Tribe has its own lifestyle different from the other communities. Their social relation depends upon the blood relation. Every person is not with each other due to any contract. Hence, the tribal people have cordial and lovable relations. Social control upon the tribe is efficient. They follow their own culture and civilization. They have their own beliefs, superstitions etc. They have integration in social and cultural life. Their food habits, apparels, cosmetics etc. are different from the other world. In brief, equality observed in their life style. Hence, social organization and social integrity is observed in this tribes which is not observed in other community.

## **6. Simple Economy:**

This is the significant characteristic of Adivasi Tribe. They have the only aim to fulfill their daily needs. Those things which are needed in their routine are taken special care by them. They do not take care of the markets, profit and loss etc. This deficiency is the major characteristic of the economy of Adivasi tribes. Only the limited production of daily needy things, cooperation among themselves, and fulfillment of minimum requirements, hard work and power of the nature are various things utilized by Adivasis.

## **7. Equal religion:**

Adivasi religion is the primitive and oldest religion in the world. Religion and its sequential following of norms have the great significance in the Adivasi Tribe. It often lives in the nature. Hence, their life is affected by the nature. To soften the supreme power among the men, the Adivasi people worship Ghost, Deity, Ancestors and Nature. To control the metaphysical powers in the nature, they through *Adivasi Bhagat* [Priest] perform enchantment and spiritual rituals. All these things have important place in their life. They believe in these rituals. Due to these rituals, their

attitude towards life has been confirmed. Hence, equal religion is the chief characteristic of the Adivasi tribe.

#### **8. Limited Enchanting Technology:**

There is limited use of technology and is backward in this Adivasi tribes. Net for fishing, hut, Cattles burrow, fencing compound for herds, lair for chickens, mud houses, limited weapons like bow and arrow, spear, axe and agricultural equipments are few ancient things used by the Adivasies. In brief, Adivasi Tribe has the limited enchanted technology as we consider their economical condition.

#### **9. Social harmony:**

The Adivasi Tribe has equal religion rigidity, equal dialect, equal culture, equal social norms etc. All these things show the integration of Adivasi Tribe and their social harmony. Their traditional norms, religious beliefs and cultural beliefs are deeply rooted in their life. They follow all these norms. They also evaluate their routine things by measuring them with these norms and beliefs. Hence, they have the common effect upon any event. We do not see difference in their life. So, there is social harmony in their life.

**10. The Adivasi Tribe** is caste group. The Adivasi people have the obligation to marry among their caste.

**11.** Dr. Thomar and Dr. Robin Tribhuvan have told the following features of the Adivasi Tribe –

- “i) Tribals live in isolated areas as culturally distinct groups.
- ii) They trace their origin with the oldest ethnological section of the population.
- iii) Tribal dialect, have no script.
- iv) Animism is one to the important aspects of their religion.
- v) They follow primitive methods of occupation such as food gathering, hunting and occasional fishing.
- vi) Drinking alcohol is linked with their ritual and ceremonial life.
- vii) Shyness as regards to social interaction with civilized societies is yet another characteristic.
- viii) Love for dance and music is yet another salient feature of their culture.”<sup>21</sup>

Today’s world is a world of Science and Technology. There is a change in the Adivasi Individuals and their families due to the cultural heritage, modernism and development. Hence, by considering the above mentioned norms and features, it is difficult to decide whether this Tribe is Adivasi or not? However, it is decided theoretically. In India, the Adivasi Tribes are 573. As per the 1991 census, the Adivasi Tribe have their population i.e. 806.64 Lakh. It is the 9.55% of the total population. In Maharashtra, it has the population i.e. 8.85%. As per the 2001 census, the Adivasi Tribe has population i.e. 85.77 Lakh. In Maharashtra, 47 Adivasi Tribes are declared as Adivasis. Geographically, Adivasis are dispersed in the three regions - Sahyadri region, Satpuda region, Gondvana region.

#### **4. Conclusion:**

1. A tribal group that lives in a special territory and speaks its dialect with cultural integration and integrated social organization is called Adivasi Tribe. They have common ancestors, common deity and common leadership. Moreover, people from their group are united with economic, familial and blood relations.
2. The Adivasi Tribe gives importance to their ancestors.
3. The Adivasi Tribe does not have their written script. Hence, Folk literature is transferred from one generation to other.
4. There is much illiteracy in the Adivasi Tribe. Drink, Dance and Music are their special interesting things.

5. The Adivasi Tribe makes marriage within Tribe. The people are strictly married within the caste.
6. It is considered that their origin is from living or non-living ancestors.
7. They have beliefs upon Ghost-spirits and the power of the nature.
8. The Adivasi Tribe follows the tradition and religious rituals strictly.
9. The Adivasi religion is the primitive and nature religion.
10. They have their occupation limited to their daily needs.
11. They give much importance to blood-relation.
12. The Adivasi Tribe is different from any other religion and caste in the world.

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