

**ORIENTALISM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE 'TRIBE': A  
SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS**

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## DECLARATION

This is to certify that the dissertation titled "**Orientalism and the Construction of the 'Tribe': A Sociological Analysis**" submitted by Dheeraj Kumar Kushwaha for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is my original work. This dissertation has not been previously submitted in part or full for any other degree or diploma of this university or another university.

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## CERTIFICATE

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*Dedicated*

*To my mother*

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# Chapter-1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Through colonization, British conquered the territory of non-western societies and established their colony in Asia and Africa. In order to sustain its domination and control on the native populace, a detail and comprehensive information was collected by colonial administration. Subsequently, it produced a large body of knowledge on various sections of native population, through the help of administrative mechanisms, missionary interventions, orientalist scholars, and social anthropologists. This reproduced the existing power relation between the colonizers and colonized. In the course of studying Indian society, orientalists and Indology scholars constructed the notion of Indian culture and civilization, which was the oldest one and established a connection with Aryan race and Indo-Aryan language family, but neglected and subjugated the other identities of the Indian societies. For understanding Indian culture and civilization, Orientalist scholars were relied on the religious texts and through these texts they had develop an understanding that the Indian society has characteristics of being static, timeless and spaceless (Cohn 1968: 7). Various measures have been applied by colonial administrators, such as, census enumeration, which classified and categorized various groups and communities into certain specific types and categories. Moreover, Xaxa (2003) focuses on the aspect of reinforcement done by colonial administrator-scholars. Tribe is also such a category which came into existence during colonial period, and portrayed as opposite and outside the larger Hindu society and civilization. Apart from administrative studies, anthropology emerged as a discipline to study the non-western, and primitive societies.

Anthropology emerged in colonial context to study the peculiarity of the native other, and it is often accused of being a child of colonialism. Post-colonial scholars have analyzed the whole literally construction done by colonial administrator-scholars and traced the linkages, similarities and disjunction between colonial and post-colonial knowledge construction on Indian society, particularly on tribes. Apparently, most of the post-colonial scholars who have written about tribe, directly or indirectly are influenced by the colonial constructed idea of tribe (Upadhyaya, 1996). Since the colonial period, an extensive work has been produced on tribal people in the form of administrative reports, monographs, gazettes, glossaries and anthropological writings. It has been utilized as a power tool in order to extend and strengthen

colonial rule over native population. This larger number of extensive knowledge production on tribal culture and society has constituted a new identity in the confluence of diverse socio-economic groups of people. Actually, the knowledge production about tribes in Indian context, has stigmatized and produced a large amount of prejudices and negative terms and connotations, which later got institutionalized through various processes such as, textualization, census enumeration, professionalization of anthropology etc (Dirks, 1996). Anthropology is considered as the colonial instrument which has been used for the study of 'others' in terms of language, race and culture. That's why, the way tribes have been established in colonial period later got challenged by nationalists and post-colonial scholars. Tribes have been defined in the opposition of Hindu civilization during colonial period, which became a defining principle and set the debate on tribal position in future as well.

Bhukya (2008: 103) argues that colonial administration has constructed the identity of Adivasis in the form of distinct society, as opposite to civilized society. Whereas in the context of isolation, the identity of tribes was conceived as a separate society vis-à-vis the larger society (Xaxa, 2005: 1365). Therefore, nationalist and post-colonial scholars have challenged the whole understanding on tribe which was produced in colonial period. Thus, their claim about tribal identity have generated new concepts and debates in post-colonial period. The concept of tribe in academics and administration vary from each other in Indian context. Most of the work on tribal people, either administrative reports or scholarly works, have been done by outsiders, who did not include the voices of tribal people. The role of orientalist scholars, Indologists, racial theory, use of anthropometric method for physical classification of human groups and other apparatuses have created tribal identity as primitive, backward, lack of education, and civilization etc. Hence, tribes have been situated from a long period of time in the last ladder of civilization (Bhukya 2008: 105). Large number of post-colonial scholars have analysed the situation of tribes in terms of its development by post-independence state. State has classified tribes as "STs" and several committees decided its characteristics in very narrow and stereotypical manner. As the state played a crucial role in identifying, including or excluding the community in the list of scheduled tribes, in the post-independence period it gained further legitimacy in terms of outlining the characteristics of the tribes for census operation, and policy making purpose. That's why the major idea behind this work is to trace the nuance understanding of orientalist interpretation of Indian civilization and its impact on the emergence of the category of 'Tribe' in Indian context. Furthermore, the continuity of colonial legacy in the works of post-colonial scholars, is also analyzed.



## **1.2 Understanding Orientalism**

Orientalism was the product of 18<sup>th</sup> century European social thought that was preoccupied with the nature and origin of 'civilization' mostly the oldest civilizations like Greek and Egyptian. After the discovery of India and its past, British orientalists started to reconstruct Indian civilization through Sanskrit texts and placed its knowledge within the various universal schemes of human history and through this process India became one of the antique civilizations (Upadhyaya 2002:30-1). Orientalists were totally dependent on classical religious texts which were the main sources for their understanding of Indian civilization. According to Singer and Cohn (1968) these texts were considered as the "accurate guides to the culture and society of the Hindus" (Singer and Cohn 1968: 7). Orientalist found that Hinduism is rooted in these texts so Brahminical Hinduism became the defining feature of Indian society. British took help from the Brahmin *pundits* and *sastris* (known as scholars of Hindu scriptures) for the interpretation of classical texts so it is not surprising that orientalists located Brahmans at the Centre of the social order (Upadhyaya 2002:31). In India orientalists had to depend on philologists, and indologists for the study of Indian society. These orientalists came from different countries and each one of them had their own way of interpretation to classical text. Brahminical interpretation of Indian society became important. Moreover orientalist started translation and codification of religious texts for understanding social reality. But this was not the adequate understanding of Indian society which did not go beyond Brahminical supremacy. Overall it was based on power relation also between 'orient' and 'occident'. Frozen, non-rational and unmoving are some images which have been used time and again for the classification of 'other' by orientalists and anthropologists in order to satisfy the academic romanticism of the outsiders. The other is mysterious in this discourse (Srivastava 2008:35).

## **1.3 Anthropology and Race Science in India**

The category of tribe emerged out of 19<sup>th</sup> century European debates about the history of mankind and the origins of the various races. Through the help of racial and evolution methods, ethnologists had classified Indian population in relation to other races of the world. Language and race became the important factor for linking the relation between the west and the east, Aryan vs. non-Aryan and Indo-European language. Risley developed the racial theory of caste to elaborate the Aryan invasion theory of Indian history. They developed an Aryan theory of Indian civilization where Brahmans were considered as Aryan who are civilized and Sanskrit speakers whereas other groups classified as non-Aryan and uncivilized. British government

tried to keep tribal community separate from other categories of Indian society. The primitiveness of 'Tribes' elsewhere was constructed in opposition to European civilization, in India 'Tribe' stood in opposition to Hindu 'civilization' (Beteille 1992; Skaria 1997) (cited in Upadhyaya 1996:5). Some of the historians such as, Romila Thapar (1978) says, "The curious situation of the arrival of the Indo-Aryan-speaking nomadic pastoralists in northern India who came into contact with the indigenous population (possibly the remnants of the urban civilization of the Indus) and regards them as barbarians" (Thapar 1978: 137). In the search of barbarian, in ancient period, distinction between Aryan and non-Aryan have been established in the form of language, very less in racial terms. Carol Upadhyaya (1996:7) says that due to the colonial rule, anthropological writings and administration of tribal areas created the condition in favour of protection of tribal from the Hindu society and civilization. Post-colonial Indian anthropologists and sociologists did not accept the isolation policy of tribal areas from rest of the civilizations notwithstanding, however, they accepted the classification, categorization and characteristics of tribal community constructed by ethnographers and perpetuate these features for the assimilation of tribes into Hindu fold. The debate is still continuing, that either tribes should maintain their identity or assimilate into mainstream society.

#### **1.4 Emergence of the New Social Category 'Tribe'**

Xaxa (2003) in his article, "Tribes in India" gave a comprehensive knowledge on tribes ranging from colonial to post-colonial period. Region, religion, language, caste, and tribe are those distinctions which conceived as an important factors for the formation of differences of Indian society. 'Tribe' as a new category was introduced by colonial administrators-scholar, during British period. By applying one of the most important intellectual and administrative instrument, that was decennial enumeration and classification of native populace into various (Xaxa 2003: 373) social categories.

Caste and tribe, according to some anthropologists, both are considered as the 'colonial construction' (Beteille 1995; Singh 1993) (Cited in Xaxa 2003: 374), because through enumeration and classification process its features were hardened. But Beteille (1995) argues that it is more appropriate in the matter of 'tribes' than the category of caste, because caste was already existed in India before the arrival of Britishers. That's why 'tribe' is considered as the colonial construction and part of modern consciousness. Tribe as category has always been projected as existed from a long time and represent some residual part of the past. All the features which were associated with certain communities came into existence through colonial

bracketing process which became a permanent identity marker for those communities. Reconstruction of identity into a new social category, especially in very negative and stereotypical manner determined the fate of these communities in modernity. Going beyond the dominant understanding of tribe as primitive Guha, S. (1999) proposes that we need to look how certain communities have been getting 'primitivized' in modernity. Moreover, the identification or categorization put forward by colonial administrators of tribe, was based on the clubbing of a heterogeneous group of people, which differ from each other on the basis of "physical and linguistic traits, demographic size, ecological conditions of living, regions inhabited, or stages of social formation and level of acculturation and development" (Xaxa, 2005: 1363).

When British government started to collect and write various records regarding Indian society, colonial state had clubbed diverse social groups under one category called 'tribe', later which was recognized without any critical analysis by post-colonial government. In the matter of categorization, British had the vital role but the idea was already present in Indian context where certain communities were described in a very stereotypical manner by elite group of people (Brahminical interpretation) in precolonial period. Therefore, interaction or dialogue between Britishers and elite notion of tribe had the significant background in the development of tribal category, that's why it becomes crucial to look back into history to see how the category of 'tribe' was being interpreted in the precolonial period.

### **1.5 Tribe at the Early Phase of Colonial Period**

In the initial phase, tribe and caste were used as synonyms and sometimes as cognate manner in administrative and ethnographic writings. Although administrative-scholars were not able to distinguish between both of them, further they formulated various criterion to differentiate from each other. Over the period of time, census officers used religion as a significant indicator to segregate tribe from caste. In every enumeration process, colonial administration had formulated various terms and terminologies regarding the new social group called 'tribe' but the standards were either insufficient or uncertain. In colonial period, tribes have been conceived as descents of common ancestors and living in barbarous and primitive conditions (Xaxa 1999: 1519). Nevertheless, the idea of 'tribe' or 'indigenous' in Indian context have been deconstructed by various scholars who have traced its origin back in colonial period.

Sumit Guha (1999)<sup>1</sup> relates the anthropology of 'tribe' with colonial power, where he argues that racial anthropology initiated by Risley developed the notion of Indo-Aryan origins and race got merged with caste and tribe. Later in subsequent phase, Indian elites (upper caste) have adopted the idea of Indo-Aryan and established a similar relation with Europeans whereas distinguished themselves from lower caste and adivasis by locating their position lower in the social hierarchy (Cited in Baviskar, 2005: 5106).

Gill (2007) in her article, "Politics of Population Census Data in India" analyzed the whole political agenda in the enumeration of census by colonial and post-colonial state. It was/is associated with the knowledge production and power, that's why it is used as an instrument to fulfill the political agenda of ruling class, either to reflect differences or homogenizing process. Therefore, the process of categorization was initiated. To comprehend the complex social reality of any given society, creates the urge of categorization. Without categorization, it seems quiet impossible to manage the whole social world. That's why census enumeration fulfills the need of the categorization in order to define the demographic and socio-economic space or data collection through new or replacement of earlier categories. In the census operation, various terms had been applied by census officers for clear and proper understanding of 'tribe' and distinction between tribe and caste, for instance, in 1881 as 'forest tribe', 1901 as 'Animists', 1911 as 'Tribal Animists' or 'people following tribal religion', 1921 as 'hill and forest' tribe, and in 1931 as 'Primitive Tribes', 'Backward Tribes in 1935, and 'tribes' in 1941. (Verma, 1990) (Cited in Ambagudia, 2011: 34; Xaxa, 1999: 1519; Xaxa, 2005: 377). Apart from such nomenclatures which was laid down by colonial census officers, various anthropologists and social workers have used other terms for 'tribes'. Indigenous people or aborigines or Adivasi, these are the alternative terms which have been used by administrators and anthropologists in their writings along with other names, for instance, 'so-called aborigines', 'Backward Hindus', 'ethnic minorities', 'fourth world' and 'tribes in transition' (Xaxa 2003: 377).

The main purpose behind the emergence of anthropology and sociology as a disciplines was to get detail and comprehensive information about Indian society. Anthropology has its own way of working, it was shaped for the colonial interest and considered as 'the handmaiden of the colonial state' (Xaxa 2005: 1365). But in the post-independence period, the role of anthropological writings and anthropologists for tribal policy in administrative field, has been neglected or used merely to serve the purpose of dominant political thinking which is totally

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<sup>1</sup> Guha, S. (1999), "Environment & Ethnicity in India: 1200-1991" Vol. 4, Cambridge University Press

different from colonial usage. Both the disciplines, anthropology and sociology, were not only used for the division of subject matter, but it also divided the world into two categories that is, the modern and the non-modern.

But in case of India, sociologists are basically refer as social anthropologists. Once, Beteille (2002) in his interview said that “Anyone who studies India, Africa, or Melanesia is an anthropologists, whereas to be a sociologists one has to be a specialized in western industrial Societies” (Beteille 2002: 236) (Cited in Patel 2011: xiv). Later in 1960s, anthropologists in the North brought a different perspective in the applicability of anthropology. Scholars have analyzed the role of “anthropological knowledge-that is the colonial exploits sponsored by imperialists states” (Patel, 2013: xiv)-, conceptualization of native people and civilizing mission. Through the help of various administrative practices such as census, the document of the state, the use of statistical tables, legal codes (termed ‘investigative modalities’ by Cohn 1997:4) and excavated the archives, these process got instrumentalized (*Ibid*).

## **1.6 Contestation between Missionary and Hindu Organizations**

Even in missionaries writings primitiveness was considered as key element. During the colonial rule, the communication between tribes and missionaries had begun and hence, tribes and low-caste Hindus who does not follow any religion as well as ‘exterior to and oppressed under Hinduism’ (2013:4). That’s why, Sahoo (2013) mentions that through social services they propagate their religious faith by raising various issues of health, disease, and education. Consequently, both missionaries and Hindu organizations have accused each other for religious conversion of tribes and lower caste people. Both have their own view point where missionaries considered tribes as animists and non-Hindus whereas Hindu nationalists criticize Britishers’ understanding of tribes as indigenous by referring it as a part of its ‘divide and rule’ policy (Sahoo 2013: 9). Hindu nationalists claim that there can be territorial gap between the both but they are interconnected with each other through culture that’s why they say, “tribals constitute an indispensable part of Hindu social and religious order” (Sahoo, 2013: 9). According to the conception of right-wing groups, religion is the prime factor for the identification of tribes. Although, it shows some similarity with colonial conception especially its relation with religious classification, however, there is disjunction in terms of neglecting its distinct tribal identity and addressing tribes as Hindus. Moreover, they oppose the status of those tribes who adhere to other religious traditions apart from Hindu religion. On the basis of religion itself, they argue that changing religious identity will cease a tribes to be tribes. Therefore it blocks

the other benefits as well granted by government to those tribal communities. In the post-colonial period where census has very important role in the formation of identity and status of any social category along with the state's interference with all political motivation, scholars<sup>2</sup> have argue that tribes have been classified as Hindus unless they adhere to any major religion. The attachment of Adivasi identity with Hindu fold in these texts became a replicating and reinforcing point by Hindu propagandists. These Hindu organizations want to convert these Adivasis into Hinduism through performing certain rituals, like purification acts. On the other hand, missionaries used the propaganda to civilize them through converting into Christianity. Moreover, it generated a controversial debate on religious conversions in India, that's why Sahoo (2013) says that various Hindu Organizations have also started using the same pattern of providing social services in tribal areas in order to curb the missionary's activity of conversion and relating them with Hindu heritage and trying to pave the path for natural absorption into Hinduism. But the major propaganda of Hindu organizations is to enhance the numerical strength of Hindus in the name of tribal welfare.

### **1.7 Role of Knowledge Production and Control on Colonial Society**

Bhangya Bhukya (2008) states that during the colonial period, a body of knowledge was produced and distinct groups of people were categorized as "tribes of India" which provided a common unity to the hitherto diverse communities. Knowledge production on tribes brought a large amount of valuable insights on tribal cultures and traditions and it has been used even by the anthropologists for the formulation of various anthropological theories. Over all it is associated with the political consideration which determines the collection of differences, omission of certain groups, deciding the social identity and strata of any group, creating a demarcation between groups in the form of us and the others, and gradually these communities got 'locked in' (Christopher 2002:406)<sup>3</sup> into specific categories or groups (Gill 2007: 401). Census data had/has been used in the collection of the information about various groups which reflects the power-knowledge nexus. These information provide 'a specific kind of legibility of the society' as well as it helps in the construction and maintenance of state. (Gill 2007: 241-

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<sup>2</sup> Xaxa (2005), Baviskar, A. (2005), "Adivasi Encounters with Hindu Nationalism in MP," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 40, No. 48, pp. 5105-5113, Nongkynrih, A k (2010), "Scheduled Tribes and the Census: A Sociological Inquiry". Shah, G. (1999) 'Conversion, Reconversion and the State: Recent Events in the Dangs', Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 34, No. 6, PP. 312-18.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher, A J (2002) "'To Define the Indefinable': population classification and the census in South Africa" Area 34, No. 4, pp. 401-408.

42). Colonial administrators used their administrative personnel, who were leaned towards anthropology, in writing and investigating about colonized people, for the collection and documentation of various information and knowledge. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, anthropologists from Europe and North America applied the evolutionary and ethnocentric perspective for the study of tribes. These information/data and knowledge has a strong relation with political power. These categories decide the characteristics and bring changes in the meaning and relationship between us and other. Therefore, “categorization of people and the information generated about such categories in a country play an important interconnecting and supporting role between power and knowledge” (Gill 2007: 241). Moreover, Nongbri states that tribal studies in Indian universities were dominated by Western perspectives where scholars were not able to keep pace with empirical experiences of lives of tribes. Tribes have been characterized in the form of transient category by colonial ethnographers, such as primitive, backward, having animistic belief, and rudimentary form of social organization, which is governed by mechanical solidarity in the Durkhemian sense (Nongbri 2003:19).

Various post-colonial scholars have analyzed the relationship of knowledge and domination which became an important instrument of colonial state by knowing the custom, culture and tradition of native people. As Edward Said, said and Bhukya mentions,

*“Knowledge of subject races or Orientals is what makes their management easy and profitable; knowledge gives power, more power require more knowledge (Bhukya 2008: 103)”*.

This knowledge-power relation can be traced in the speech of Curzon which he delivered in 1909 in the House of Lords where he mentions that not only language but familiarization with every aspect of East is important through which our position will be maintained in future as well. At the initial stage, European travelers’ account were used by colonial government as source, in order to govern their colony.

After the advent of British rule, through colonial political-administrative structure and war, annexation and conquest (Xaxa 2010) ‘tribes’ had been incorporated into colonial state and after that colonial rule and regulations were imposed on ‘tribes’ and ‘tribal areas’ against which tribal people had to revolt. Despite, following the non-interference policy by Britishers, later due to colonial economic and political set-ups opened the doors of tribal areas for outsiders. Therefore, a larger number of changes, for instance, intrusion of outsiders, changes in forest policy, taxes, commodification of land and alien judicial system, have to be faced by tribal

people which led them to begin a series of resistance against these policies (Nongbri 2003). It was basically an initiating point for the tribal studies in Indian context when these movements put a huge amount of pressure on colonial government to get familiarized with the tradition and customs of tribals. In Indian situation, tribes are nothing but a culturally isolated entity from Hindu civilization that helped Britishers to formulate different administrative policies in order to keep tribes in comparative isolation from general society especially caste society. Therefore, British government came up a different administrative structure exclusively applicable to tribes such as, The Scheduled Area District Act 1874, Government of India Act 1919 in which backwardness became an official documented criteria for tribal administration and Government of India Act 1935 divided tribal administrative territory into two, excluded and partially excluded areas (Nongbri 2003: 24; Xaxa 2003, 10).

These confrontations of tribal with colonial state has formulated a general assumption that tribes are culturally isolated from larger society. Tribal studies in Indian context framed through several phases which took place at both national and international level. It initiated with the establishment of colonialism which brought Anthropology as a discipline along with the process of modernization and change. Next phase emerged when sociology and social anthropology got shaped with nationalist orientation during freedom movement. After Independence, the process of Indian nation-state began with the high spirit of development, democracy and social justice, then again it molded the tribal studies into new version, and at last the involvement of ILO and UN at International level on tribal/indigenous issues proceeded debates and studies on Tribes<sup>4</sup>.

The conceptualization of tribes as the close relationship with larger society has created the necessity to develop some criteria which can differentiate tribes from non-tribes. Some criteria have been constituted by colonial administration led scholars in terms of religion where they defined tribes as animist or practicing tribal religion as well as complete isolation and no interaction and interconnection with rest of the society. The feature of religion had been used by various census officers till 1931 census operation. The administrative understanding of 'tribe' during colonial era came into existence in the form of administrative set-up, which was different for 'tribal' and 'non-tribal' areas. "In colonial administrative parlance the nature of such administration was described by terms such as non-regulation tracts, the schedule areas, or excluded and partially excluded areas" (Xaxa: 2005, 375). So, for the convenience of

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<sup>4</sup> Nongbri, T. (2003) pp. 20.



administrative work, certain group of people had been classified as 'tribe' without any explicitly described identification measurement.

## 1.8 Classification of tribe

In Indian context, according to Andre Beteille (1986), the identification of 'tribe' is more important than definition. Xaxa notes that there are two patterns through which 'tribes' have been defined, one by general theoretical reflections in anthropological theory, and another by providing theoretical ground for those group of people who have been already categorized as 'tribe' by administrative practices. "Tribe is a universal socio-cultural collectivity found in Africa, Australia, Asia, the Americas, and Europe" (Oommen 2011: 234). Oommen (2011) also mentions that religion can't be the static element to understand and describe them because either they can adhere to their 'original primal vision' or embrace any new 'world religion'. Bailey (1961) defined tribe in terms of segmentary features- that is tribes, besides being small in scale and restricted in the spatial and temporal range of their social, legal and political relations, also represent a structure of a definite type. His attempt to define tribe is nothing more than to bring out the differences between tribe and caste. Another Indian anthropologist Andre Beteille (1986) used historical approach to evolutionary approach in the identification and definition of tribes. As per his views, when tribe and civilization coexist, as in Indian and the Islamic world, a tribe is defined more by it being outside the state and civilization whether by choice or out of necessity, than as a definite stage in the evolutionary approach from simple to the complex (Beteille 1986: 316). Tribal societies also have internal differentiation and divisions. Later United Nation declared both the category of tribe and indigenous peoples similar to each other. Most of the tribes are referred from their ethnic or tribal names, which show linkages to their language or dialect. One of the major identification marker for tribes were their isolation and religious difference in relation to larger society. Tribe is socially constructed colonial category opposite to caste which is termed as ascriptive category. The term 'tribe' originates from Roman term *tribus* which were used for the classification of Roman population into three categories, like: "Tintienses, Ramnenses and Luceres"<sup>5</sup>. The way the term *tribus* had been used, its meaning and usage gets changed when it is used for the classification of people in the frame of social evolution. In order to govern and formulate various policies for population, British initiated the study.

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<sup>5</sup> Digal, Pratap (2016), "De-Construction the term "tribe/Tribal" in India: A Post-Colonial Reading" pp. 47, Tiplut (2003) pp. 53

The main proposition which Beteille (1986) proposed for the main identification marker of tribe is their distance from Hindu civilization apart from other characteristics which make them a heterogeneous community. Except from some states and Union territories, such as, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi, Chandigarh, and Pondicherry, tribal population is spread in all over India. Central India has a highest number (83 percent) of tribal population, whereas remaining eleven percent of tribal population constitutes in north-eastern region. In terms of language or linguistic classification, tribes have been broadly categorized under Indo-Aryan, Dravidian, Austric, and Tibeto-Burman. But mostly come under the linguistic category of Austric and Tibeto-Burman. Even in terms of physical traits, Negrito, Australoid, Mongoloid, Dravidian and Aryan are the groups under which tribes will be classified. Physical and linguistic classification of tribal communities overlap each other (Xaxa 2003). Anthropological understanding of Adivasi was different from caste in terms of its approach, perception and methodology as well. Nevertheless, post-colonial scholars always try to merge 'tribe' in caste. It started with official anthropology where racial theory produced by biologists helped colonial rulers to justify their colonial domination over inferior race. Therefore, further this racial hierarchy of human biology got used for their physical measurement by anthropologists. Races and languages of Adivasi were recognized as the oldest one where Negritos (oldest races) and Australoid (brown race) were one such racial categories whose presence were found among south Indian tribal groups and Indologists claimed that Austric was such oldest family language spoken by Adivasis in India. These racial, language classification along with physical measurement through anthropometry method established the notion that adivasis were those groups of people who are 'uncivilized' and 'primitive' and 'unchanged' in comparison to Aryans (Bhukya, 2008: 105). Later these notions got solidified by Census enumeration, monographs, ethnological notes and ethnographic survey of India, where adivasis were situated at the bottom of civilizational ladder. Physical classification done by Thurston's<sup>6</sup> through anthropometric method branded certain communities as habitual criminals. Moreover, his understanding of adivasi culture labeled them either similar to Hindus or primitivism. Due to the body measurement, certain tribes have been conceptualized as habitual criminals. Indeed, the impact of colonialism can't be neglected which increased the miseries of tribes who were already in disturbed state during pre-colonial period. The situation of some tribal communities,

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<sup>6</sup> Edgar Thurston was appointed by Rislely to collect data for ethnographic survey of India in Madras Presidency, in that consequences he produced seven volumes on tribes and castes of south India along with ethnographic notes.

for instance, Bhils and Gonds, went on that level where they reduced on the status of robbers, ‘criminal tribes’<sup>7</sup>, cruel, treacherous and savages (K. S. Singh, 1985: 120) (Cited in Nongbri 2003: 73). The situation of these groups of people during colonial period become a permanent identity marker through printed word in the history of civilized world. Moreover, Thurston’s classification of Adivasi tradition and customs was related to either similar to Hindus or reflect the symbols of primitivism.

## **1.9 Category of Tribe in Post-Independence Period**

After Independence, the main concern of the post-Independence scholars to show the linkage between tribes and mainstream society. Indian government has adopted varies measurements for providing the benefits and upliftment or enhancement of status of tribal communities and their integration in the mainstream society. Article 366(25) of the constitution defines scheduled tribes as – ‘such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be scheduled tribes for the purposes of this constitution’. According to Article 342-‘the president may, with respect to any state or union territory, and where it is a state, after consultation with the governor there of, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities which shall for the purposes of this constitution, be deemed to be scheduled tribes in relation to that state or union territory, as the case may be (Bakshi 2006: 140).

### **1.9.1 Different Interpretation from Colonial Constructed Notion of Tribe**

Anthropologists and Sociologists have also raised various parameters through which they tried to explain the nature of change, level of integration, and degree of incorporation or assimilation into mainstream or Hindu society. Scholars have adopted some references, for instance, caste, peasant, and class for the explanation of various changes. There are range of names, terms, nomenclatures, and features that have been dealt for the classification, definition, and for giving a common status to tribes. These nomenclatures have produced certain kind of images regarding tribes which was attached or became a defining features or marker for their identity. Throughout the colonial period, this distinction which had been produced by colonial administrator-scholars, later challenged by post-colonial scholars and old age linkages have been projected between tribes and non-tribal groups. These linkages, analyzed and conceptualized differently by D.D. Kosambi (1975), M.N. Srinivas (1977), N.K. Bose (1941),

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<sup>7</sup> Classification done by colonial administrators.

‘the Hindu method of tribal absorption’, Surjit Sinha (1962), have conceptualized this process of acculturation differently<sup>8</sup>. Kosambi and Bose introduced the ‘Brahminic-cum-technological model’ where adaptation of production technology from caste society craved the path for tribal integration. In contrast, Sinha (1962) gave emphasis on the role of state formation which provided a ground for the formation of various tribal dynasties in peninsular India. Even though, it does not neglect the role of Brahmans who played a vital character in spreading the cultural values and norms among people.

Going beyond the spectrum of brahminic and Kshatriya model, K.S. Singh proposed the ‘tribe-peasant’ and ‘tribe-artisan’ model (Nongbri 2003:30). N. K. Bose, who conducted a study in Eastern state of India (Orissa), analyzed the situation of tribes transformation into caste system through the adoption of caste based mode of production, where he argues, “the *jati* system of production with its superior technological base attracts tribes to it but when this happen they are accorded an inferior position within the social structure” (1941: 188-94). Even though mode of production within caste system which is considered as the specialization of occupations as well as the normative structure of caste become rigid where tribes gets situated at the bottom of the strata.

Most of the scholars have argued that the condition of tribes in India is not akin to the tribes of America, Australia, and Pacific Islands. In the context of India, scholars have propounded that tribes have a close interaction with the larger society and civilization unlike the other countries. Xaxa (2010) also accepts that influence of larger society can’t be denied and they have the close interaction with larger society. But, Beteille (1986) says that tribes are outside the state system in pre-colonial period but Xaxa (2010) and Upadhya (1996) identified that tribes had the political organizations at various levels. At the level of village, they were governed by headman but at the large scale, some of them even developed kingdom or integrated with the countless little kingdom of India. Historians, such as Thapar (1993) mentions that empire is not the unit of analysis in history rather it is janapada, where tribes live, which later gets evolved into state and kingdom. This social arrangement has developed two distinct lines of thoughts related to tribes, where colonial administrator-scholars tried to generate a distinction between tribe and caste, whereas post-colonial scholars emphasized on closeness. Like other communities, tribes are also under the process of change but these changes have always misconstrued but any process of change either towards caste, peasant or social differentiation

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<sup>8</sup> (Nongbri, 2003: 28), (Xaxa, 2005: 1364).

will not dilute their distinct social identities. Tribe as category became a part of Indian social reality after its application in administrative categorization process initiated by British administrators. Although, tribe as a term is applied for studying Indian society but in reality it was never a part of social relations, consciousness, and history like other social categories. At the initial phase of British ethnography in India, understanding and usage of the term tribe became very difficult because of the co-existence and very thin line of demarcation between caste and tribe. In order to get a clear demarcation and distinguish identity of tribes in Indian context, post-colonial scholars developed a large number of features, such as, “absence of exploitative classes and organized state structures; multifunctionality of kinship bonds; all-pervasive religion; segmentary character of social-economic units; frequent cooperation in the pursuit of common goals; shallow history; distinct taboos, customs, and moral codes; youths dormitory; low level of technology; common name, territory, descent, language, culture, etc.” (Pathy, 1992: 50) (Cited in Xaxa 1999: 1520).

### **1.9.2 Various Debates Regarding Tribe in Post-Colonial Period**

In post-colonial period, conceptualization of relationship of tribe-caste, methods of transformation from tribe to caste, and stages of incorporation, scholars have always projected in a diverse forms. Xaxa (1999) argues that transformation or any kind of change in tribes is always studied from those references which constitute or are part of dominant social structure, therefore, anthropologists and sociologists overlooked the fundamental characteristic of tribes, that tribes exist as a society like other dominant regional societies, for instance, Bengali, Oriya Assamese societies, etc. However, this conceptualization of tribe as a society gets underestimated due to two other conceptualizations, such as, type of society and standing on the particular stage of socio-cultural evolution. By negating the societal features of tribes, scholars constantly emphasizes on the various changes or acculturation rather than continuity within tribal society. Most of the studies conducted by social anthropologists and sociologists, in Indian context on Indian tribal communities, had only one purpose that was to identify those changes and transformation which could cease tribes as independent entity or tribes could no longer exist as tribe. Xaxa (1999) argues that tribes should get compared with other societies rather than caste and other categories which only reflects the aspect of change or transformation into larger civilization. Nongbri (2003) argues that in spite of various transformations, acculturation, interaction and acceptance of cultural values between tribe-caste, tribals are “*conceptually, culturally, and politically*” (2003:31) distinct from caste society even though if they are considered as highly Hinduised tribe.

There are two ways through which the conceptualization of tribal identity happens in Indian context. In one hand, distinctive identity of tribes have been accepted along with differences with larger Indian society or so-called civilization especially use as tool for conceptualization of both growth and transformation in Indian and tribal society respectively. This difference is understood just as one of type or one of the structure (Xaxa, 2005: 1364) where tribes are considered as outside the structure of larger Indian society but the aspect of interaction or the process of communication exist. Although, tribal as distinct identity in terms of languages, cultures, customs, traditions, and their social organizations get recognized. Even though, in this context, scholars consider that tribes eventually become the part of the larger society, they especially get a lower status in the organized and hierarchical structure of the caste system. On the other hand, this distinct identity has been neglected and refer them as Hindus along with maintaining the differences between two of them. G.S. Ghurye was the most prominent scholar who advocated this line of thinking. According to him, he divided tribal people, on the basis of acculturation and assimilation in the Hindu society, into three groups where the last group gets considered as the ‘backward Hindus’ and described as “imperfectly integrated classes of Hindu Society” (Ghurye 1963). Most of his understanding comes or get influenced from census data especially (1891-1931) classified by British census commissioners during colonialism. On these understandings he denies the difference between Hinduism and Animism (*Ibid*). Therefore, Ghurye’s formulation of tribes as ‘backward Hindus’ became a milestone for future discourse on tribes in India. His idea gets reinforced by Niyogi committee<sup>9</sup> by making citations from his book *The Scheduled Tribes*<sup>10</sup> as well as refrained and reiterated by right-wing Hindu social and political groups.

It is not negligible that religious practices of tribe and Hindus have certain similarities but overlooking the differences can lead only empirically and conceptually into a difficult situation. By overemphasizing on the aspect of tribes as Hindu challenges the whole understanding of evolution & development of Indian civilization where these two components are considered as

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<sup>9</sup> Niyogi Committee (1954) was set-up in the state of Madhya Pradesh for enquiring the activities of Christian Missionary regarding tribal conversion into Christianity. It refers as ‘Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee’ mostly known as Niyogi Committee. Voice of India in 1998 republished this report through the publishing house of Sita Ram Goel.

<sup>10</sup> The book got republished in 1963, earlier version of this book published in 1943 as “The Aborigines, So-called and their Future’ by Ghurye.

incompatible to each other. The aspect of natural religion<sup>11</sup>, which is given as identity marker for tribes, are as similar to other tribes of the world. So, Xaxa raises the question that tribes of other countries will also get classified as Hindu. In Indian context, Xaxa (2005: 1365) called it nothing but a ‘smacks of cultural and religious expansionism’. There is differentiation between the identification done by tribals themselves and outsiders such as, administrators, and academicians. For tribals, constitutional enumeration do not decide their identity rather than their closeness with their community either it gets included or not whereas other identify tribals who are included into the lists.

### **1.10 Niyogi Committee Report and Influence of Ghurye**

Niyogi Committee, after two years of research came into conclusion,

*“large numbers of dalits and adivasis were converting to Christianity, that the number of Hindus in the region was declining, and that the ultimate goal of Christian evangelistic work was secession-either in the form of a Christian-dominated state within the Indian Union or an independent Christian nation along the lines of Pakistan (Bauman 2008: 3)<sup>12</sup>.”*

Promises to provide education, employment, health or other social services were considered as the main method of conversion into other religious faiths. The formation of Niyogi committee as Bauman (2008) suggests “not out of concern for the spiritual state of converts so much as out of anxieties, real or perceived, about the survival of the fledgling Indian nation” (Ibid). Nevertheless, Committee had conducted an extensive enquiry, but it was biased as well where the perception or opinion of upper-caste Hindus have given more preference over Christians. Colonial and post-colonial working condition for anthropology vary from each other. In the era of colonialism, as accused, that discipline of anthropology was used for colonial benefits, whereas post-colonial state did not give emphasis on the views of anthropologist different from the dominant political thinking.

### **1.11 Debate Regarding the Tribal Policy: Elwin, Ghurye and Nehru**

Debate between Verrier Elwin and Ghurye added to the next step in tribal studies where Elwin’s study on Bagia (1939) and Agria (1942) led him to demand for ‘National park’

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<sup>11</sup> This term ‘natural religion’ had been applied on every tribal religion across the globe.

<sup>12</sup> Bauman, Chad M. (2008) “Postcolonial Anxiety and Anti-Conversion Sentiment in the Report of the Christian Missionary Activities Enquiry Committee” International Journal of Hindu Studies. 12.2, pp. 181-213.

(Nongbri 2003: 26) and protection policy in order to survive on their own terms along with little interference from outside world but this approach branded Elwin as “isolationist”, “no changer” and “who wished to see the aborigines reinstated in their own original ways irrespective of any other consideration” (Ghurye 1943, Guha 1999: 157) (Cited in Nongbri 2003: 26). Verrier Elwin in his article “*Issues in Tribal Policy Making*” defended his position of being accused as isolationist, no-changer, and a revivalist. Elwin asserts,

*“I do not happen to be either an isolationists or a no-changer. A revivalists? Yes, certainly, along with most of intelligent and artistic people who are trying to revive the beauty of the arts and music of India (Elwin 1960: 30)”*.

Further, Elwin cleared his standpoint on the changing context and as well as explained the circumstances when he proposed those ideas and policies. Despite supporting the policy of integration in the contemporary period, Elwin advocated for all rights and opportunities similar to non-tribals. For Elwin, education is the main responsible factor which can integrate tribals with non-tribals. On the position of protectionist, Sundar clubbed “Grisson, Elwin, Hyde, Hutton, Mills and other administrative-anthropologists” under one section despite their differences (Sundar 1997: 180).

Ghurye had the spirit of nationalism and nation-building which led him to classify tribes as ‘Backward Hindus’ (Ghurye 1963). Xaxa (2005) states that assimilation policy was contrary to the Ghurye’s conceptualization of tribe. It was nothing more than a strategy to challenge the Elwin’s position. However, both had to abandon their stand point and they supported the integration policy<sup>13</sup> for tribes. Ghurye thought that “every inhabitant of the Indian subcontinent was Hindu by birth (Bhukya 2008: 108). Therefore, in the context of Adivasi, he proposed that “*they were born on Indian soil, worshipped Hindu gods, and speak the same regional languages as caste Hindus*” (*Ibid*). Moreover, he rejected the term so-called aboriginals as well as adivasi because it depicts them as the original inhabitants. Ghurye’s understanding of tribal people has the mixture of colonial and nationalist favor, and for the purpose of nation-building, he tries to homogenous the distinct identity of tribes into the larger religious framework. Ghurye’s understanding of tribes as being ‘backward Hindus mostly assign with the notion that there is more resemblance between animism and Hinduism. Sundar (1997) says that debate

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<sup>13</sup> Integration “*As for the subject-matter, the view point presented in the book...was generally considered to be a novel one when the book was published in 1943. I had then not designated my particular point of view. I have now done so. I call it simply integration*”. Forward in ‘The Scheduled tribes’ pp. x.



between isolationist and assimilationist had the historical and political context. Anything which goes against the spirit of nationalism or unity of India as a nation, it was considered as agenda of divide and rule.

Contrary to these two scholars Nehru proposed the 'integration' policy for the development of tribes which is generally referred as middle path. He did not accept the views given by these two scholars because after the independence, it was not possible to keep certain group of people outside the development paradigm. Nehru described Elwin's isolationist policy as 'Anthropological Zoo' (McMillan, 2005) (cited in Ambaguidia, 2011:37). Therefore, he emphasized that by maintaining their culture and tradition, tribes can also take participate in development. He advocated the policy of Panchsheel (Ambagudia 2011: 39) for tribal welfare. But Xaxa (2003, 05) mentions that integration policy had the negative impact on tribes which led to their exclusion rather than incorporation in the mainstream society and tribal culture is being destroyed for the interest of majoritarian society. Oommen also reflect on the debate of assimilation and isolation and says that there in compare to South Asia indigenous culture had been recognized in North America (Oommen 2007: 172). Oommen quotes B.S. Guha (1951) who says that "the essential thing is to realize that the tribal and general population are inhabitants of the same country and their interests are closely interwoven for good or bad...the administration of primitive tribes should be so planned that the purpose is served by developing them as their own models and thoughts, but also gradually bringing them up as full and integral members of the country and participating like the rest in her joys and sorrows (Guha 1951: 44) (Cited in Oommen 2007: 172-173).

## **1.12 Statement of the problem**

Tribe as a new category and identity came into existence during colonial period, which included various diverse groups of people who were different from each other on the basis of socio-economic, political and developmental level. A large amount of knowledge on tribal people had been produced by colonial administrators-scholars later which transformed into a subject matter of anthropology when it got institutionalized. The way tribes had been understood in colonial period by various groups of scholars, later its conceptualization has been challenged by nationalists and post-colonial scholars. In post-independence period, tribal identity had been constituted as Scheduled tribes which is different from anthropological understanding of tribes because it does not reflect and enumerate the actual status and reality of social world views of tribes. The role of state in homogenizing process has been supported and extended by various

post-colonial scholars as well. But apart from these scholars, there are other anthropologists, such as, Virginias Xaxa, V.K. Srivastava and Bangya Bhukya etc. gave a different and critical analysis on tribe. The present work will take the theme of identity formation of tribes in India, in the context of various scholarly debates and will try to understand the role of orientalist construction of knowledge in the formation of tribal identity into particular way which has been adopted, contested and interpreted by nationalist and post-colonial scholars.

### **1.13 Research Objectives**

- (a). To understand the role of orientalism in the formation of tribal identity and its continuation in post-colonial period.
- (b). To understand the relationship between knowledge production and power in terms of tribal identity and its projection towards Hinduization.

### **1.14 Research Questions**

- (a). How has orientalism played an important role in the construction of the category, tribe, and in the formation of tribal identity in colonial and post-colonial India?
- (b). How have the orientalist constructions been adopted or appropriated in colonial and post-colonial academic discourses to argue for the Hinduisation of tribal identity?

### **1.15 Methodology**

The present work is based on historical method. It analyses the role of orientalism in the construction of Indian culture and civilization and its impact on the formation and understanding of tribal identity. This dissertation will look into the reports of Lokur and Niyogi committees, Government of India Act, constituent assembly debate and census data in the construction, formulation and understanding of tribal identity. Along with these government reports, this work will also use secondary sources, like articles, books, and journals. The writings of those authors who have primarily worked on the subject tribe will also be used. Writings of Ghurye, Srinivas and N.K. Bose have been analysed to understand the orientalist impact on Indian sociology in its conceptualization of tribe and tribal identity.

### **1.16 Chapterisation**

This dissertation contains total five chapters. Along with introduction, there are three major chapters. Introductory chapter will give an overall view about the dissertation and deal with

various concepts and debates which will be further discussed in the major chapters of the dissertation. The first chapter will deal with the debate of orientalism in the Indian context. It will examine the various debates related to British orientalism and indology in the development of Aryan debate, racial interpretation of religious Sanskrit texts, racial interpretation of caste system and the construction of Indian civilization, culture and history. Further, this chapter will analyze the relation between orientalist knowledge production with maintenance of British rule over India and the impact of Eurocentricism on Orientalism as well as in the emergence of two important social science discipline, Anthropology/Sociology. Most of the historians look back into history to examine the existence of tribal communities in India, prior to colonization.

The second chapter would focus on the construction of category of 'tribe' and various debates and contestation between colonial and post-colonial scholars. After colonization, British started exploring Indian community through conducting various studies and for that purposes they used various methods and techniques as well. Anthropological theories also helped in the study and understanding of Indian composition. It will bring various debates which started after independence where Indian scholars projected a different interpretation and understanding of tribal community of India by contesting and accepting various concepts and debates. Along with scholarly debates, this chapter will examine the role of administration in the formulation of tribal identity and policy. It is important because after independence, Scheduled Tribe became a constitutional identity and through constitution these group of people got various benefits and facilities. Though various reports of committees, government tries to provide a clear cut definition. Along with the committee reports, it will analyze the role of census enumeration in the construction and formulation of tribal identity.

The third chapter will study the work of three Indian social anthropologists/sociologists. Through their works, this chapter will explore the impact of Orientalist constructed idea of Indian culture and civilization and how they have used this construction in the study of tribal identity. Through the works of Ghurye, Srinivas and N.K. Bose, it will analyze their view on tribal people related to identity, changes and Hinduization process. This chapter will examine that how these scholars have used caste and Hinduism as the parameter to examine the change and transformation among tribes.

The last and concluding chapter will summarize the important points and findings will be discussed.

### **1.17 Significance of the Study**

Interpretation of Indian history, culture and civilization brought a major transformation Indian society. It started with the orientalist and indologist scholars who reinterpreted the whole Indian history and highlighted the role of caste and Hinduism in India. Through the interpretation of religious Sanskrit texts, it brought the debate of arya/dasa racial distinction, conflict and the story of conquest. Arya were projected as superior race over dasa. Through this study, I have tried to study the relation between Orientalist knowledge production and the construction of tribal identity as well as the impact of Orientalism on the work of three major scholars. This study will be an addition in the understanding of the tribal identity through the lens of orientalism.

## Chapter-2

### **Orientalism and Knowledge Production: Aryan Debate, Indology, and Tribe**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the role of orientalists, Indologists, and comparative philologists who contributed in the construction of the notion of Indo-Aryan language family and associated it with broader Indo-European language family. After the comparison of languages once again Vedic texts had been interpreted in order to search the identity of ‘Aryan’ race in Indian context. Risley and Max Muller are the two essential scholars who provided a legitimacy to the ‘Aryan Invasion theory’ by interpreting the caste system in terms of Race. Some of the scholars have highlighted the politics behind the orientalist construction of Indian civilization and culture. Over a period of time, utilitarian and evangelic scholars produced the critique of orientalist interpretation of India in order to provide a base for colonial policies. James Mill (1773-1836) produced a different idea regarding Indian history by publishing the three volume work ‘The History of British India’ (1817). Evangelicals (Christian Missionaries) also criticized the orientalist view. Even though these two group of scholars had different purpose they came together at one point to criticize orientalism.

Apart from Indo-Aryan, scholars identified the presence of Dravidian and Munda language family. Some of the scholars even emphasized on the interconnection between Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages through the identification of various common words. Over a period of time, when archeology became an important method for historiography, evidences of Indus civilization challenged the earlier constructed notions related with ‘Aryan’ race that they are the one who built Indian civilization. But, this notion of Vedic versus Indus civilization took a political dimension as well. The whole debate regarding the Aryan versus Indus civilization is not confined within the ‘community of scholars’ rather Aryan race identity and Aryan invasion theory are used by different group of people for political purposes too.

The political interest behind the construction and usage of the orientalist notion of Aryan identity turned the debate into different context which Indian intellectuals and nationalist utilized during the nationalist movement. Though archeological artefacts do not have enough evidences to support the theory of Aryan invasion and Aryan race, there has been an attempt to legitimize and apply these theories in Indian context. Furthermore, Dalit and Hindutva

groups introduced a new debate with regard to the same theory of Aryan invasion and Aryan race, where it became crucial to know that either Aryans are indigenous or foreigners.

## 2.2 Idea of Orientalism

*“Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident” (Said 1995: 2)”. This distinction became important as well due to the perception of Western countries towards oriental countries. “Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1995: 3). Further, Wallerstein (1997) also talks about the role of Orientalism through which Eurocentrism gets reflected in social sciences. He says that “Orientalism refers to a stylized and abstracted statement of the characteristics of non-Western civilizations. It is the obverse of the concept, ‘civilization’” (Wallerstein 1996: 99). Patel (2013b) mentions that there are various forms of Orientalism, such as, British, French German and others. But their way of analysis is different from each other. And scholars have used this tool of knowledge production in diverse areas like, art, history writing and literature.*

In the contemporary period after the publishing of the writings of Said, scholars became critical on the role of Orientalism/Orientalist way of knowledge production otherwise earlier it was a “badge of honour” (Wallerstein 1996: 99). Starting from middle age<sup>14</sup> to the nineteenth century orientalists are continuously doing the same work of reading the religious texts and learning the languages of non-Western civilization. Hence, “in the process, they continue to depend upon a binary view of the social world. In partial place of the Christian/pagan distinction, they placed the Western/Oriental, or modern/non-modern distinction” (Wallerstein 1996: 99). Understanding the culture of someone by others develop a different interpretation and that’s what it happened, the way culture was constructed by Orientalist it came under attack because *“The concepts do not fit the empirical reality; they abstract too much and thus erase empirical variety; and they are extrapolations of European prejudices” (Wallerstein 1996: 100).*

While describing about Orientalism, Said (1995) defines that “the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies...the orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image idea, personality, experience” (Said 1995: 1-2). In Comparison to America, British, French and others countries

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<sup>14</sup> Those time Christian monks who study non-Christian religions for better understanding but with the intention of conversion.

had the long tradition of Orientalism. Further, Said (1995) mentions that “Orient is an integral part of European material civilization and culture. Orientalism expresses and represents that part culturally and even ideologically as a mode of discourse with supporting institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines, even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles” (Said 1995: 2). Said (1995) mentions that in the contemporary period, as compared to Oriental studies or area studies, scholars less preferred to use Orientalism because of its attachment with the “high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth century and early-twentieth century European colonialism” (Said 1995: 2). Consequently, power, varied degree of hegemony, and domination are the certain traits through which relationship between Orient and Occident are mostly understood (Said 1995: 5).

Over time, when political scenario changed with decolonization, United State became a ‘superpower’ which used the existing theories of that period to produce the knowledge about “others” (Cohn 1996: 12). Edward Said (1995) combines the two theoretical concepts to explain the power of Orientalism. He used Foucault’s concept of knowledge and power and Gramsci’s concept of hegemony. Said (1995) considers Orientalism as a discourse and a discipline. Through this discipline “*European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period*” (Said 1995: 3). By describing the three different kinds of ‘Others’, such as, Savage, Black and Oriental others, Oommen argues that Oriental others are different in compare to Savage and Black. In Oriental other, civilization and culture are the base of Othering rather than race. Further, he (2007) argues that Edward Said (1995) had conceptualized the concept of Orient within singular frame, whereas there are three distinct forms of Orient exist and the process of Othering is also vary from each other. He classifies it as Near Orient, Far Orient and Middle Orient<sup>15</sup> (Oommen 2007: 178).

## **2.3 Colonial Discourse of India**

### **2.3.1 Orientalist Construction of Indo-Aryan Discourse in India**

Debate associated with Aryans started with the three major discoveries which came into existence in different historical periods. These discoveries either provided substance to Aryan debate or challenged it. These discoveries were “Indo-European language family (1789);

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<sup>15</sup> Near Orient includes Egyptian civilization region, Far Orient includes Chinese civilization region, and Middle orient includes Indian civilization region.

Dravidian language family (1816); and Indus Civilization (1924)” (Trautmann 2007: xx). Sir William Jones was the first scholar who proposed the idea of Indo-European language family in Calcutta where he established a genealogical relationship among six ancient languages. According to Jones these languages derived from a common original language “Proto-Indo-European” (Trautmann 2007: xxii) which is no longer in existence. Jones included “Sanskrit, Latin, Greek, Gothic (ancestor of the Germanic languages), Celtic (ancestor of Irish and Welsh), and Old Persian” (Trautmann 2007: xxi) which are described as branches of Indo-European language family<sup>16</sup> tree. The interpretation of Jones on Indo-European language family rationalized the Biblical narrative to tower of Babel<sup>17</sup>. The comparison of these language introduced a new area of study called comparative philology or historical linguistics and comparative method was used in the study of law, religion and society as well (Cohn 1990: 54).

In the above context, Sanskrit got recognized as historical language and challenged the established notion of eternal Sanskrit. John considered “Sanskrit as a *sister* language to the other four ancient languages, not as the *mother* language from which all the others have derived” (Trautmann 2007: xxii). Languages established a connection between different nations and moreover, history of India also got connected with Iran and Europe. With the emergence of comparative philology, Indo-Aryan language became the part of Indo-European language, hence it developed a mutual relationship which was referred by Max Muller as ‘Aryan brethren theme’<sup>18</sup> (Trautmann 2007: 89) or say “Aryan brotherhood” (Trautmann 1997: 172). Jones not only connected one language with other broader language family rather he got a command on Indian language as well. He describes his intention that “learning of language, in this case Persian and then Sanskrit, was deemed critical in the effort to rule India properly (and perfectly)” (Dirks 1996: xiv). Later, Western scholars assumed that Indo-European language family spread from Central India. Indo-Aryan term includes those group of languages which are spoken in North India and surrounding countries of India such as, “Pakistan (Sindhi and Lahnda or Western Punjabi), Nepal (Nepali), Bangladesh (Bengali), and Sri Lanka (Sinhalese)” (Mehendale 2007: 47).

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<sup>16</sup> Bernard Cohn also talks about the role of language family which had been used as a tool to provide a sense of history to Indian as well as to discern “the unrecorded languages of the past” (Cohn 1990: 54).

<sup>17</sup> According to this, God confused the languages of nations in Babylon and then dispersed from there to different directions.

<sup>18</sup> Kinship relation between British and Indians where language was overemphasized as compared to complexion.



After the establishment of Indo-Aryan language family in India where Sanskrit got the prominent place, but on another side, some of the scholars like, Francis Whyte Eills<sup>19</sup> found a Dravidian language family in south India. Eills included “*Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Tulu, Kodagu, and ‘Rajmahali or Malto, a tribal language of the Gangetic basin’*” (Trautmann 2007: xxiii). He also established the college of Fort St. George. Most of the scholars have given different views related Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language family. Some of linguistic scholars say that both the languages have borrowed many words from each other which is not found in other languages. Along with it, Sanskrit ‘texts incorporated various words from Dravidian languages. This exchange was developed through the co-existence and interaction process. These co-existences not only brought resemblance between languages but in cultures as well. Therefore, scholars remarked, “*Indian civilization is a fusion of different linguistic and cultural components that have converged over time*” (Trautmann 2007: xxv).

Scholars have identified four major languages in India- Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, and Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language (Thapar 2002: xxiii). Relation of Indo-Aryan and Dravidian languages were interpreted differently, some scholars such as, Emeneau and Burrow showed that certain words such as, danda (staff), Pinda (ball or lump) were borrowed from Dravidian languages and used in Sanskrit format and on the other side, Deshpande argued that Dravidian language was already present in North India therefore, due to this bilingualism Sanskrit adopted features from Dravidians.

Knowledge of agriculture, carrying various animals, wheeled vehicles, fixed, year-round settlements, and a complex, ranked social system transformed the identity of Aryans as pastorals rather nomadic. After the excavation of Indus civilization, it generated a new set of questions such as the relation between Veda and Indus civilization and language spoken by Indus people. In the context of relation between these two civilizations, some of the scholars such as, Marshall’s argues that Indus civilization existed prior to Veda however, there are various similarities between these two mostly in terms of religion and language. Trautmann (2007) mentions that on the basis of speculation, scholars came at the conclusion that Dravidian language family was spoken by the people of Indus civilization. Nevertheless, still the language of Indus civilization has not been deciphered.

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<sup>19</sup> Collector of Madras.

### 2.3.2 Racialization of Indian Civilization

By locating the scenario of world history in the emergence of race concept. Trautmann (2007) argues that after the end of slavery system in England and United states developed the division of labor on the basis of racial segregation. This racial division of labor provided the support to British Empire. This racial segregation was not confine within the domain of labor but it created division within social groups as well. That's why it developed the "*system of indenture labor involving larger number of Indian workers being shipped to distant colonies of the British Empire...to work for very low wages*" (Trautmann 2007: xxxii). Orientalist scholars have founded the linkage of Indo-European language family in Indian literature through which they propounded the theory of Aryan invasion in India.

Linguistic classification and racial science has been merged together to produce the Indian civilizational theory and in that consequences, the notion of race/ racial categorization has been used for the ethnological division of Indian population. Over the period of time, in mid-nineteenth century a new race science developed by Nancy Stepan<sup>20</sup> which challenged the linguistic basis of racial classification. In that context on the basis of features of human body racial classification started taking place where Arthur de Gobineau<sup>21</sup> said, as Trautmann mentions,

*"White race is responsible for all the ancient civilization, and that the decline of civilization is everywhere due to the intermixture of white race with other races (Trautmann 2007: xxx-xxxi)"*.

According to him, Germanic race is still pure one. His idea related to race purity generated a hatred politics of race in the world.

Aryan debate in India created a demarcation between social groups through the reinterpretation of Vedic texts in the terms of race, such as Aryans versus Dasas. Therefore, orientalist supported the new racial interpretation of Indian history where the differences between Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language had been interpreted as clash between "a light-skinned race bringing Sanskrit and civilization to an India inhabited by dark-skinned, savage speakers of Dravidian languages" (Trautmann 2007: xxxi). It is in this context, caste system emerged in

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<sup>20</sup> Stepan, N. (1982) "The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain 1800-1960" Macmillan, London.

<sup>21</sup> He was French aristocrat and published a four vol. Book "Essays on the Inequality of the Human Races (1853-55).

India which combined the two different group into one single society by mixing and segregation. Trautmann (2007) denoted this process as “the racial theory of Indian civilization”. (1997; 2007: xxxi). Nevertheless, after the discovery of Indus civilization, this racial theory got challenged and Aryans were no longer the bearer of Indian civilization.

At the present time, scholars have shown some agreement that due to the misinterpretation of Rig Veda this whole division of Aryan vs. Dasa (described as broad-nosed and dark-skinned) emerged. Upadhyaya (1996) and Patel (2006) both talk about the usage of ‘race science’ (Patel 2006: 384), Indo-European language family, evolutionary, Victorian social thought and Aryan invasion theory which all produced the theory of Indian civilization. Aryans are mostly described as “fair-skinned, civilized, Sanskrit-speaking group of people, whereas on the other side, aborigines as dark-skinned, savage people who were conquered by Aryans and some of them were partially absorbed as well (Patel 2006: 384). “The Dravidians, the ‘wild tribes’ and ‘aborigines’ were seen as racially distinct from the Aryan population and therefore not part of the Brahminical caste order (Bayly 1995: 171)<sup>22</sup>.

“Campbell’s ethnological survey of India divides the ‘Black aboriginal tribes of the interior hills and jungles’ from the ‘modern Indians’ who cultivate the soil” (1866: 13, cited in Trautmann 1997: 162)<sup>23</sup>. The whole endeavor was the classification of Indian population on racial basis in order to establish the historical relation among them. The historical linkages were further connected with the white ‘Aryan’ British (Bayly 1995: 168). Upadhyaya (1996) has mentioned the three ways through which the notion of tribes have been largely constituted in Indian context, which is also adherent to racial connotation. These three ways are- subjugation and exploitation of tribes by invading Indo-Aryan Hindus, concept of primitiveness based on racial and social evolutionary theory and cultural and political independence from ‘Hindu’ civilization (Upadhyaya, 1996: 6).

Notion of primitiveness was used for the description of tribes in India as well but reference groups are totally different for tribes. Hindu civilization for Indian tribes whereas European civilization for other tribes of the world were used as a reference group (Upadhyaya 1996: 5). Furthermore, Bates (1995) describes that district gazetteers and ethnological survey of India (1901) were the two other tools through which ethnological data of India was collected.

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<sup>22</sup> Bayly, Susan (1995) “Caste and ‘race’ in the colonial ethnography of India in Peter Robb (ed.) “The Concept of Race in South Asia”, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

<sup>23</sup> Trautmann, Thomas R. (1971) “Aryans and British India” Vistaar Publications, New Delhi.

Upadhyaya (1996) argues that over the period of time, aspect of primitiveness was being attached to cultures and societies (Upadhyaya 1996: 5).

### **2.3.3 Role of Max Muller and Risley in the Interpretation of Indian History and Culture**

One of the major aspect that emerged after the identification of two different languages in India was that Max Muller<sup>24</sup> associated these languages with different races. So, Muller emphasized more on race (blood) than complexion. He said that “*the comparison of languages shows that the same blood flowed in the veins of the soldiers of Clive as flows in the veins of the ‘dark Bengalese’*” (Trautmann 2007: xxx). Muller never visited India, however gave an influential concept of Aryan race regarding to Indian society. He mostly relied on secondary sources. His interpretation of Vedas created a division between arya and dasa on the similar basis of Aryan and Semitic respectively (Thapar 1993; 2002). Muller’s statement about Aryan nation and its conflict as well as victory over other races made Aryans as the ruler of history. Therefore, it seems that Aryans were involved in the mission to connect the whole world within the chain of civilization, religion and commerce (Thapar 1978: 201).

Max Muller did not find physical features as the major basis for differentiating the two social groups that is Arya and dasa. Further, it was found that the differentiation based on the noses was a misinterpretation. Max Muller also denied the relationship between language and race. Nevertheless, further, H.H. Risley<sup>25</sup> extended the notion of nose as ethnic marker and interpreted the caste system in term of race. Henceforth, the idea of nose became a marker of difference between two groups of people through the interpretation of Vedic texts but later it got strengthened by anthropometric method. Risley’s proposal to conduct an ethnographic survey<sup>26</sup> in India had the intention that “he could actually test in India the various theories about race and the human species that had been merely proposed on speculative grounds in Europe” (Dirks 2001: 50). In that context, caste system played an essential role which organizes the social relations through endogamy (Ibid).

For Risley, Indian tribes and castes are racially distinct from each other. So, through this method non-Aryan section of population can be detached from Hindus which includes “Kolarian, Dravidian, Lohitic, and Tibetan stocks” (Trautmann 1997: 199). In order to

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<sup>24</sup> A German Orientalist

<sup>25</sup> He published a book on ‘the people of India’ (1908) and multi volume work on ‘tribes and castes of Bengal’ (1892).

<sup>26</sup> To collect the physical measurement of selected tribes and castes.

substantiate the Aryan invasion theory, Risley proposed the racial theory of caste, where he proposed that caste hierarchy is made of the combination of dark people with invading Aryans. Tribes are mostly considered as remnants of aboriginal groups who were pushed into the remote forests and hill areas without conquering and absorbing them by invading Aryans (Upadhyaya 1996). Along with Risley, the role of Edgar Thurston<sup>27</sup> can't be neglected in the process of classification and collection on tribes and castes. Based on the notion of anthropometry, the notion of 'criminal tribes and castes' also emerged. These listed were being used in the policing of traditions. After conducting the study through anthropometric<sup>28</sup> method, Thurston said that *"the most important division of anthropology was anthropometry, which he defined as the measurement and estimate of physical data relating to people of different races, castes and tribes...anthropographic labours...scientifically demonstrating that the nasal index was lowest in Aryans and highest in jungle tribes"* (Dirks 2001: 185).

Cohn (1997) argues that after the mutiny of 1857, caste was used as a tool to create the concept of martial race as well for the recruitment of different communities. Bhukya (2008) in the context of tribes mentions that European racial theories were being used by anthropologists to create a division based on physical measurements. Furthermore, Indologists identified 30 different groups of languages and most of them were adhered to the Austro-Asiatic language family. They argued that languages spoken by Adivasis in India are the oldest one. Therefore, Bhukya (2008) writes that "Adivasi culture was branded as uncivilized, while the Aryans (Brahmin and the educated) race and Indo-Aryan languages were considered by orientalist scholars to be relatively civilized" (Bhukya 2008: 105). In order to counter the concept provided by colonial masters, Ray (1972) goes back to Indian history and searches for an Indian term from Indian languages such as Sanskrit and Prakrit. He proposed the term *Jana*.

#### **2.3.4 Concept of Varna**

Varna is the category which was extended in order to establish the theory of caste system. Varna was interpreted as 'colour' and divided into Arya-Varna and Dasa-Varna. Thapar (1993) mentions that four colors were associated with them as white, red, yellow and black (Thapar 1993: 29). "There is no reason to think that these Indo-European speakers formed a racially unitary and pure group. The principle markers of Aryan identity are cultural (linguistic and

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<sup>27</sup> He wrote seven volume work of 'castes and tribes of Southern India'.

<sup>28</sup> Typical physical features, intelligence and culture got linked together (Oommen 2007: 149).

religion) and not physical or racial” (Preface, Trautmann 1997: xviii). Dasas were generally referred in a negative traits, in terms of “rites, deities, speech, and resort to magic, the difference being essentially cultural and linguistic. They were wealthy in cattle and therefore, the Aryan speakers raided them for this wealth” (Thapar 2007: 125). On the other hand, Trautmann (2007) suggests that enemies were there but they were different from Arayn on the basis of language and religion not complexion. Even, the term ‘Aryan’ attached with ‘Indo-Aryan’ does not imply a racial connotation, rather it denotes “merely to an honoured person of high status, and in the Vedic context this would be one who spoke Sanskrit and observed caste regulations and rituals” (Thapar 1993: 4).

In Indian context there are various evidences available regarding the complexion of different groups. For instances, Madhav Deshpande<sup>29</sup> (1993) provided certain examples from pantanjali’s *Mahabhasya* where Brahmins are referred as “*gaura*, ‘fair’ and that no dark person can normally be identified as a Brahmin” (Trautmann 2007: 104), the other text Rajasekhara’s *kavya-mimamsa* provides a geographical distribution of people having different complexion. In the northern region, people are considered as *gaura*, ‘fair’, eastern side *syama*, ‘dusky’, south Indian as *krsna*, ‘dark’, west people as *pandu*, ‘pale, yellowish-white’ and people from middle country referred as mixture of *gaura*, *syama*, and *krsna*. (Ibid).

### **2.3.5 Reinterpretation of Indian History: Orientalist and Indology**

There were two groups of scholars. One who were producing and acquiring knowledge<sup>30</sup> about ancient Indian past while others group was critical<sup>31</sup> of the way knowledge was being produced (romanticizing the Indian past). Both were part of British administration. One of the important aspects behind the study of India was the European visualization of India as the survivor of earlier times. In this context, the evolutionists and the functionalists played an essential role in the study of Indian past. Caste was such a distinct feature of Indian society which combines religion and race together. Bhukya (2008) says that “*the construction of textual knowledge about Indian communities was a major genre in the colonial milieu as part of the project of colonial knowledge creation as a means of the extension of colonial power*” (bhukya 2008:103). Textual knowledge was used for the establishment of colonial rule, domination and control over native or colonialized people. It was transformed into the source of legal and

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<sup>29</sup> Deshpande, M.M. (1993) “Sanskrit and Prakrit: Sociolinguistic Issues” Motilal Banarsidas, New Delhi.

<sup>30</sup> It involves William Jones, Henry Colebrooke, and H. H. Wilson.

<sup>31</sup> It involves James Mill, Charles Grant (utilitarian) and Evangelical.

general administration. The language of knowledge and domination created a genre in colonial government to expand and widen its project of knowledge production. Earlier Aryans were considered as the constructor of Indian civilization, some scholars even claimed that proper history of India started after the coming of Aryans. Scholars have mainly developed two frame of arguments regarding the Aryans, one supports the idea of immigration of Aryans which is considered as a standard view, whereas on the other side, some argues for indigenous position of Aryans (Trautmann 2007: xiii). The mention two different views about Aryans in the Indian society provides distinct historical context. With regards to immigrant Aryans view, it is considered that Aryans came from outside in about 1500 BC, whereas the other view, that is Aryans as indigenous people, considers that they are not migrants but creator of Indus civilization. In contemporary time Aryan debate is not limited in the circle of scholars itself rather it has entered into public domain.

The above discussion suggests that by using the Aryan race theory, European scholars have tried to interpret Indian history as well as to ‘discover’ the Indian past. Consequently, Thapar (2007) says that *“the theory of Aryan race was not limited to historical reconstruction and is an example of how historical perceptions of the past can be related to conflictual situation of the present”* (2007: 107). Moreover, this interpretation and emerging theories after post-Enlightenment period, according to Thapar (1993)

*“Reflected...the political and ideological interests of Europe, the history of India becoming one of the means of propagating those interests”* (Thapar 1993: 2).

This can be discerned through various theories such as, Aryan invasion, Aryan/dasa distinction, and racial theory of caste. Nevertheless, *“Vedic sources were seen as the earliest survivals of common past. This village community of Vedic society was looked upon as the rediscovery of the roots of ancient European society* (Thapar 1993: 5)”. Therefore, for the study of Indian past, East Indian Company used to appoint various scholars with different administrative purposes and being an administrators they used to collect information on Indian law, politics, society and religion. Hence, it reflects that *“scholarly and administrative interests coalesced”* (Thapar 1993: 2).

Trautmann and Thapar (2007) both argue on similar lines that how Vedic corpus especially, Rig Veda had been interpreted in racial terms to describe the conflict and conquest of Dasas/indigenous people by Aryans. In this whole interpretation Varna played an essential role. By equating philology and ethnology in India, scholars try to understand Indian civilization

and society. Rig Veda is considered as “the most ancient literature and the key to Sanskrit and to Hindu civilization” (Thapar 2007: 108). But on the question of validity of Rig-Veda, as a source for the interpretation of Indian past Trautmann (2007) says that “we are often baffled by the difficult, metaphysical, and allusive poetic style and the archaic language of the Rig Veda. The Veda was not composed to give us a lesson in history” (2007: xv). Racial separateness and conquest became the demarcation and provided a base for the emergence of caste system. Similar to Indo-Aryan language, Dravidian language family inferred as Dravidian race and considered as racially native to India. Debate regarding the beginning of Indian history is mostly associated with who is the indigenous and alien or say rightful inheritors of the land. In that context at the contemporary period, historians, like, Thapar (2002) suggest that it is impossible to decide who is indigenous and alien because intermixture of people and ideas change the communities and their identities. Moreover, Thapar suggests that “to claim historical continuity in allotting indigenous or alien status to particular groups in the creation of contemporary identities is unacceptable, for identities are neither permanent, nor unchanging, nor transparent” (Forward Thapar 1996: xvi).

Romila Thapar in her various seminal works<sup>32</sup> talks about the interpretation and emergence of Indian history where she talks about the role of European scholars who interpreted Indian history in terms of how they understand history. European interpretation opened the new ways to understand the Indian history which is still influential in many ways. European interpretation of Indian history, culture and civilization reconstructed the whole identity of India and affected the identities of various social groups as well. It started with the orientalist who were the part of British administration and work as British officers. They were the one who initiated the interpretation of Indian past based on the religious texts. But this study and acquisition of knowledge of Indian past was not untouched from knowledge and power relation. Therefore, she mentions that the “Interpretation of the Indian past, growing out of these studies, were inevitably influenced by colonial concerns and interests, and also by prevalent European ideas attempt to understand the world-view of those who were teaching them” (Thapar 2002: 4).

### **2.3.6 Role of Indology and its relation with Social Sciences**

Indology which was pioneered by Britishers (earlier attached with East India Company) for the understanding and learning of Indian language down the line had loyalty for British Empire.

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<sup>32</sup> Thapar (2002) “Early India: From the Origins to AD 1300”; Thapar (1993) “Interpreting Early India”; Thapar (1978) “Ancient Indian Social History Some Interpretation”.



Indology as an approach had been used by many sociologists in order to understand and interpret Indian society based on the assumption of the uniqueness of Indian culture and society. Indology came into existence during colonial period for the systematic study of Indian civilization by relying on the books such as, “classical texts, manuscripts, archaeological artefacts, philological data and symbolic expression” (Sharma, 2005: 48)<sup>33</sup>. Indology developed in two forms of knowledge production first, as a discipline and second, as an approach in Indian sociology but it contains variety of schools and methods. Prior to the establishment of sociology, Indology was already an established discipline that’s why most of Indian scholars have combined Indology and sociological approach while studying any aspect of Indian society. For the study of Indian civilization which is considered as unique in nature other than Indian concepts, and theories can’t be an appropriate framework. Therefore, scholars have applied the interdisciplinary method but especially focused on historical and philological methods for the investigation of language, literature, art, rituals, customs, institutions, histories, and antiquities and other aspects of Asia in general and India particular (Sharma, 2005: 47-50).

Diverse schools for instance, British, American, German, France and others had their own purpose and method to produce the knowledge on Indian society. Sharma (2005) explains that Indological studies contains two streams of knowledge production where at one side it emphasis on the Indology or Indic studies and another side orientalist studies. “Orientalism emerged as the ideological need of the British empire whereas Indology is said to be the westerns’ labour of love for Indian wisdom” (Sharma 2005: 48) and in that consequence, Indologists have produced a positive, empathic account of Indian culture where they have given more emphasize on the spiritual aspect of Indian society whereas Orientalist scholars highlighted the negative image of Indian society in order to strengthen and support the colonial government and activities of missionaries. Knowledge of the past is reflected as an essential aspect of academics where division of the world into orient and occident proceed it. Orient always considered as representing a pre-history of occident. Similarly, India is also considered as a pre-history of European. Sharma (2005: 57) states that Euro-centrism and Orientalism are not a singular phenomenon rather it should be understood in plural form (Euro-centrisms and Orientalisms).

### **2.3.7 Critique of Indological Interpretation**

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<sup>33</sup> Sharma, Amit Kumar (2005) “Indology in India: A Sociological Perspective”, Think India Quarterly, Vol. 8, No. IV.

Kosambi (1956) was a Marxist scholar who analyzed the ancient Indian civilization and culture not in terms of Indology but through the modes of production, materialistic, ecological and social-economic point of view. In order to understand and explain the nature and content of Indian civilization Kosambi had relied on a larger number of historical sources rather than Indological texts such as “archeology, numismatics and literary sources to indicate the long history that organized the social life of India since the third century B.C. (Patel 2013b: 118). According to Kosambi “the history of ancient India cannot be extracted from texts-written by “Brahmans” and reconstructed during the colonial period as part of its project to codify “ancient Indian civilization”. Rather what was needed was the use of combined methods inputting linguistics, archaeology, anthropology and sociology together in the perspective of the materialistic social theory of history” (Thapar 2008) (Cited in Patel 2013b: 120).

Patel (2013b) writes that discipline of history has created a critique of Eurocentrism-Orientalist frame whereas sociology/anthropology are still stuck in the same frame of knowledge production. Further she suggest that in order to get rid of colonial episteme, sociologists have to reframe their disciplinary focus and need to introduce historical perspective to it (Patel 2013b: 124). Perception about other communities as well were being presented by brahmins themselves. Therefore, it lacks various information regarding diverse group of people whose tradition is not preserved in written form, rather always present in oral form. That is why Thapar writes that “such traditions were seen as limited to brads, to lower castes, and the tribal and forest peoples, and as such not reliable when compared to the texts of the higher castes and the elite” (Thapar 2002: 10). Nonetheless, it can’t be totally denied that other groups never got a position in Indian religious texts but were always represented in a negative and distorted manner. Garada (2013: 12) mentions that religious texts on which these scholars were highly dependent religious in nature and do not “notice the diversified and contradictory world views of untouchables, women and tribal in particular”.

### **2.3.8 Knowing and Orientalizing India**

German Romanticism, projected the image of Indian civilization and culture as being non-historical due to the “the idea of an unchanging continuity of society and religion over 3,000 years; and it was believed that the Indian pattern of life was so concerned with metaphysics and the subtleties of religious belief that little attention was given to the more tangible aspects” (Thapar 2002: 4-5). Britishers constructed a history for India because for European India was seen “not only as exotic and bizarre but as a kind of living museum of the European past”

(Cohn 1996: 78). Cohn (1990) explains that Britishers produced various kinds of theory<sup>34</sup> to explain the nature of Indian society. These theories were used as a tool to maintain and justifying their rule in India. Said (1995) considers Orientalism as discourse and discipline too. Through this discipline *“European culture was able to manage-and even produce-the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period (Said 1995: 3)”*. *“Orientalist discourse remodels the exotic and strange Orient into a manageable, controllable, and intelligible phenomena that can be categorized, conceptualized and defined” (Jouhki 2006: 45)<sup>35</sup>.*

Orientalization of India can be seen in the matter of clothes where Britishers decided the clothes of soldiers and turban was one such example. Hence, Cohn (1996) says that by deciding the dress uniforms *“Britishers exercised their fantasy of what an “oriental” warrior should be look like” (Cohn 1996: 124)*. Explaining this concept of Orientalization, Cohn says, as Dirks mentions,

*“British simultaneously misrecognized and simplified under the name of tradition...they reduced vastly complex codes and their associated meanings to a few metonyms (Dirks 2001: 9-10)”*.

Further, Said also writes that *“Orient was “Orientalized” precisely because of the byzantine reinforcement of colonial power and knowledge” (Dirks 2001: 10)*. Learning the language and codification of law (generally codifies customs and traditions of particular community through religious texts) occupies important role as part of colonial state modalities. It created *“cultural forms of societies newly classified as ‘traditional’ were reconstructed and transformed by and through this knowledge” (Dirks 1996: ix)*. Trautmann (2007) writes that *“there was a close connection between their scholarship and the British colonial adventures in India” (Trautmann 2007: 85-6)*.

In the context of establishment of new Orientalism and knowledge of Sanskrit language as well as construction of new college Fort William (1800) in Calcutta, he (2007) argues that it developed a connection between knowledge formation and colonialism. Talking about the role of orientalists Dirks mentions that *“efforts by British orientalists to study was not part of a*

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<sup>34</sup> Oriental Despotism, The Village Republics and Caste, The Feudal, and competition and conspiracy.

<sup>35</sup> Jouhki, Jukka (2006) *“Imagining the Other: Orientalism and Occidentalism in Tamil-European Relation in South India”* Jyvaskyla Studies in Humanities, Jyvaskyla.

collaborative enterprise responsible for a new renaissance, but rather was an important part of the colonial project of control and command” (Dirks 1996: x). Aryan or Indo-European idea came into existence through orientalist interpretation done by Britishers, therefore it established a kinship relationship between Britons and Indians. Later this identity got adhered with Hinduism. Along with the concept of kinship relationship, aspect of friendship or love was also attached with orientalism. Aspect of romanticism was also adherent with orientalist scholars and later colonial officers, Indologists, historians, sociologists and anthropologists also adopted this aspect. In the case of tribe, most of colonial officers praised tribal way of life and described them as “noble, honest, loyal and ruggedly independent” (Bhukya 2008: 107). Some of the professional anthropologists also went into tribal areas and stayed there for a long period of time. They were also occupied with the same notion of tribes as being “uncivilized, innocent and honest but taken advantages of by unscrupulous outsiders” (Ibid).

The term “Aryan” developed during nineteenth century and was applied by going back in history where reference of *arya* surfaced in Iranian Avesta and Indian Vedas. Describing the relation of language and ethnological construction in India, Trautmann says that “British Sanskritists supplied the theoretical structure which dominated and directed the construction of the ethnologies in India” (Forward, by Thapar 1996: x in Trautmann 1997). Actually, “Orientalism was not just a scholarly activity, however, it was a political policy...an ideology” (Trautmann 2007: 91). The whole orientalist knowledge production related to Indian civilization, history and culture projected the negative image of Muslims in Indian context. Muslims were projected as the conqueror of ancient civilization. That’s why Orientalist emphasized that British rule will restore the former happy state of Hindus by adopting the laws and culture of people.

The study of Indian civilization, culture and history constructed the various negative image about other social categories and by neglecting the presence and influence of those communities in Indian history and culture, India was described as “Hindu Civilization” (Thapar 2002: 9) which created a bifurcation between Hindus and Muslims. Thapar (2002) mentions that “the normative texts are taken at face value and read as descriptions of the perfect harmonious society. It is stoutly maintained, for example, that pre-Islamic India was a tolerant society, and references to religious and social intolerance are dismissed as innocent readings of the source or are ignored” (Thapar 2002: 21). According to Dirks, the present avatar of caste is the product of colonial rule. Hence, Dirks argues that caste is a modern phenomenon which has become so central to Indian history, culture and civilization (Dirks 2001: 5). There are two

myths which work behind the formation of structure of power, hegemony and control, Quijano termed it as “coloniality of power”. These Myths are...

*“First, the idea of the history of human civilization as a trajectory that departed from a state of nature and culminated in Europe; second, a view of the differences between Europe and non-Europe as natural (racial) differences and not consequences of a history of power. Both myths can be unequivocally recognized in the foundations of evolutionism and dualism, two of the nuclear elements of Eurocentrism (Quijano 2000: 542) (Cited in Patel 2013a: 46)”.*

### **2.3.9 Utilitarian Perspective and the Critic of Orientalism**

Most of the studies conducted by British scholars were within “the framework of colonial perspective on the Indian past” (Thapar 2002: 11). Even though, over a period of time, scholars from diverse ideologies came to India but all of them, by and large, were associated with British government. For instance, Utilitarians and Evangelicals (Christian Missionaries) were such. James Mill and Thomas Macaulay, were the two scholars who criticized the orientalist way of knowledge production. They were against the romanticisation and Indomania of Indian culture and civilization. They were influenced by the idea of progress based on rational thought and individualism which was not present in India. For them, India presents a stagnant culture governed by despotic rulers, based on self-sufficient village economy and caste system. Macaulay’s notion is famous in the context of Indian education and learning whereas on the other side, Mill’s history of British India became a hegemonic texts which influence many commentators and administrators.

These scholars wanted to transform India to fulfil the need of colonial policy. Therefore, they projected the debate of backwardness vs. progress and through the appropriate legislators India’s backwardness can be removed. In the case of Evangelicals, they were mostly concerned with the civilizing mission and spread of Christianity in India. By describing the condition of Indian society, Charles Grant<sup>36</sup> argues that “the caste system, the legal system, government, and above all the despotic role of Brahmans who control the society and culture are the cause of the degraded state of the Hindus” (Singer and Cohn 1968: 8). On the relationship between missionary and official ethnography Bhukya (2008) indicates that “missionary ethnography also largely converged with official ethnography, for it saw the liberation of criminal tribes,

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<sup>36</sup> He was the commercial official in Bengal from 1774 to 1790. He expressed his views in “Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain” (Singer and Cohn 1968: 8).

and for that matter the entire liberation of Indian, as laying in the modernization agenda of the colonial state” (Bhukya 2008: 106).

### **2.3. 10 Theory of Oriental Despotism**

The theory of Oriental despotism was given by Utilitarian scholars in order to describe the Asian civilization and the role of the king in it. Thapar explains this theory as “a system of government of a despotic ruler with absolute power, was the characteristic of Asian societies. Such societies features the existence of isolated, self-sufficient village communities whose surplus produce was creamed off by the despotic ruler and his court, governing through an autocratic bureaucracy...Oriental despotism encapsulated the political economy of Asian empires” (Thapar 2002: 6); It also includes that India lacked the concept of private ownership of land and lack of urbanization. Orientalists were the one who denied the theory of oriental despotism in Indian context, but orientalist said that “ancient India knew true private ownership of land” (Trautmann 2007: 92).

Cohn (1990) provides a critic of Oriental Despotism and suggests that it is important to understand the context in which the introduction and application of this theory was initiated. This theory emerges during the debate on the role of East India Company in India or say company should be overtaken by parliament. Therefore, in order to sustain its career, scholars described that situation of India is based on anarchy and despotism. Britishers explains that “the theory of despotism then functioned effectively to explain and legitimize the British conquest to the officials and owners of the East India Company” (Cohn 1990: 212).

The depiction of India as totally different from European society created the image of India being ‘the other’ of European society (Thapar 2002). Moreover, most of the early European sociologists accepted the view presented by Orientalist and produced various theories and ideas related to Indian society. Marx’s idea of Asiatic mode of production, Weber’s notion of caste being associated with Hinduism and barrier in economic development and Durkheim’s idea related to division between belief and rituals later helped in the study of Vedic sacrifices. On a similar basis, this classification of Indian civilization was later used to create the category of tribe which was projected as different from largely consolidated idea of India culture and civilization.

The tribe was interpreted in Indian language as Janas. During British rule, along with military conquest, there were other number of factors involved in the conquest of janas. For instance, Ray (1972) mentions that “administrating these areas involved more or less close and detailed

objective knowledge of these communities of peoples that we are speaking of, their social and religious life, political and economic organization, their behavior pattern and so on” (Ray 1972: 19). This knowledge production helped in the formulation of various policies, administrative set-ups and rules and regulation for tribal development and administrative purpose. Xaxa (2003) mentions that different forms of administrative set-ups, for instance, “law of consonance, non-regulation tracts, the scheduled areas or excluded and partially excluded areas” were introduced for the tribal people (Xaxa 2003: 375). Upadhyaya (1996) argues that tribal culture was projected as “discrete, seamless and timeless wholes” (Upadhyaya 1996: 7). Furthermore, the way tribal culture was being described as “age-old customs and tradition” (Ibid) along with the marginalization and exploitation, it created the urge for protection and indirect rule for tribal areas. Among the various settings for tribal administration, ‘civilize’ them was also one such intention of colonial rulers.

## **2.4 Reinterpretation of Orientalist knowledge in Post-colonial Period in India**

### **2.4.1 Nationalist View on Orientalist Interpretation of India**

Max Muller who made this notion popular that Britishers and Indians are connected with each other through Aryan identity which developed a kinship relationship. This kinship ties had been endorsed by Upper-caste Hindus. It provided a path for British conquest and introduction of Western civilization in India (Thapar 2007). Whereas on the other side, Indian upper caste middle class endorsed the notion that they are the “lineal descendants of the Aryans...the coming of the British to India was in effect the meeting of parted cousins” (Forward by Thapar 1996). Said (1995) by applying the concept of cultural hegemony explains that when consent gets imbibed with culture then there is no need of domination and influence of ideas, institutions and other persons work easily. This provides a strong position to Orientalism.

Nevertheless, nationalist argued little differently that Aryans who came to India were more civilized therefore, in comparison to other ancient civilizations Indian civilization was most advanced. The way Indian society was interpreted and represented thorough religious pattern, created an image of spiritual East which was different from Western culture based on the ‘materialistic’ superiority. This aspect of Indian image was even endorsed by Indian intellectuals and used as a tool as well as “salve” during anti-colonial nationalism (Thapar 2002: 5). Construction of Indian civilization by Orientalists in the form of glories past, positive narration of Indian religion, and knowledge was reiterated by Nationalists but in a different way. Upadhyaya (2002) mentions in order to counter the European’s negative approach to Indian

civilization, nationalists intellectuals asserted that “Everything in Europe had already been invented in the Indian past, that the discoveries of western science had been anticipated by ancient Aryans, and so on” (Raychaudhuri 1988) (Quoted in Upadhyaya 2002: 34). And in that consequence, they divided Aryans into two forms where Hindu Aryans were claimed as superior to European Aryans. Some nationalists like, Dayanand Saraswati appealed to Indian to go back to Vedas because source of all knowledge is contained in it. Indian historians were influenced with the on-going nationalist movement, for providing an ideological base they accepted the theory of Aryan race but dismissed the theory of Oriental despotism. Historian, such as, Ray (1972) similar to nationalist scholars argues that Britishers created the various hurdles so that India could not become a nation hood. He says,

*“They know too well that India had been aspiring for nationhood, and the whole burden of their argument seems to have been that the people of India could not weld themselves into a nation so long as these two major hurdles were not removed (Ray 1972: 20)”*.

Later, during the nationalist movement, nationalist leaders and scholars tried to produce a different and distinct idea of India contrary to European modernity. Therefore, traditional nationalist reinterpreted and appropriated the orientalist knowledge in order to provide an Indian version. Their interpretation was based on the same frame of civilization on which once orientalists emphasized. But, they have provided a slightly different notion. Jouhki (2006) explains that how orientalist interpretation in certain context had been accepted, and appropriated by educated Indians and reworked by Indian nationalists. Consequently, Indian tried to restore *“the images of Vedic times as the golden age, spiritual India, caste-centricity and Hinduism”* (Jouhki 2006: 75). This reflects the power of orientalism which is still existing in many forms and degrees. By highlights the role of Britishers, Srinivas (1987) mentions that various forms of changes were brought in the sphere of economy, polity, communication, or education, which helped in the formation of modern states in south Asia. Later, these changes and others<sup>37</sup> provided the basis for emergence of Indian nationalism. , Further, Srinivas writes,

*“The past proved to be a balm to the nation's soul bruised by alien conquest. It gave the new educated classes a sense of pride and self-respect, and the strength and determination to rebuild their society and culture on new principles (Srinivas 1987: 135)”*.

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<sup>37</sup> Srinivas mentions that the conquest by alien rulers, racial arrogance, criticism by missionaries about Hinduism and its practices, made conscious to politically-motivated Indians.



Jouhki (2006) writes that “orientalist habits and categories still have such power that it is exceedingly difficult for either native Indians or foreign scholars to view India without revealing to the outdated discourse” (Jouhki 2006: 76). That’s why Said says that it is difficult to go beyond the authoritative position of Orientalism. Nevertheless, only non-Brahmans and Dalit raised their Voice against the ‘Orientalist Golden age’ (Dirks 2001: 10). The way the term Aryan has been interpreted and associated with India it provided a base to Indian nationalist to counter the British rule. That’s why “early Indian nationalism gave greater attention to extolling the Aryans in India rather than to the connection with Europe” (Thapar 1978: 201). Dirks (2001) mentions that Indians (Especially reformers and nationalists) were also influenced by the writings of Muller and Gandhi was one of them who used the idea of Muller in order to search the “soul of Indian civilization as that of Vedic age” (Dirks 2001: 38-9). But he agreed on the point of segregation between social and religion. Cohn (1990) argues that during nationalist movement, educated Indian class ‘objectified’<sup>38</sup> their culture to counter Western cultural imperialism. Now, traditions will be selected, polished and reformulated by Indians for their purposes.

#### **2.4.2 Social and Political Implication of Aryan debate in India: Dalit and Hindutva Groups**

At the contemporary time, scholars have changed their views related to racial interpretation to Aryan/Dravidian difference by abounding the concept of race associated with physical features, and migration altered the invasion theory of Aryans, as Romila Thapar says that archaeological evidences don’t support massive invasion and massive migration (Thapar 1978: 192). In the context of language, Thapar argues that presence of non-Aryan linguistic elements in the Indo-Aryan language provides a different interpretation to Aryan Race. It labels them as “Aryan ethnic group”. Thapar says that “Aryan ethnic group, introducing a language, for migrations and settlements in the context of the gradual spread of a language mutate ethnic identities and modify the language in various ways” (Forward, Thapar 1996: xiv).

On the debate of Aryan/Dravidian linguistic difference, Thapar says that it had been “*interpreted under the shaping of colonialism and nationalism*” (Thapar 2007: 106). She analyzes the claims of two different group of people who utilized the Aryan invasion and Aryan race theory for social and political aspirations. These groups are Dalit led by Jyotiba Phule and

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<sup>38</sup> Objectified means culture will be seen as ‘thing’. Through the aspect of objectification “they can stand back and look at themselves, their ideas, their symbols and culture and see it as an entity” (Cohn 1990: 229).

Hindutva group led by Veer Savarkar who reinterpreted the whole debate once again. These groups have embraced the standard (Dalit) and alternative (Hindutva) view of Aryan debate to legitimize and change their identity and status within India. Henceforth, Thapar (2007) writes that

*“Establishing an Indian identity was the need to define the rightful inheritors of the land, all within the context of a gradually growing nationalism where the question of origins and affirmation of common descent were central to nation-building” (2007: 109-110).*

#### **2.4.3 Role of Jyotiba Phule (1821-1890) in the establishment of Dalit Identity**

Influenced by the missionaries' interpretation of Indian history, Phule argued that “the original inhabitants of India were the adivasis, among whom he included the Sudras, the ati-Sudras and the untouchables” (Thapar 2007: 110). Basically, Phule reinterpreted the whole invasion theory of Aryans who conquered and subordinated the adivasis. According to Phule, prior to Aryan invasion, Sudras had different status, such as, cultivators, landowners, and warriors. Along with it, they had distinct culture as well. Indus civilization was that ‘golden age’ for him (Thapar 2007: 110, 119). Caste system, according to Phule, was deliberately invented by Brahmins to create the division and dichotomy between Brahmin-Sudra. To provide justification for his assertions Phule relied on various myths cited in *Mahabharata* and *Puranas*. Thapar (2007) says that “*Aryan Invasion...became an essential part of the Dalit version of Indian history*” (2007: 111) which strengthened the anti-Brahmin movement in Peninsula because non-Aryans were being associated with Dravidian language people. The whole anti-Brahmin movement was started for the rejection of Aryan domination.

#### **2.4.4 Role of Savarkar in the establishment of Hindutva Identity**

Sometime some groups of Brahmins, especially Chitpavan and others from Maharashtra developed their own interpretation of Aryan theory which provided a base for the emergence of the notion of Hindutva. These groups of people were inspired by the writings of theosophists, Colonel Olcott. They tried to provide a different interpretation regarding Hinduism, caste hierarchy and Aryan race. Olcott states as Thapar mentions,

*“aryavarta was the cradle of civilization and the Aryans were a race indigenous to northern India, their literature being the source of all philosophy and religion (Thapar 2007: 112)”.*

Moreover, they argued that language and culture was spread by Indian Aryans throughout West Asia and even in Europe. Hindutva groups endorsed the view that Aryans are indigenous and

the creator of Indian civilization. Hence, it created a notion that “all Hindus are members of the Aryan race...and united by the bonds of common blood” (Thapar 2007: 113). Moreover, this notion constituted the idea of Hindu nation where foreigners could not live unless they leave their religion, culture and language. It divided the Indian population where Muslims and Christians were regarded as foreigner. Savarkar<sup>39</sup> provides three essential characteristics of Hinduness or Hindutva, “a common nation (Rashtra), a common race (Jati), and a common civilization (Sanskriti); and a Hindu is he who looks up this land as not only a Fatherland (Pitribhu) but also a Holyland (Punyabhu)” (Shao 2013: 5). In the context of tribal identity, Hindu nationalist neglect the claim proposed by missionaries as non-Hindus and animists. They argues that there is a geographical difference in terms of inhabitants. Tribes live in forest (Vanvasis) whereas caste-Hindus live in villages (Gaonvasis) or cities (Shahrvasi). But in terms of culture, there is no difference between two of them (Shao 2013: 9). Nevertheless, when it came to the game of numbers or to prove the claim of majoritarianism, Hindutva groups incorporated Scheduled castes.

## **2.5 Knowledge Production during Colonial Period: Role of Modernity and Eurocentric-Orientalism**

Sujata Patel (2013a) analyzes the role of colonialism in the context of knowledge production through the frame of multiple modernities. She examines the role of Western countries especially the United States modernity<sup>40</sup> project which proceeded at the large level in non-western countries after the decolonization. She argues that how this modernity project started in India during the Colonial period and produced a various forms of knowledge in order to know and control the colonies. Through this production Western countries have divided the world into different binaries and always projected themselves at superior side. “While European modernity conceptualized its growth in terms of linear time, it sequestered the (various) East(s) divided between two cultural groups, the ‘primitive/barbarians’ and the civilized as being enclosed in their (own) space” (Patel 2013a: 46). Moreover, she (2013b) tries to understand the role of Eurocentric-orientalist frame in the formation of sociological/anthropological discourse which emerged during colonial period in India.

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<sup>39</sup> He wrote ‘Hinduism: Who is Hindu’ and he is considered as the “father of Hindutva ideology”.

<sup>40</sup> Scholars have proposed various new concepts such as, alternative, hybrid, entangled and global modernity In order to oppose the Western experience and hegemonic project (Patel 2013: 54).

Over the period of time, from 1980s, various scholars from different countries started questioning on the theories of modernization and proposed the theory of multiple modernities. Scholars like Amin (2008) and Wallerstien (2006) have question on the notion of Eurocentrism which “define it as a universal belief of viewing the world from European perspective either consciously or subconsciously, legitimizing thereby the pre-eminence of European culture and its theories of modernity” (Patel 2013a: 41). Immanuel Wallerstien (1997) writes that “Eurocentrism is also a theory of social science...it is able to ‘naturalize’ the distinctions between ‘scientific universalism against essential particularism’ as it develops a discourse in the nineteenth century through the mode of historiography, the analysis of (Western) civilization through Orientalism, and its attempts to impose a theory of progress (Wallerstein 1997: 94) (Cited in Patel 2013a: 45). While analyzing the impact of colonialism on culture and cultural artefacts, Dirks argues that “colonialism was made possible, and then sustained and strengthened, as much by cultural technologies of rule” (Cohn 1996: ix).

Colonialism is mostly understood in terms of military and economic conquest, and cultural impact has ever been gets neglected. However, Dirks (1996) argues,

*“Colonialism was itself a cultural product of control. Colonial knowledge both enabled conquest and was product by it...knowledge was what colonialism was all about” (Dirks 1996: ix).*

In the context of colonialism, acquiring knowledge about native/colonized society was made possible through “historiography, documentation, certification and representation” to sustain and strengthen colonial rule and to transform knowledge into power (Dirks 1996: xi) Dirks refers to it as “state modalities” (Dirks 1996: xi). Further, Dussel (1993, 2000, 2002) and Quijiano (1993, 2000, 2007) by extending the idea of Eurocentrism argue that “Eurocentrism is not only a theory of history but an episteme, a theory of power/knowledge. If this episteme theorized the “I” (Europe, the moderns and the west), it also theorized the “other” (non-modern and the East), the “periphery” (Patel 3013a: 45). Oommen (2007) also says that colonialism is responsible in the construction of dichotomies. Furthermore, Oommen (2011) by describing the concept of colonialism he tries to explain the role of Aryan invasion in Indian context. He describes that tribes are the victims of both internal and external colonialism in India. In addition, he divided the external form of colonialism in two ways. Replicative<sup>41</sup> and retreatist

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<sup>41</sup> In the case of replicative, outsiders get settle down in different countries and impose their culture (America, Australia and tribes in India) whereas in the case of retreatist, over the period of time colonial rulers leave their colony (such as Asia and Africa).

are the two forms of external colonialism which vary from each other in terms of colonization. Both forms of colonialism can be found over same native population in some duration of period. Henceforth, tribes are the victims of both forms of colonialism where first of all, Aryans captured the aboriginals' space and spread their 'superior culture' through culturocide (replicative form of colonialism). Later, in the modern period along with Britishers other Indians imposed retreatist colonialism over tribal peoples. Further, he mentions that "After the British retreated, tribal settlements became internal colonies in independent India" (Oommen 2011: 238).

Dussal and Quijano said that various processes which are involved in the making of Europe modern and violence against rest of the world is one of them. In the process of becoming modern, laziness and cowardice are the two features which push the non-modern societies back to the stage of immaturity. Therefore, emulation of 'moderns' justifies the colonizing process is necessary for the 'civilizing process (Patel 2013a: 45). In the whole process of Eurocentrism where Western form of experience and knowledge was projected as dominant and hegemonic, social sciences were also involved in the same project of discovering the "'nature' of the various people, nations, and ethnic groups in the world in terms of the attributes of the binaries" (Patel 2013a: 46). It is interesting to know that how the theories and methodologies such as Indology and ethnography were being used in order to facilitate the rule and domination through acquiring the knowledge of 'others'.

## **2.6 Eurocentrism and Early Anthropology/ Sociology in India**

It is interesting to know that prior to emergence of anthropology and sociology as social science discipline, west developed a certain form of knowledge and notion for itself which distinguished it from rest of the world. Wallerstein says that "Social science has been Eurocentric throughout its institutional history" (Wallerstein 1996: 93). Further, he identified five different ways through which the social science reflects Eurocentrism- in historiography; the parochiality of universalism; Civilization; Orientalism; and theory of progress (Wallerstein 1996: 94). Patel (2013b) mentions that Eurocentrism and Orientalism are interlinked with each other. This has set the language of social sciences, shaped the idea of colonialism, and later influenced nationalist and sociologist of India. After the establishment of British rule in India anthropologists were employed by colonial state for the study of 'others' or 'natives' ((Patel 2013a: 47). Division of societies into traditional and modern frame further divided the sociological and anthropological area of interest. Therefore, Patel states that "it was

anthropology that institutionalized the knowledge about India as a traditional society” (2013a: 47). In the whole process of knowledge construction India was projected as a pre-modern civilization (Ibid) where study of tribe, caste and village became an essential components which became the subject-matter of social anthropology and sociology in India. By summarizing the whole process of knowledge production done in India, Patel (2013a) says that knowledge

*“was produced as part of colonial politics of rule; was expressed and organized in terms of values that were in opposition of modernity; used disciplinary practices such as Indology and ethnography to elaborate these positions; was codified with the help of native intelligentsia, especially the Brahmins, the highest caste; and thus reflected the social order as represented by this group (Patel 2013a : 50)”.*

## **2.7 Understanding of Tribe in India through Historical perspective**

In order to get the proper answer related to ‘tribe’ question, Ray (1972) emphasizes that without historical understanding sociology and social and cultural anthropology cannot get an adequate answer. Therefore, he says that “Non-recognition or inadequate recognition of the historical perspective has been...responsible for the uncritical acceptance of ideas and concepts, methods and models that had a colonial origin in climes altogether from our own” (Ray 1972: 5). He describes ‘tribe’ as a concept that emerged during the period when nationalism was rising in Europe. In that context, in a particular territory and language area, a community of people were labeled as presenting particular stage of socio-political evolution. Further, he argues that “Clan, tribe, nation, etc., thus came to denote the various successive stages in the progressive march of a people aspiring towards nationhood” (Ray 1972: 7-8). But in Indian context, caste was considered as an intermediate stage which brings obstacles in achieving nationhood.

According to Ray, the term ‘Jana’ is similar to ‘tribe’ and most of the communities which are included in the category of tribe, they are mostly Jana. These communities are the Savaras, the Kullutas, the kollas, the Bhillas, the Khasas, the Kinnaras, and others (Ray 1972: 9). Ray mentions that there are large number of communities who are almost similar to ‘tribe’ which are conceptualized and described in anthropology and sociology. Moreover, names of these communities are available in Indian texts such as, epics, *Puranas*, and our secular literature<sup>42</sup>. While describing the situation of tribe and caste in terms of Jana and *jati*, Ray (1972) asserts

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<sup>42</sup> He did not describe it.

that there was no difference between these two sets *janas*, except in the sense that “the Jana continued to remain outside the control of the *jati* system of social organization” (Ray 1972: 10).

For Ray, tribe “are the Indigenous, autochthonous people of the land” because they arrived in India prior to Aryans. Ray invoked the Aryan debate in the matter to decide the status of tribes in India. For him, Aryans speaking people entered from Central India and settled down in Indus and upper Ganga-Yamuna Valley (Ray 1972: 10). Further he mentions that it was not only Aryans who came from outside but there were larger number of foreigners either in small or big numbers came to India, wave after wave. But it was Indo-Aryans who developed Brahmanical Hinduism which latter established a strong hierarchical caste system.

According to Ray, all the indigenous *janas* were not on the same stage of development. It seems that he created a demarcation within the indigenous *janas* and in which, there is one group who survive through food-gathering, live in isolation, follow the anthropological described ‘primitive religion’, and “live in closed by well-knit social units each presided over by a headman or chief and controlled by a group of elders” (Ray 1972: 11). It was that group of people towards whom Ray was indicating that faced pressure from the superior social organization and techno-economy developed by Indo-Aryan speaking people. Ray refers to these indigenous people as “so-called tribes” who were settled down in those areas which were inaccessible such as, “forests, and hills and large mountains slopes, that is in what the records call, *atavika rajyas*, *mahakantaras*, or great forest regions and *pratyanta desas* or frontier regions on the fringes of agriculturally settled, organized and more developed areas” (Ray 1972: 11).

Pressure were getting increased on tribes because of the ideas, institutions, socio-religious norms, and socio-economic organization of *jati*. But Ray mentions that some *janas*, such as “the Andhras, Cheras, Dravidas etc. of India south of the Vindhyas” were able to resist the pressure of languages but not the Hindu-Brahmanical socio-religious system and *jati*. Ray (1972) have divided the category of *janas* into two groups according to their geographical and socio-economic status but in comparison to Indo-Aryan speaking Hindu-Brahmanical neighbors. First of all those who became part of *jati* system through defeat in war provided the lower status in *Jati* system, similar to *Chandalas*; and living on the periphery of Indo-Aryan Speaking Hindu-Brahmanical peoples but somehow maintain their social, economic, religious and cultural identity. But over the period of time, they gave up their identity and were included in the *jati* system to whom Hutton referred as ‘tribal castes’ (Ray 1972: 15). However,

according to him, within the tribe-caste category, many janas were able to get the higher status, and they are not included in the category of tribe. Second, those group of people who are still outside the jati system.

His interpretation of historical data brought a counter argument to the standard view (immigrant Aryans) of Aryan debate. For him, Aryans are not indigenous, however, settled in Indus valley. According to Ray, pastoral-nomadic people who migrated from central India were not the one who established Brahmanical Hinduism rather “they were slowly but inevitably swallowed up by the Hindu social and economic organization and given a place in it, to the extent that they came to adopt the languages, religions and cultures of the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples and of Brahmanical Hinduism. According to Ray says that foreigners were also classified in the category of *janas* who were later given the jati status. He says that “janas of foreign origin that came to exercise political authority as kings and as members of royalty, nobility and the court, were given the jati status of Kshatriya; those that eventually took the agriculture came to be self-styled as Vaisyas; but the large majority had to be content with very low jati status in Hindu socio-economic hierarchy, including those like the Hunas who allowed themselves to be recruited as mercenary soldiers by regional rulers” (Ray 1972: 13).

## **2.8 Sustaining Colonial Rule and the Connection of Knowledge and Power: Language and Culture**

During colonialism, various forms of knowledge were used by Britishers to construct the image of India. Among various procedures of knowledge production, classification was also one of them. It was mainly used for the formation of social identities and categories. This classificatory method indicates the “incidents of state power” (Dirks 1996: ix). Classification method had an important role in the context of ‘tribe’ as well, where colonial state clubbed diverse features into one frame and developed new category. Most of the published “reports, statistics returns, official proceedings, administrative histories, and legal codes” produced through the usage of “investigative modalities”<sup>43</sup> are considered as “texts” by Cohn which was a part of colonial project of knowledge production and sustaining power (Dirks 1996: xiii). In the beginning of colonial rule, Britishers were unaware of Indian language, therefore they produced grammars, and dictionaries of working Indian language. At the initial stage

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<sup>43</sup> Historiography, observation and travel, enumeration, museology, and surveillance are the certain forms of modalities (Dirks 1996: xiii). Investigative modalities defines as the producers which used for gathering appropriate knowledge, ordering, classifying and transforming these knowledge into a document.



Orientalists such as William Johns and Halhed produced Persian and Bengali grammars. Hence, Cohn argues that “even grammars could be converted from an Indian form of knowledge into European objects” (Dirks 1996: xiii).

After the establishment of Asiatic Society of Bengal, a larger number of scholarly work had been produced by Orientalist scholars who learned Indian languages. Getting command on language were used to give commands, to maintain law and order, collect taxes and gather others forms of information. Consequently, Orientalist projects of learning, translation and producing grammars and codifying laws were part of colonial project of rule. Cohn (1990) states that translation and labelling were the two important instrument which were being used by Britishers to make unknown and the strange knowable. In the context of labelling, they were limited on their own forms of knowledge and thinking. That’s what happened in the case of ‘tribe’, where they labelled heterogeneous group of people under one framework. Learning of language process started after the victory of Plassey war. It includes “Classical” languages (Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic) and vernacular languages.

During seventeenth and eighteenth century Sanskrit was considered as secret language by Britishers which is “invented by the Brahmins to be a mysterious repository for their religion and philosophy” (Cohn 1996: 25). Brahmins were designated as the “professors of law” (Cohn 1996: 26) which is found all over India. “The idea of primacy of the Sanskritic component in Indian civilization then became the determining of action, policy and structure, not only for the rulers but for many of the ruled. What had been fluid, complex, even unstructured, became fixed, objective, tangible” (Cohn 1990: xxii). Cohn (1996) explains that three major projects were involved in the learning of Indian languages, literature, science, and thought. First related to “the objectification and use of Indian language as an instruments of rule”; second related to “discoveries of the wisdom of the ancients...to classify and locate their civilizations on an evaluative scale of progress and decay”; third was related to “the patronage of institutions and religious and literary specialists who maintained and transmitted-through texts, writing, recitation, performance...that which the British conquerors defines as the traditions of the conquered” (Cohn 1996: 46).

W.C. Taylor, explains that how power of language provides command on commerce, “the knowledge gained through the study of oriental literature to success in ‘the pursuit of Oriental commerce’” (Cohn 1996: 45). Further, he used the aphorism “KNOWLEDGE IS POWER” (Cohn 1996: 45). Moreover, while encouraging a group of younger servants of the company,

Warren Hastings<sup>44</sup> also explained the connection of knowledge and power. He promoted them to learn classical languages of India “as a part of a mixed scholarly and pragmatic project aimed at creating a body of knowledge which could be utilized in the effective control of Indian society...to enable the British to define what was Indian and to create a system of rule which would be congruent with what was thought to be indigenous institutions” (Cohn 1990: xxii).

Most of the scholars<sup>45</sup> who wrote about Indian culture and society or say about particular aspect of India never visited to India. They mostly relied on the reports or the studies done by other scholars. With regards to Durkheim and Maine both tried “to explain the nature and origin of European societies and India and the Australian aborigines were viewed essentially as a stage through which European societies had passed, and which provided for the late-nineteenth-century scholars ideas about what European societies may have been” (Cohn 1990: 205).

## **2. 9 Conclusion**

This chapter highlights the relation between orientalism and the knowledge production in Indian context. Staring from the establishment of Asiatic society of Bengal, a larger number of scholars were indulged in the study of Indian history, culture and civilization. These scholars were referred as orientalists and indologists who were primarily relied on the religious texts for the interpretation and understanding of Indian society and culture. Learning the language, understanding the culture and codification of law and customs provided a command to these scholars about India. Interpretation of these texts provided a totally new understanding of Indian society where they produced various concept and theories such as, Indo-Aryan language family, Aryan race and Aryan invasion theory respectively. Scholars, like Cohn (1997) and Dirks (2001) says that British administrative-scholars applied diverse methods to produce various forms of knowledge to establish a relationship between knowledge and power.

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<sup>44</sup> Governor of Bengal

<sup>45</sup> Maine, Durkheim, Max Muller, Marx, Weber and others.

## Chapter-3

### Conceptualisation of Tribe as a Category: Colonial and Post-colonial period

#### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter is an attempt to examine the role of anthropology in the construction of the category of tribe in India. Tribe as a category emerged during colonial period in India during the vast study of Indian community by British administrative-scholars. Tribe is considered as a new social category which was developed especially for administrative purposes. Most of the early administrative-scholars were not able to develop a clear idea of the category of tribe in India because of the close connection and interaction between social groups that is why most of the time they used caste and tribe as cognates. Colonial anthropological conceptualization of tribe has been challenged by Indian scholars on various basis but they have largely accepted the concept of tribe. Moreover, they tried to produce a clear cut definition, characteristics and demarcation between tribe and caste but they opposed the isolation of tribal communities. Their focus was more on the interaction, interrelation and communication of tribe with the larger society. This chapter looks into the various debates and contestation between colonial and post-colonial conceptualizations on tribal identity. Apart from the term ‘tribe’, scholars have provided several new terms and names to describe the actual situation of tribe. But, describing tribe as indigenous people in India is highly debatable issue. Along with the scholarly debate on tribe, it examines the role of census, constituent assembly debates and committee reports on tribe.

#### 3.2 Emergence of Anthropology and its subject-matter

Expansion and colonization of European rule over the non-European territories led to the foundation of anthropology for the study of various races and distinct cultures in order to govern them. Cohn (1990) says during colonial period, a larger number of anthropological work had been produced by anthropologists and ‘colonized people’, that were the subject matter of anthropology. Further, by describing the ‘colonial people’, he mentions that it,

*“include(s) groups such as the American Indians and Africans transplanted to the New World...relocated in newly created stratification systems, to the people of much of Africa, South and South East Asia-in which the effects of colonial rule have been more indirect and are mainly felt through political and economic innovations (Cohn 1990: 224)”*.

Beteille (1986) says that over a period of time, subjects and topics of anthropological domain got expanded from simple and isolated societies to civilizations. Earlier tribes were considered as self-contained units but the situation got changed when anthropologists began their study of civilizations where tribe and civilization co-existed together from a long period. Thus, tribe and civilization both became the subject matter of anthropology. Moreover, most of the anthropologists were from other countries or among Indians, usually non-tribals, who conducted studies on tribal societies. During initial period, anthropologists looked at tribes through the frame of being exotic and primitive way of living where ethnologists described their culture as 'eternal present' (Atal, 2016: 1) in the sense of non-changing. The aspect of 'culture' which was viewed holistically, became so important, in the matter of tribes that preservation became a necessary option from the onslaught of modernization which was termed as 'anthropological zoos' (Atal, 2016: 2). Various approaches developed by anthropologists were being used by ethnologists in order to define and classify tribes as well as to formulate policies on tribal societies.

But, when Indian scholars, especially, students from tribal societies itself initiated research work, it is referred to as 'auto-anthropology' (2016: 4). They demanded a new perspective to look old concepts and in that process, it challenged the earlier definition of anthropology itself, i.e., a 'study of other cultures'. Anthropology is considered as the product of colonialism and industrial revolution<sup>46</sup> which had the impact of Darwin's theory of evolution. When scholars initiated to search about the origin of man and evolution of cultures and civilization then in that consequence, anthropologists began studying the 'primitive' and the 'past' and developed a ladder of human civilization. In the ladder so far built, savages were kept at the bottom whereas barbarians and civilized positioned at middle and top respectively. Many scholars considered establishment of Asiatic Society of Bengal (1774) as the initial phase in the emergence of anthropology in India. The entire field of studies was concerned with 'man and nature'<sup>47</sup>, defined by William Jones, provided a base for conducting studies on several aspects of Indian society. Asiatic Society of Bengal also promoted studies on indology, where William Jones was also one of the distinguished scholars of Sanskrit along with others, for instance, Henry

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<sup>46</sup> It facilitated to explore the distant lands.

<sup>47</sup> (Majumdar, 1968; T. N. Madan and G. Saran, 1962: 3) (Cited in M. S. Rao, Introduction chapter in 'A survey of Research in Sociology and Social Anthropology' Vol. 1, Bombay Popular Prakashan, pp. xxi-lxxvii), Sahay, K.S. (1976), "Teaching of Anthropology In India" Indian Anthropologist, Vol. 6, No. 1 pp.1-19

Thomas Colebrooke, Max Muller and William Dwight Whitney who translated Sanskrit literatures in other Indo-European languages.

‘Primitive’ societies are considered as the earlier phase of contemporary advanced societies of the West. It means that modern societies of the West have also gone through the primitive stage of human society. By describing the journey of anthropology, Atal (2106) mentions that social anthropology now studies complex societies and civilizations whereas earlier it was engaged in the reconstruction of past. After independence, it engaged in the improving of present through planned development, initiated by the state and involved in fashioning our future. Social evolutionism and diffusionism were two vogue theories which had the great impact on western scholars to understand the transformation of institutions from simple to complex. Subsequently, studies of non-western countries strengthened the notion that west had already gone through these institutions and stages which was currently represented by non-European societies. European society also tried to trace the elements of cultural items that spread from one place to another through the course of human history. Atal (2016) argues that colonialists had the twin process of administration where at one side they used the theoretical aspect to describe the society and culture of primitives and on the other side, used practical-administrative aspect to know about the culture of natives in order to govern them. The aspect of modernity and change which came along with colonialism had been used by colonial rulers, but not on every aspect of native cultures. Nongbri (2003) argues that most of the time scholars have relied on the mainstream theories which analyze tribes from the purview of dominant society (Nongbri 2003).

### **3.3 Anthropological understanding of “other”**

The category of ‘the other’ has great implication in social sciences and humanities. Indeed, the references of ‘the others’ had/have been present and understood by anthropologists in different ways, mostly it depends on the power relation. Therefore, when Western anthropologists initiated their studies of ‘the other’, for them it was non-white population who are inhabitants of their former colonies and depicted as inferior, ignorant, need protection and guidance from the superior ruling race. West emerged as a ‘positive reference group’ and ‘superior race’ (Atal, 2016: 51) for these primitive people. To bring out these natives towards modernity and civilization, it was phrased as ‘white man’s burden’ (Srinivas 1996: 656). Srinivas (1996) and Oommen (2007) both say that ‘The other’ was then intellectually, culturally, racially and often spatially far away” (Ibid) and for the British anthropologists, it had been used in a comparative

framework to understand ‘the self’. Later, Indian anthropologists, as Srinivas mentions that due to lack of funds, began conducting their field work among tribes and other categories of their own country. Basically, it was the imitation of British work-pattern, methodology and subject matter by Indians who focused not only on castes and tribes but on the study of entire civilization.

“This self-versus-other dichotomy is not something unusual as, historically, every society has been having its others” (Said, 1994: 10; in Gill, 2007: 244). But, in the case of India, this ‘other’ especially the ‘tribes’ are always existed within the similar cultural universe of caste Hindus. This pattern can be discern through the cultural contact, religious participation and the impact of Sanskritisation and influence of Vaishnavism in the case of North-East tribes. Indigenous Population of North-East India does not reflect a homogenous image, albeit, maintaining their indigenous structures and traditions. Most of communities have adopted the faith and beliefs of other religions, for instance, Hinduism and Brahmanism were adopted by the Assamese of Brahmaputra and the Meitei of Manipur or Christianity adopted by the Khasi, Garo, Mizo and Naga people. Apart from these two religions, the influence of Islam and Buddhism can also be noticed in North-East region of India<sup>48</sup>. While looking back in pre-colonial history, distinguished historians state that the ‘other’ was associated with the term *Mleecha* in Sanskrit literature. However, its meaning got changed over time and context.

During that time, along with language (Sanskrit vs. non-Sanskrit speaker), territorial distinction was also considered as the demarcation point between Aryan and forest dwellers. Nevertheless, those had been attributed as *mleecha* also participated in the social, political and religious system (Thapar, 1978). Oommen (2007) describes three categories of others that are Savage other, Black other and Oriental other<sup>49</sup> (Oommen 2007: 148-153). Oommen (2007) describes that for each society the circumstances and relation of “the savage other, the Black other, or the generalized ethnographic other” (Oommen 2007: 7) are different from its mainstream society. For Europeans, non-modern people are distinct and distant whereas, in New World, these non-modern people are distinct but not distant, constitute the part of ‘nation-state’. But, in Asia, tribes are distinct but efforts are being made for ‘integration’ in mainstream society whereas in Africa, tribes themselves form the mainstream society.

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<sup>48</sup> Nongbri, T (2003), “Development, ethnicity and gender: select essays on tribes in India” pp. 08.

<sup>49</sup> In the Oriental category those countries were included who had civilizations but can’t govern themselves (Inability to self-governance) (Oommen 2007: 152).

At the present context, due to accessible transport facility, interaction pattern between tribals and outsiders or especially with their neighboring communities has improved a lot and it has brought cultural changes as well. On reflecting at the present situation of crisis in anthropology, in the matter of tribal studies, Atal (2016: 17) argues,

*“Our subject matter is decided by the official definition (a group is a tribe if it is listed in the Scheduled), anthropology has not offered a commonly agreed definition of the concept of tribe; and anthropologists in India have, in recent years, generally neglected the study of the tribes, and moved to other areas and peoples (Atal, 2016: 17)”.*

Nevertheless, government also bracketed them under single frame as ST with the idea of being backward despite undergoing several changes. During 1931 census, when religion was the prime factor for the identification of ‘tribes’ in India, non-converters adherent of distinct tribal names classified as tribes by Hutton. But, however, Hutton addressed tribal religions as ‘residuals... were yet to enter the temple of Hinduism’ (Atal 2016: 19).

### **3.4 Tribes in Pre-colonial Period**

In Indian context, the term tribe emerged during colonialism especially for the administrative purposes. Prior to colonialism, there was no such reference was available through which scholars could know the meaning and usage of the term tribe. The emergence of tribes as a category and reference point was during colonialism but scholars have tried to trace the existence of such groups prior to colonial rule also. In that way, most of the historians looked back into history to search the community of tribes. Ray (1972) states that scholars have tried to bring the commonality between tribe and *Jana* based on the egalitarian form of social organization against the social organization of *Jati*. (Xaxa, 2008: 1). Beteille (1960) mentions that “term tribe was taken over by the anthropologist from ordinary usage, and like all such terms it had a variety of meanings” (Beteille 1960: 7). Prior to colonial era, there was no similar terminology for ‘tribe’ in indigenous context. There were certain group of individuals who adhered to specific territorial, kinship and cultural patterns. They were referred to as ‘Aatavika Jana’, also called vanvasi or forest dwellers in Sanskrit (Atal, 2016:33).

Apart from such terms, these groups of people were referred to as ‘*Jati*’ (caste) as well. Apart from these terminologies, Adivasi (oldest inhabitants), and Vanyajati or Banvasi (by replacing the Adivasi) were the other terms (Atal, 2016: 46; Srivastava 2008: 34). Xaxa (2008) mentions that so-called civilization has constructed some images and meanings related to certain groups and communities which has much likeness with the term tribe described by colonial

administrators. The description of tribes as primitive and barbarous demonstrates certain similarity with the description given in Sanskrit and Hindu religious texts and traditions. Bara states,

*“The pre-colonial depiction of the tribal people of India as ‘dasyus’, ‘daityas’, ‘rakshakas’ and ‘nishadas’, when juxtaposed with the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century western racial concept, rather advanced the aspect of bestiality attached to the concept (Bara 2002:125) (Cited in Xaxa 2005: 1363)”.*

India was studied as a pre-modern civilizational society where sociology had the close impact of anthropological traditions. Along with other methods, region-wise analysis of communities, created a spatial-cultural zones. Patel (2006) argues about the two assumption that it implies, first, in relation to West and then within India, groups were divided on the basis of spatial-cultural structure. Second, she mentions that these groups were bounded by cultural attribute of ‘spirituality’ which were derived from Hindu civilization. Two group of people emerged in India, Aryan and non-Aryan, later designated as ‘caste’ and ‘tribe’.

Tribes are generally described as primitive, live in backward areas, unknown from writing skills, and follow certain animistic form of religious practices. Categorization of identities into the definite framework has altered the previous identification process. Sujata Patel mentions,

*“In precolonial India, multiple markers of identity defined relationship between groups and were contingent on complex processes, which were constantly changing and were related to political power (Patel 2006: 384)”.*

Sujata Patel (2011) mentions that ancient and medieval historiographers gave a different point of view on the identification of ‘tribes’ and ‘caste’ because in colonial period these terms became “more pervasive, totalizing, uniform and defined by religious order” (Patel 2011: xv). By providing various names of social groups which existed in India prior to colonial period, Dirks (2001) mentions that among the others, social identities “caste or rather some of the things that seem most easily to come under the name of caste, was just one category among many others, one way of organizing and representing identity” (Dirks 2001: 13).

While analyzing the historical situation of tribes with non-tribes through Indian scriptures, Nongbri (2003) argues that the nature of writing genres are Brahmino-centric. Nongbri reflects on the narratives from *Rig Veda* and *Ramayana*, where negative and derogatory terminologies, such as, Dasyu, rakshas and Vanaras (money/apes) (Nongbri, 2003:69) had been used by Aryan



origin people against non-Aryan origin. Either in terms of color, their appearance, or social and moral quality, in all the spheres non-Aryan had been projected as lesser than Aryans. The social position and status of Aryans over non-Aryans during ancient period reflects the hegemonic ideologies and discriminatory practices where Aryans were considered as conqueror and followers of Vedas whereas non-Aryans classified as Dravidian and Kolarian stock. This distinction between two groups of people was based on the unequal power relation where the tribal had to face the 'push-back effect' from the dominant section which led them settled into isolation or interiors of the hills. This process had been described as 'withdrawal syndrome' (Nongbri, 2003:69).

Jones Brockington (1997) also explains that the interpretation of the term Varna in racial terms to describe the superiority of Aryans over Dasyus. To understand the role of Varna in Post-Vedic period, he analyzes the two Sanskrit epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana. Through various instances he explains that apart from these four Varnas, some of the people were described as Pisacas, Raksasas, and Pretas (Ghosts) and Mlecchas/barbaras<sup>50</sup> (Brockington, 1997: 99-101). Furthermore, he says that tribal groups were also present in these two epics which designated lower status in society. The interaction of tribes with other sections also finds mentioned. In Indian epics, the conflict between kingdoms and those who lived in forests has been described. Most of the terms used for forest tribes are Rakshasas or demons. Not only the terms, but the place was also divided into *grama* and *aranya*-the settlements and the wilderness (Thapar 2002: 103). Upadhyaya (2011)<sup>51</sup> argues that the complex dialectical process of "pre-colonial social formation and local histories of resistance as well as colonial discourse" (2011: 267) formed the adivasi identity.

### **3.5 Tribe in Colonial period**

Prior to institutionalization of Anthropology as an academic discipline, in the formative stage of tribal studies, as Vidyarthi (1982) classifies, various monographs, handbooks, gazetteers, glossaries and reports were published by colonial administrator-scholars, and missionaries. Vinay Kumar Srivastava (2008) critically deals with the features which have become a persistent identity marker of tribal society even in contemporary world. The word primitive was used by Victorian scholars in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to explain the evolution of human society

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<sup>50</sup> It includes those peoples who do not follow proper norms and foreigner warriors respectively.

<sup>51</sup> Upadhyaya, Carol "Colonial Anthropology, Law, and Adivasi Struggles: The case of Jharkhand" in Patel, Sujata (2011) (ed.) "Doing Sociology in India: Genealogies, Locations, and Practices" Oxford University Press.

and race. Through the evolutionary perspective, tribes were conceptualized as representing a stage of evolution. Later, tribes were conceptualized in comparison to peasants<sup>52</sup>. Furthermore, the term primitive for non-western, simple and preliterate societies is still being used in post-evolutionism phase. Therefore, the term primitive, together associated with derogatory meanings, stereotypes, prejudices has been popularized. Srivastava (2013) argues that during colonialism British administrative-scholars applied several criterion<sup>53</sup> to create a demarcation between tribe and caste but at the ground level when officers started preparing lists they were not able to distinguish between tribe and caste.

Xaxa (2008) says that various terms and terminologies were adopted by census officers to bring together a diverse group of people into a clear framework, however, along with these explicit terms, geographical isolation and primitive living condition were implicitly used for the demarcation of tribes in India. Most of the scholars have contested this notion that animism and Hinduism are separate from each other. Xaxa (2008) also writes that “this distinction is not satisfactory for it is not difficult to show that caste Hindus practiced elements of animism” (2014: 3). R. Siva and Abhik Ghosh both argue that tribe as a term emerged, got constructed and popularized by the colonial empire and the anthropologists of that period. Further Siva (2013) remarks that it is difficult to ‘operationalize’ this term in reality (Siva 2013: xvi). Most of the scholars such as, R. Siva, S.M. Channa, and S.K. Chaudhury emphasize on the role of change as well as the role of historical perspective to understand the concept of tribe.

Colonial state had implied various colonial knowledge systems which are considered as “technologies of power” (Upadhyaya, 2011: 267) for the consolidation of colonial government in which anthropology also helped a lot. The impact of knowledge production on Indian population can be still recognized in the form of several social and political repercussions. Three paradigms for instance “evolutionary, racial or civilization” (Upadhyaya 2011: 268) were being applied by anthropologists for the understanding of complex social structure of Indian society. Ethnological and administrative practices of colonial state for formation of customary laws by reifying of ‘custom’, generated a process of “fixing tradition” (Dirks 1997: 203) (Cited in Upadhyaya 2011: 268) which developed a permanent identity marker for social categories. Consequently, the categories which were regarded as “fuzzy” (Cohn 18987; Kaviraj 1992)

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<sup>52</sup> Described as ‘part-society’ and ‘part-culture’ whereas tribes as ‘complete societies’ (Srivastava 2013: ix).

<sup>53</sup> Caste were described as victims of segregation and discrimination whereas tribes were as described In terms of isolation.

(Cited in Upadhyaya 2011: 268) transformed into “substantialized” (Upadhyaya 2011: 268) identities which had great impact in the post-colonial period. Upadhyaya (2011) says that anthropology had not only been used in the construction of certain form of knowledge and modern identities but its implication can be seen in the intersections of power and policy formulation. The way category of tribe was produced and the description given by ethnographers forced the colonial state to formulate the policies and laws to curb the rebellious tribes. Technologies of power which mostly include information-gathering exercises has been used by colonial state for the invention of new identities in the form of social categorization. Therefore, group identities had been produced in “redefine, ‘substantialize’ and rigidify” style by the application of new technologies of social categorization (Upadhyaya 1996: 3)<sup>54</sup>. Like other scholars, Upadhyaya (1996) also argues in the same manner that ethnological classification of tribe in Indian context generated a different image because of the coexistence of tribe and non-tribal group of people. In India, Upadhyaya mentions,

*“Tribes were never cut-off from Hindu society, many were similar in terms of language, culture or religion to neighboring ‘caste’ group, and many were regionally dominant groups organized into independent states (Upadhyaya 1996: 3)”*.

The whole process of reformulation, reconstruction and reinterpretation of Indian civilization began through colonial conquest. British not only conquered Indian territory but initiated to define Indian ‘tradition’ as well. Through this ‘tradition’ they created beliefs and customs of a particular community which later became an important aspect of culture. Reflecting on this whole process of construction of Indian tradition, Cohn writes,

*“In the conceptual scheme which the British created to understand and to act in India, they reduced vastly complex codes and associated meanings to a few metonyms.... Once the British had defined something as an Indian custom... any deviation from it was defined as a rebellion or an act to be punished. India was redefined by the British to be a place of rules and order; once the British had defined to their own satisfaction what they constructed as Indian rules and customs, then the Indians had to conform to these constructions (Cohn 1997: 162)”*.

### **3.6 Government of India Act 1935-**

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<sup>54</sup> Upadhyaya, Carol (1996) “Anthropology, Adivasi Movements and the Politics of Indigenesness” The Conference of Sociological Society” pp. 1-38

The affairs of tribal areas had been given to Governor-General under the Government of India Act, 1935<sup>55</sup>. The authority of declaring certain areas as “excluded area” and “partially excluded area” were given to His Majesty by Order in Council and in that process to formulate the Draft of the Order responsibility had been given to Secretary of State. After that, for the regulation of excluded and partially excluded areas, executive authority of a province became responsible where without the permission of Governor the ‘Act of the Federal Legislature or of the Provincial Legislature’ was not applicable<sup>56</sup>. This Act was condemned by nationalists and alleged “as a devise of anthropologists to protect aboriginals as museum pieces for their science” (Guha, 1996: 2375). Separate provisions and facilities developed by Britishers through the implementation of Government of India Act 1935 created an obstacle for the integration as well as prevented the formation of ‘unified sovereign state’ and ‘well-knit nation in the making’ (Ghurye 1973: 110)<sup>57</sup> (Cited in Oommen 2011: 239). Therefore, creation of ‘areas’ had the element of protectionism.

### **3.7 Tribe in Post-Colonial Period**

In the other parts of the world, as scholars argue that tribes were detached from civilizational societies whereas in Indian context, tribe and civilization coexisted from a long period. However, despite that coexistence, tribes do not constitute the part of civilization but the influence of civilization on them cannot be neglected as well (Xaxa, 2003; 2010). Compared to North-East tribes, central Indian tribes are in close proximity with Hindu neighbors who even participate in Hindu festivals. N. K. Bose’s (1941) studies of Juagans, Munda and Oraons reveal the variation in the impact of Hinduism. According to Bose, Munda and Oraons are highly Hinduized tribal groups but Juangs are not. In the case of Juangs, further, he mentions that Juangs are not outside the influence of Hinduism. Most of the scholars, even, created a division among tribes on the basis of acculturation and incorporation into Hindu society. Roy-

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<sup>55</sup> In the section 11 of ‘Provision as to defence, ecclesiastical affairs, external affairs and the tribal areas’.

<sup>56</sup> Chapter V, Part III, Section 91 & 92 “Excluded and partially Excluded Areas” & “administration of excluded areas and partially excluded areas”. (Government of India Act, 1935 [26 GEO. 5. CH. 2].

<sup>57</sup> Ghurye, G.S. (1973) “I and other explorations”. Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

Burman (1970) and Elwin (1944) divided tribal groups into four sections<sup>58</sup> whereas Ghurye (1963) divided them into three sections<sup>59</sup> (Xaxa 2003: 381-382). Beteille (1960) also admits,

*“Except in a few areas, it is very difficult to come across communities which retain all their pristine tribal characteristic. In fact, most such tribal groups show in varying degree elements of continuity with the larger society of India (Beteille 1960: 6-7)”*.

Moreover, Ray (1972) talked about the process of integration through which janas can come into the mainstream society and jati was one such method. He says,

*“The process was somewhat naturalistic, and hence a slow, patient, and gradual one, but through the centuries it succeeded in drawing a very larger number of these communities of people into the mainstream of Indian life and culture, transforming them and being itself transformed by them (Ray 1972: 21)”*.

However, he accepts that jati system no longer seems accurate method because of its own disintegration. The various terminologies have been used such as, simple, small society, *janjati*, *adivasi*, *jana*, *adimjati*, *vanvasi*, *vanyajati*, and *girijan* (local terms) in the place of primitive and tribe as well but still it reflects the same connotations attached with various value-loaded assumptions. National Tribal Policy (2006) also talks about the 75 identified STs who were described as Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) but now known as Particular Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)<sup>60</sup>, based on the notion that these group of tribes are more backward than others. Tribes of primitive group further gets divided into two other groups on the basis of their degree of isolation. In the first category, it includes those who are “insulated from the surrounding populations and are placed in isolated ecological environment” and another division of group is based on their location “on the fringes of ‘mainstream’ population” and thus, “have some contact with them” (Srivastava 2008: 33-34). Bhukya (2008) articulates that colonial anthropology did not focus on the adivasi-caste interdependency but it describes tribes in very stigmatized form as well as distinct from others. Tribes are mostly stigmatized on the basis of their racial, linguistic, and cultural features. For instance, they are generally being

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<sup>58</sup> Roy-Burman “fully incorporated, positively oriented, negatively oriented, and indifferent to it”. Elwin “purest of tribal group, less simple and honest compare to first one, state of transition (effectively become backward Hindus) and adopted the full Hindu faith but still retain their old tribal names”

<sup>59</sup> Ghurye “high status within Hindu society, partially Hinduized tribes and those who resist to Hinduism as an alien culture”.

<sup>60</sup> Annual Report 2001-12, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India pp. 25

described as belonging to the older race and language group of people, uncivilized, primitive, at the bottom of the civilization, unchanged, backward and savage (Bhukya 2008; Srivastava 2008).

### **3.7.1 No longer in the same framework**

By locating the status of tribe in evolutionary framework, Atal (2016: 21) claims that tribes are “transitional structural units” that is why certain frameworks used by ethnographers is no longer applicable. Tribe as a status cannot be considered as a permanent identity. Numerous changes can be identified among tribes after post-independence, therefore, tribes have crossed the boundary of colonial features used by ethnographers to delineate ‘tribes’. Atal (2016) says that “Lumping them together may be administratively convenient, but it is sociologically absurd” (2016: 3), where 705-odd tribes (according to 2011 census) (Ibid) were enumerated as Scheduled tribes in Indian constitutions which challenges the aspect of isolation associated with tribes. One of the major aspect on which Atal has focused is the changes among tribes which is noticeable through their connection with neighboring communities. Further, he mentions that changes in cultural sphere may create confusion in identification rather than total removal of its identity. There is nothing called tribal culture as such in the monolithic format. Beteille (1960) also mentions that “no iron wall exists where one ‘culture’ comes to an end and another begins” (Beteille 1960: 10).

The designation of tribal culture as such emerges only in the context of Indian civilization, where both gets distinguished from elite and folk culture of pan-Hinduism. However, it does not reflect the complete isolation from each other, while maintaining their distinct identities, and exchange of several elements always takes place. One of the common identical source among tribes are closeness to nature which not only provides a subsistence but identity also. In the introductory chapter, Atal (2016) supported the integration process to bring tribes closer to mainstream society. He opposed the idea of tribal India by referring to it as a ‘myth’ (Atal, 2016: 4) which came into existence from 1950s, where India had been divided into three segments-Urban, Rural and Tribal. Tribes are no longer confined in one particular space and belong to various racial stocks and speak various languages. Due to lack of unanimous definition of ‘tribe’ and various anomalies in the inclusion process into Scheduled list in Indian context, Lokur committee also supports the transitional form of tribes. In central India, state has adopted twin policies of assimilation and development, in the name of providing autonomy to the tribals,. Therefore, it reflects the unequal power relationships. Nongbri (2003) argues that

influence of Indo-Aryan identity did not bring any change in the character of North-East region, especially its Indo-Mongolian and multi-ethnic identity. By providing the instance of North-East, Nongbri (2003) argues that this region was not socially and culturally isolated even though it was not the part of Hindu or Mughal empires. However, tribes maintained the relationship with other parts of the world since the prehistoric times. Demographic distribution of tribal population in North-East region reflects the interrelation of people with nature. The introduction of education and Christianity provided a base for the modernization and westernization which brought a number of changes in North-East profile. Several provisions came into existence in the form of Sixth Schedule for some 'tribal areas' in order to provide autonomy and self-management<sup>61</sup>. Albeit, the concept of 'tribe' is considered as tentative and transient in nature which emphasizes on the notion of transformation and loses its distinctive identity through acculturation process. Post-colonial scholars such as, Beteille (1960, 1986) and Ghurye (1963) who have also put a question mark on the validity of such concept especially in Indian context.

Moreover, Beteille (1986, 60) suggests that anthropologically constructed idea of tribe, as ideal type, does not exist in India. In contrast to these claims Xaxa (1999) argues that scholars have also neglected the societal features of tribes. Tribes have been also studied with the reference of caste and peasant. Further, he says that tribes should be studied in comparison to Bengali, Oriya and other societies. Due to lack of positive traits of modern society, scholars have always projected its transformation at the next stage. It is generally accepted that tribes are part of primitive, illiterate, simple and backward society (Xaxa 1999: 1524). At the contemporary period, the debate of detribalization has been started because most of the groups which had been classified as Scheduled Tribe, does not fulfill the criteria. Xaxa (2008) mentions that "there is discrepancy between the concept and its application to different groups and communities listed as tribes" (Xaxa 2008: 4). Reflecting on the definitional problem of STs, Atal (2016) argues that due to get the constitutional benefits, most of the tribal groups want to maintain their 'primitive' tag.

### **3.7.2 Tribe as Indigenous People**

Another aspect of debate on the category of 'tribe' emerged during 1980s through the involvement of UNO's rights-based approach of development (Nongbri, 2003) for indigenous

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid, pp. 12

peoples. One of the major distinction between Indian tribe and tribes of the rest of the world for instance, USA, Australia and New Zealand is that elsewhere 'Indigeneity' is the basic criteria to differentiate between tribe and non-tribal population whereas in India it is debatable who is indigenous or autochthonous? However, attempts have been made by some people such as, tribal leaders Jaipal Singh<sup>62</sup>, and SC&ST commission who recognized the fact that under International law, tribes are considered or referred to as indigenous peoples. During the constituent assembly debate, Jaipal Singh asked the president Rajendra Prasad to issues the instructions to Translation Committee to translate the Scheduled Tribes as Adivasi rather than using the term Banjati (forest Dwellers) (Atal, 2016:37). It is not merely a part of academic debate where scholars argue and contest each other's ideas but this debate of classification of tribes as Adivasi emerged during constituent assembly debate as well. Jaipal Singh and Ambedkar debated on the status of tribe, and also discussed the appropriateness of the term 'Adivasi' or Schedule Tribe.

After the inference of ILO (International Labour Organization) and UNO (United Nations Organization) at International level<sup>63</sup>, on the issue of rights and privileges of certain group of people, especially tribes, the applicability of the term acquired a political dimension. The term 'indigenous' became a debatable and contentious concern in India due to the use of the term 'tribe' and 'indigenous' as equivalent to each other. Apparently, Indian scholars and Government of India did not approve the applicability of the term 'indigenous' in India because of the uncertainty it holds in it that other unspecified groups can also raise their voices notwithstanding, the similar word Adivasi (Indian version) of 'indigenous' use for tribal population. The Aryan debate which emerged through the interpretation of religious Sanskrit texts done by orientalist scholars in India, generated another such debate. Prior to the excavation of Indus civilization, Aryans were considered as markers of Indian history. But over a period of time, some Hindutva groups started claiming that the Aryans are the indigenous group of people in India (Trautmann 1997, 2005).

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<sup>62</sup> Jaipal Singh Munda (1903-1970) was one of the members of Constituent assembly from Bihar province of that time. He contributed in the field of education and later joined the politics to see the pathetic condition of tribes.

<sup>63</sup> ILO's Convention 107 in 1957 & 169 in 1989, UN's proposal of Sub-Commission of Human Rights Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, and Draft Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People (Tiplut, 2003: 20, 42), (Xaxa, 2003: 378) (Upadhya 1996: 22-23).



At one point Beteille (1986) argues that certain group of people are conceived as tribe as well as indigenous because they were able to escape the processes of colonization and subjugation while others became a part of larger social organization and lost their distinct identity too. On the other side, Beteille (1995) says, “it would be absurd to designate as indigenous only the tribal population” (Nongbri, 2003: 43). Migration of population from long period and distinct circumstances in comparison to other countries became a basis argument for the rejection of the claim of indigeneity of tribes in India. Ghurye (1963) also argues that religion, occupation and racial features are not sufficient to distinguish between tribal and non-tribal populations. While analyzing the whole concept of indigenous and its related debate in Indian context, Nongbri (2003:44) argues that the concept indigenous can be used as a dynamic tool by identified groups to challenge and overcome from their subordination. Xaxa (1999), by analyzing the term indigenous through the Adivasis’ perspective, states that it is the outsiders who used this term but over the period of time. Tribals also started identifying themselves more in term of raising their demands and rights. To avoid or overcome from all the uncertainties in Indian context, K.S. Singh suggests to use the term community (Srivastava 2008: 34) and Xaxa suggests to use the term ‘Indigenous people’ (Xaxa 1999: 1524). Scholars argue that tribes should be studied by their actual community names such as, Santhals, Khasis, etc. rather than claiming, that a new status is waiting for them as, Atal (2016) argues.

### **3.8 Constituent Assembly debate**

The debate on the amendment of fifth schedule of the constitution took place on September 5, 1949 which has been covered in volume 9 of the CAD<sup>64</sup>. This section of debate is important for the understanding of administration of tribal areas in post-colonial period. In the proposed draft, Dr. Ambedkar was against the formation of Tribal advisory council and the governor was given the rights to implement the law passed by parliament (9.132.4)<sup>65</sup>. On the other hand, Jaipal Singh questioned that it was not even decided whether who would be included in the schedule tribes and which area would be the part of the schedule areas. He cautioned that, if efforts are being made to understand schedule tribes through schedule areas, then it would be an incomplete understanding of tribes (9.132.94)<sup>66</sup>. However, Jaipal Singh favoured for an

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<sup>64</sup> [http://cadindia.clpr.org.in/constitution\\_assembly\\_debates/volume/9/1949-09-05](http://cadindia.clpr.org.in/constitution_assembly_debates/volume/9/1949-09-05).

<sup>65</sup> *ibid*

<sup>66</sup> *ibid*

annual report by Tribal Advisory Council (9.132.95)<sup>67</sup>. Jaipal Singh put forward that the benefits we want to extend to the Schedule tribes should not be given area wise, but, extended to the entire state or wherever the tribes were residing (9.132.105)<sup>68</sup>. Jaipal Singh described that his purpose was to ensure that all the tribes get the benefits of Fifth Schedule and further he wanted to see Tribal Advisory Council as a powerful working institution in reality (9.132.5)<sup>69</sup>.

Along with that, Jaipal Singh objected on the usage of the term *Banjati* and proposed to change it by *Adivasi* (9.132.205)<sup>70</sup>. In the constituent assembly debate, Ambedkar accepted the term STs on the place of Adivasi, proposed by Jaipal Singh. Ambedkar mentioned that the term “ST” has a fixed meaning because it enumerates the tribes” (Saksena 1981) (Ambagudia, 2011:34).

K. M. Munshi on the other side, questioned this notion of tribe as a homogenous category. There are differences within tribes (9.132.241)<sup>71</sup>. K. Munshi says,

*“We want the schedule tribes in the whole country should be protected from the destructive impact of races possessing a higher or more aggressive culture and should be encouraged to develop their own autonomous life; at the same time, we want them to take a larger part in the life of the country adopted. They should not be isolated communities or little republics to be perpetuated forever (9.132.242)<sup>72</sup>”*

K.M. Munshi favoured the assimilation of tribes in mainstream society. Dr. Ambedkar supported K. M. Munshi’s argument of the assimilation of tribes in mainstream society (9.132.248)<sup>73</sup>.

Nongkynrih (2010: 43-45) critically analyzed the applicability and practicality of the term STs in census enumeration process. Due to the lack of conceptual clarity, it puts a question mark on the reliability of enumeration in the matter of disaggregated data on tribal societies.

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<sup>67</sup> ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

<sup>70</sup> ibid

<sup>71</sup> ibid

<sup>72</sup> ibid

<sup>73</sup> ibid

Therefore, by referring 'ST' as umbrella term Nongkynrih (2010: 47) argues that 'tribal societies do not exist as real and distinct people, but exist as STs. Ambagudia (2011) deals with the issue of inclusion and exclusion of Scheduled tribes in Indian constitution where he argues that STs is administrative, legal and political category. It determines the definition, identification, and classification of tribal people in India, without laying down any criteria in constitution.

### **3.9 Post-colonial concern for tribe: Definitional Crisis, Constitutional Provision, Nationalist concern for Tribe, and problem of Backwardness**

#### **3.9.1 Definitional Crisis and Constitutional Provisions**

Beteille (1960) in his article '*The Definition of Tribe*' argues that the historical situation has changed the nature of tribes in Indian context where they live closely with other communities. Therefore, apart from certain areas, elements of continuity with the larger society is visible in tribal communities. By analyzing the situation of tribe, Beteille (1960) has contested the idea of separate tribal society on linguistics, political and cultural basis because of the process of absorption which is going on from a historical period which never prevented any kind of interaction and proceeded the absorption of tribes within wider society. Caste became a critical vantage factor in order to decide, describe, and delineate about tribes in Indian context. Therefore, there is ambiguous relation between caste and tribe. Defining a tribe in India is very crucial issue because of the debate that it has generated from colonial period onwards, created a complex situation. In this context, Dube (1977) says that for the solution of various debates associated with tribes in the form of isolation, assimilation, integration, and harmonization, generated an urge at the national level to define the tribes. Most of the post-colonial scholars try to solve the problem of defining a tribe as well as its status and associated policies in order to ensure its development and its integration into mainstream society.

N.K. Bose describes those people as philantropologists who on the basis of specific cultural traits identify tribe and advocate for the preservation of those traits as well, rather than anthropologists, which promotes tribalism or 'tribal communalism' among tribes. That is why, others have been perceived as 'outsiders' by tribals<sup>74</sup>. Atal (2016: 32) by analyzing both constitutional definitions of Scheduled Tribe, in Article 366(25) and Schedule Caste in 366(24), states that the Constitution has made such provisions where any group either caste,

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<sup>74</sup> Pramanick, S. K. (1994). *Sociology of GS Ghurye*. Rawat Publications pp. 54.

race, or tribe can become the part of Scheduled caste but reverse process is not possible. It mostly accepts the evolutionary framework where it shows that tribe came into existence prior to caste. Further, he argues, *“It is possible that a tribal society becomes larger and the subgroups within it become endogamous in character and thus the entire Tribe may transform into a caste system (Atal 2016: 49)”*. In order to provide an official identity, and constitutional rights to specific group of people, STs emerged as an administrative category (Nongkynrih 2010). V.K. Srivastava (2013) says that ‘Scheduled Tribe’ is not a permanent identity rather over the period of time when any tribal community improved the social and economic condition through “the policy of protective or compensatory discrimination” it got ‘de-scheduled’ from the list (Srivastava 2013: vii). But still that community continues to be called as tribe.

Constitution of India in the matter of STs describes those places as ‘Scheduled areas’ and ‘tribal areas’ (Bakshi 2006: 192-96)<sup>75</sup> where STs inhabits. These habitats divided under Fifth and Sixth Schedule by the provisions of the Constitution. “The Fifth Schedule under Article 244(1) of the constitution defines “Scheduled Areas” as such areas, as the president may be order to declare to be Scheduled Areas after consultation with the Governor of that state” (6.31), “The Sixth Scheduled under Article 244(2) of the constitution relates to those areas in the states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram which are declared as “tribal areas” and provides for District or Regional Autonomous Councils for such areas. These councils have wide ranging legislative, judicial, and executive powers” (6.32)<sup>76</sup>.

### **3.9.2 Nationalist Concern for Tribe**

National integration was most probably main concern of nationalist leaders of that period and the character of nation was described as Hindu because cultural diversity was assumed as threat to the nation and in the consequence, policies of development and ‘controlled integration’ (Upadhy 1996: 9) was promoted for tribes. Nandini Sundar (1997)<sup>77</sup> brings two contradictory position of nationalist leaders, where at one side they were ignoring the aspect of integration of tribes into capitalist economy through migrant labor or in other form, whereas on the other side, they neglected the state mechanism in the exploitation of tribal resources and peoples as well. In the ‘Peoples of India’ project, information on communities and castes have been

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<sup>75</sup> Bakshi, P M (2006) “The Constitution of India” New Delhi: Universal Law Publishing.

<sup>76</sup> Annual Report 2001-12, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India pp. 37.

<sup>77</sup> Sundar, Nandini (1997) “Subalterns and Sovereigns; An Anthropological History of Bastar 1854-1996, Oxford University Press, Delhi.

constructed in the similar manner of colonial anthropological notion, by using fixed cultural, linguistic and biological features but with slightly different intention where anthropology used for the maintenance of 'unity in diversity'. Elwin was the only one scholars (self-trained anthropologists) who raised the concern of tribals and become the voice of '20 million tribes of central Indian' (Guha, 1996: 2376) during 1940s when independence movement was getting its momentum. Elwin's arguments had generated a controversial debate among scholars and nationalists which divided the scholars into pole where at one side isolationist, protectionist were standing whereas at the other side assimilationist and interventionists. Debate between Ghurye and Elwin was based on the status of tribes in India and most probably on the designation of tribes as aboriginals of India. Ghurye contested Elwin's stand point. Elwin (1941) wrote,

*"The aboriginals are the real swadeshi products of India, in whose presence everyone is foreign. These are the ancient people with moral claims and rights thousands of years old. They were here first: they should come first in our regard (Guha, 1996: 2383)".*

### **3.9.3 Problem of Backwardness**

A.R. Desai in his article "*Tribes in Transition*" analyzes the situation of tribals who constitute the lower position in the society and adversely affected by the economic and political system of British government. They have the similar situation as other backward population of non-tribals. Desai also in the similar line of thought, explains that the situation of assimilation is not a new process but already existed in history. Desai mentions,

*"Studies of the history of Indian civilization reveal how the growth and the expansion of Hindu society was a prolonged and complex process of assimilation, both forcible and peaceful, of the tribal people into Hindu society. In fact, as history discloses, various methods of tribal assimilation or absorption have been adopted by different societies in different epochs"* (1960: 24). Bose<sup>78</sup> analyses the transformation and relation of tribe-caste through economic process and asserts that when integration through economic structure fails, then

*"Under slow inflation, a special occupation could be assigned to a tribe when it becomes a caste. But today nothing of that kind is possible. A whole tribe may be transplanted from its*

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<sup>78</sup> Bose, N.K (1972) "Disintegration of Tribal Cultures" in his Anthropology and some Indian Problems, pp. 5-51.

*forest home and lowly economy into the whirlpool of war, where some of its members become coolies, some become trained in technical occupations....(Pramanick, 1994: 62-63)”.*

The problem of stratification among tribes will lead towards the emergence of educated class among them but according to Deasi, these ‘vocal’, ‘richer’, ‘privileged minority’ (1960: 25) will never let the benefits reach to those unprivileged section of tribes, as well as prevent the unification process between tribes and non-tribes. For Deasi, tribal problem is merely the issue of economic-political where social order is structured on the basis of the denial of opportunities and exploitations. Therefore, Romesh Thapar says,

*“The vast bulk of lower strata of tribal society...are exploited and suffer from the same disabilities as the non-tribal people...uprooted from their moorings in the same way as the artisans and peasants were uprooted (Romesh Thapar 1960: 20)”.*

On the similar line of thought, Ghurye also talked about the problem of tribes by clubbing it with larger non-tribal group of people. On the question of alienation of land, he writes,

*“It is the problem of the backward, the ignorant and the exploited people, who work on land and carry on cultivation for some time only to find sooner or later that their land are no longer theirs (Ghurye 1963: 207)”.*

Aiyappan (1960) in his article “Tribes in the South” argues that compared to other Indians, they are not able to adjust with the changes and choose a different way of life. Bose in his article “India’s Eastern Tribes” gives emphasis on the various methods through which tribes make their living. By contesting the idea of complete isolation, Bose argues that economic interdependency has existed. Therefore, Bose says that “The isolation of communities practicing primitive forms of production is not necessarily proportional to the primitiveness of their methods of production” (1960: 55). Despite retaining their cultural aspect but in the economic sphere, the condition of tribes are similar with other agricultural labors. Bose mentions that even though the process of Hinduization has taken place among some sections of tribes through the economic changes but this integration between tribes and non-tribes does not survive at the social level. Elwin argues that not only British policies<sup>79</sup> but contact with Hindus also degraded the position of tribes, as Guha (1996) mentions,

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<sup>79</sup> Economic policies, Indian Panel Code, Indian Forest Law, ban on shifting cultivation, and alien system of jurisprudence.

*“Extended contact with Hindus crushed the aboriginals’ love of art, music and dance; taught them to worship alien gods and have contempt for their own; introduced child-marriage; constricted their ‘generous hearts’ with the practice of untouchability; and encouraged them to put their free and happy women in purdah” (Guha, 1996: 2379)<sup>80</sup> ”.*

These contact of tribes with Britishers and Hindus for Elwin provided noting rather than Psychological trauma and moral degradation that’s why Guha (1996) says that “he saw his work as being the protection of the ‘real primitive’ from the inroads of civilization” (Guha 1996: 2379). Whereas, Aiyappan (1935) mentions that due to the policies of British administrations, century long process of submersion of primitive tribes into dominant sections of Indian peoples had been interrupted. It considers that tribes have the “natural gravitation” (Aiyappan 1935: 59)<sup>81</sup> towards Hinduism.

### **3.10 Hinduization of Tribe**

Desai in his work states, “Studies of the history of Indian civilization reveal how the growth and the expansion of Hindu society was a prolonged and complex process of assimilation, both forcible and peaceful, of the tribal people into Hindu society”<sup>82</sup>. Several scholars have identified the process of ‘Hinduization’ in their respective field studies but the process had been referred with other names. S. C. Roy identified the process of ‘Hinduization’ among Oraons of Chota Nagpur, Grigson among Kol tribes, Sinha among Bhumijas of West Bengal, for which, Sinha described this process as tribal-Rajput continuum, S. K. Srivastava described it as ‘Kshatriyaisation’ process which occurs in rural Agra and Srinivas’s study among Coorgs describe that process as Sankritization<sup>83</sup>. Pramanick (1994) also supports the Ghurye’s view on process of merger of tribes into Hindu fold. Changes in the economic structure, welfare programs, and several others processes have become an obstacle in the general process of unification which existed from a historical period between tribes and non-tribes. Despite the various claims of change, transformation, assimilation, and integration of tribes into Hinduism or caste society through the process of Hinduization, Pramanick (1994) argues that the presence of self-image, identity and cultural elements among tribes are inevitable. One of the common

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<sup>80</sup> Guha, R. (1996) “Savaging the Civilized: Verrier Elwin and the Tribal Question in Late Colonial India” Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 31, No. 35/37, pp. 2375-2380+2382-2383+2385-2389.

<sup>81</sup> Aiyappan, A. “57. The Problem of the Primitive Tribes in India”, Man, Vol. 35, pp. 59.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted from Romesh Thapar (ed.) Tribe, Caste and Religion (1977), Cited in Pramanick (1994) pp. 59.

<sup>83</sup> Pramanick, S. K. (1994). *Sociology of GS Ghurye*. Rawat Publications

argument among scholars regarding tribe is their adoption or acceptance of Hinduism by leaving their tribal religion. It transform tribes as Hindus, and this argument had been supported by census data.

Stephen Fuch, by providing the census data of 1941 and 1951, argues the transformation of tribes into Hinduism. According to Fuch, “Out of the 25 million tribals recorded in 1941, six to seven millions have been dropped in 1951. And of the 19 million left, only one and a half million are officially recorded as still confessing a tribal religion...all the others must have embraced Hindu religion” (Cited in Pramanick, 1994: 58)<sup>84</sup>. By referring C.B. Mamoria, Deasi argues that there are two reasons which raise doubts on the reliability of tribal numbers. First problem is related with classification and second problem arose after 1909 which brought the provision of separate religious electorates. After the 1909 various religious organizations tried to increase their numbers in the census. For that reason, most of communities were deliberately got misrepresented. In one of the study conducted by Sinha (1962) in Bengal among Bhumijas, he argues that earlier they were claiming the status of Kshatriya but constitutional provisions has created a “vested interest” among them. Therefore, they reversed the process of unification. Sinha (1962) quoted the statement of one MLA who says that “if we claim to be Kshatriya, then we shall get no facilities from the government as ‘adivasi’ (Pramanick 1994: 62-3).

In the draft bill of Hindu Code Bill<sup>85</sup>, the application of the code discuss in detail about who is Hindu and to whom this code is applicable. In the context of tribes, this code has utmost significance which reflects not only on the nature of post-colonial Indian state towards tribe, but also highlights on the question of inclusion and exclusion from the category of ‘Hindu’. Here, it discusses the definition of Hindu, from the Hindu code Bill which is a proposed draft of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar (Ambedkar, 2014: 50). It mentions that the code is applicable to

1. (a). All those persons who are Hindu by religion in any of its forms or developments, including Virashaivas or Lingayats and members of the Brahmo Samaj;
- (b). to any person who is Buddhist, Jaina or Sikh by religion;
- (c). (i). to any child, legitimate or illegitimate, both of whose parents are Hindus within the meaning of this section.

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<sup>84</sup> Fuch, S. “Central Indian Tribes” in Thapar, R. (1977) (ed.) “Tribe Caste and Religion in India”

<sup>85</sup> Ambedkar, B.R. (2014) “Writing and speeches” Vol.14, Part 1, Section (i to iii), Government of India: Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.



- (ii). to any child legitimate or illegitimate, one of whose parents is a Hindu within the meaning of this section: provided that such child is brought up as a member of the community, group or family to which such parents belongs or belonged; and
- (d). to a convert to the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain or Sikh religion.

According to the Hindu code Bill, it defines Hindus,

- 2. To any other person, who is not a Muslim, Christian, Parsi or Jew by religion.

While introducing the Hindu code Bill draft, Dr. Ambedkar answered the concern raised by the fellow members of constituent assembly about the inclusion of tribals in Hindu code Bill. According to Dr. Ambedkar, the lives of tribes are regulated by their own customs and institutions and it would not be possible to regulate them from the Hindu code bill as their customs are different. It is the choice of a tribal individual to accept or reject Hindu religion. But, paradoxically, this burden has been given to the tribal individual to give some supportive evidence to prove that he is outside from the purview of Hindu religion (Ambedkar, 40: 2014).

### **3.11 Lokur Committee Report-**

“Advisory Committee on the Revision of lists Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes”<sup>86</sup> had been constituted by Government of India in 1965 under the chairman of B. N. Lokur, in order to revise the lists of Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes on the basis of rational and scientific manner. The lists of both (caste and Tribe) scheduled had been formulated and re-formulated by various orders but without any uniform definition or certain specific features which produced various anomalies during inclusion and exclusion process. The purpose of the committee-

“To advise on the proposals received by Government for revision of the existing lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. To advise whether, where a caste or a tribe is listed as a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe in relation to a particular area in a State or a Union Territory. Members of that caste or tribe residing-

- (i) in other areas within the same State or Union Territory, or
- (ii) in other States or Union Territories

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<sup>86</sup> The Report of the Advisory Committee on the Revision of the Lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Government of India, Department of Social Security.

should be recognized as belonging to the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, as the case may be” (pp. 2, 1.2).

Backwardness based on social, economic and educational level was the criterion set for the formulation of lists. The Committee tried to make a clear distinction between SCs and STs on one side whereas OBCs on the other side. While analyzing the definition of Scheduled Castes which has been formulated under article 341, committee observed that race and tribe can also be included in the section of scheduled castes.

Whereas in the case of Scheduled Tribes it is totally restricted to the tribe or tribal community. Committee found that because of the transition of tribes it is difficult task to formulate a definition. For the new proposal regarding inclusion committee states,

*“Communities which had been assimilated in the general population were not at this stage invested with an artificial distinctiveness as tribe, and that communities which might be regarded as tribes by reason of their social organization and general way of life but which were really not primitive should not now newly be treated as primitive (pp. 6, 2.10)”*.

Therefore, new criterion were formulated by committee in order to revise the list for Scheduled Tribes, but the features like “primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness” (pp. 7, 2.12) were not applicable for those tribes who had, by and large, merged with general population. Scholars, such as, Atal (2006) and Srivastava (2008) have dealt with these features in a critical way and argue that these characteristics are not applicable in the contemporary period. Indeed, these criterion became an identification standard for STs which have never explicitly included in the constitution.

Lokur committee mentioned that inclusion has created a “vested interest” as well as “regarded more as a coveted prize than as a reflection of backwardness” (pp. 9, 2.15). That’s why committee had proposed the idea of descheduling of privilege sections from both scheduled in the favor of national integration. At the contemporary period, most of the drafts regarding tribal policy<sup>87</sup> have initiated the debate of ‘descheduling’ the tribes from the list. In the matter of uniform pattern of listing committee suggested that due to changing social structure, it is not possible or even desirable to do it (pp. 12, 3.18). On the matter of ‘area restriction’ which creates obstacles to reach the special benefits provided by state if they move or stay some other

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<sup>87</sup> Tribal Policy Draft Document by Government of India, July 2006.

places. But, others observed this phenomena in terms of preventing social mobility. Committee also analyzes the case of ‘denotified tribes’ and ‘nomadic tribes’ which possess the characteristics of tribe, traditional untouchability, nomadic traits, and an anti-social heritage. These groups of people get classified in both the Scheduled Castes and Schedule Tribes. Committee suggests that referring them community will be more appropriate and scientific in nature rather than tribe.

### **3.12 Census Enumeration process in India-**

Census was considered as one of the intellectual and administrative tool of colonial state which applied for the purpose of classification and administrative convenience in order to incorporate the diversity into neat and meaningful categories. Nongkynrih (2010) describes that during post-independence period, tribal peoples were officially classified as Scheduled Tribes with inadequate definition. After Independence, census data has been used for development and policymaking process but it was not able to capture the social worlds and realities of tribal societies by using the umbrella term STs. However, STs varies from each other in terms of socio-economic and political level, but still applied the same term in constitution of India. Nongkynrih (2010) specifies to refer Xaxa (2001:203) that “tribes in India are not a homogeneous category. They differ widely among themselves in respect of the regions they live in, language they speak, physical features they display, geographical terrain they inhabit, modes in which they make their living, levels of development at which they are placed and size of community they represent”(Cited in Nongkynrih 2010: 43). Gill describes two objectives in the collection of census data-

*“To construct a characteristics demographic and other related socio-economic attributes of a population, and to construct a characteristic demographic and socio-economic space by introducing new categories and/or replacing the earlier ones for the purpose of data collection (Gill 2007:241)”.*

Census was the primary source, for the scheduling of tribes in new constitution of independent India, which was collected by colonial officers. Even though colonial census was the base for the inclusion of tribes in schedule list but it overlooked the various patterns of division done by census officers. Therefore, listed those groups who were having tribal/ethnic names beyond its religious affiliation. State has the power to include or exclude certain groups from list and providing the status of Scheduled tribes, whereas anthropologists lack evidences to prove any exclusions (Ambagudia, 2011; Atal, 2016). Morton Fried says, “....the numerous communities

described as tribes could not be defined independently of state systems with which they are associated” in that context it is necessary to analyze the role of the state systems and its constructions (Cited in Guha, Sumit 1995: 2). It reflects the lack of common criteria either during colonial or postcolonial period. To overcome from such difficulties, Srivastava (2008: 29) says, “this decision was left to the perception of the local community by the individual enumerator”.

Data collection through census enumeration process is not apolitical in nature at all rather than it gets defined, effected or shaped by current political discourse of any country. Therefore, Gill (2007) argues that census decides the social identity and strata of any group, creates a demarcation between groups in the form of us and the others, and formulates new identities. While reflecting on the differences of census enumeration, Gill (2007) argues that the political scenario and purpose, either in colonial or postcolonial period vary from each other. At one side, colonial government gave emphasis on the enumeration of various categories which suited their political agenda but on the other side, after independence government focused on the homogenizing process either by assimilating the various categories into dominant group or by reducing their numbers. “To understand the demographic and social structure of the country; to acquire better comprehensive of the resource potential, both demographic and cultural; and to enhance the demographic visibility of the Christians” are the three major intention behind the collection of data during colonial period (Gill 2007: 242).

The adoption of brahminical Hinduism in the form of ‘mainstream’ culture in India by ruling class for the integration and homogenizing of the diverse social reality. Therefore, to complete the agenda of nationalism without any hindrance, Bava (2003: 277)<sup>88</sup> states that “the notion of inclusion as given in the constitution is being substituted by the idea of exclusion” (Cited in Gill 2007: 243). Gill (2007) says that census data based on several variables, have never been collected on accurate basis. It always depicts some anomalies such as, after 1951, data on individual tribes is not available in a proper sense. In the case of tribe, especially its religious identity/affiliation/classification, depicts a dominant religious trend behind the enumeration of tribes where tribes have been gradually getting assimilated into Hinduism in every census enumeration. On the question of declining tribal identity in census enumeration, Schwartzberg (1978: 233)<sup>89</sup> comments that “reclassification as Hindus of a large number of tribal people who

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<sup>88</sup> Bava, U S (2003) “Dynamic India: Imagined and Real Review Article” *South Asian Survey*, 10(2), 275-80.

<sup>89</sup> Schwartzberg, J E (1978) “A Historical Atlas of South Asia”, The University of Chicago press, Chicago.

would have been classified in 1931 as belonging to “tribal” religious rather than Hinduism” (Gill 2007: 245).

The office of the registrar General and Census Commissioner are still using the same constitutional definition<sup>90</sup> for tribes which came into existence in 1950s along with certain changes. Census data has various implication on tribal development, policy making, and getting actual status of tribes on the basis of their socio-economic development. Nongkynrih (2010) the census definition which is used for the description of STs has certain limitations. In the matter of religion, he tells that census does not enumerate those religious beliefs and practices which distinct from the major religions, such as, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, and Jainism rather than clubbed them under one framework of ‘others’. Furthermore, he describes that the population of ‘others’ is very less even in most of the states it is less than two percentage. But at the other side, where STs population comprise more in number, they follow their indigenous religion. Apparently, it goes against the spirit of Indian constitution which does not gives any special treatment to any major religions. That is why numerical measurement can’t be considered as an appropriate standard for the negligence and insignificant of ‘others’.

Census was one such ‘investigative modalities’ (Cohn, 1996: 5)<sup>91</sup> which applied by colonial government along with other methods of knowledge collection but census had defined the categories, classified the categories, formulated and reformulated the categories, fixed the identities of groups into specific sense. Therefore, tribe is considered as modern category. Prior to taking a census at all India level, collection of revenue from local level initiated the process of accumulating data by revenue supervisors in Bihar and Bengal. Bhagat (2003) argues that the purpose of collecting data in India was different from Europe. But in Indian context, it had been used for different purposes such as, to learn about people and land which were under control of colonial government. The effort of categorization and defining of Indian population by colonial government during initial period, later provided a base for post-colonial government for conceptualization and scheduling the population into different and distinct categories. While analyzing the census data in Indian context, Mukherjee (2013) mentions that

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<sup>90</sup> “Scheduled tribes included the tribes or tribal communities or parts of, or groups within tribes or tribal communities specified in the “constitution(Scheduled Tribes) order 1950” and the Constitution (scheduled tribe) (Part C states) Order 1951. Scheduled tribes belong to all religions” (Nongkynrih 2010:45).

<sup>91</sup> Cohn, B. (1996) “Colonialism and its form of knowledge: The British in India” Princeton University press.

the purpose and context of data collection was totally different in Europe and India. Mukherjee says that “census were functional imperative of the colonial administration” (2013: 806) in which information on religion, caste and race were included from the beginning itself. In order to define Hinduism as a religion, directly or indirectly, it impacted on the conceptualization of tribes. Colonial government classified non-Hindu population among tribal population due to their practices of ancient form of religion. The way decennial census enumeration had been conducted during colonial period, it created various anomalies which later also extended and continue with several changes.

Tribe as separate religious category was introduced by census officers in order to differentiate tribes from Hindus. Subsequently, made a separate table with the title of ‘Others’ or ‘Religion not Known’ during 1881 census. Classification of tribal population based on religious started during colonial period but its continuation by post-colonial scholars, administration, various committees and radical Hindu socio-political organizations neglect the other important dimensions of tribal identities. It develops one way of understanding of tribal peoples by giving overemphasis on it. Tribes have been conceptualized as “those communities located outside of historical and textual religions and their accompanying social organizations” (Xaxa, 1999; 2008: 74). Therefore, tribes were considered as those group of people who follow animism or tribal religion, primitive living condition and living in isolation. It was 1909, which initiated the politics of religion through the introduction of separate religious electorates. Therefore, Hindu organizations started mobilizing various sections of population whose status were not confirmed as Hindu and tribes were also one of them. Earlier census classified tribes as animists or practicing tribal religion which was opposed by Hindu organizations who wanted tribes should be enumerated as Hindus.

Nandini Sundar (1999) describes that after independence, if tribals do not follow any major religion, then state has started to enumerate them as Hindus by replacing the earlier basis of enumeration, such as, ‘tribal origin’ and ‘tribal religion/animism’. Hence, Xaxa (2005) describes it “the post-independence method of tribal absorption” (Xaxa 2005: 1367) based on coercion contrast to the previous method of absorption which was based on the freedom and choice of tribes. Further, Xaxa (2005) mentions that in this process of absorption, tribes do not have choice to declare their religion until/unless they adhere with major religions. Compare to the earlier process of absorption described by Bose (1941), this is also a similar process of Hinduization but with certain differences. While discussing the colonial and post-colonial political scenario in Indian context, Gill (2007) states that political agenda of both government

varies from each other. At British period, differences were enumerated which provided a shape to a few ambiguous communities but on the other side, homogenizing process was initiated by ruling political class through the process of elimination of certain ethnic communities created more fuzziness. Enumeration of diverse groups in census operation had become the basis of accusation on British government by Indian scholars because it was interpreted as the essential element of their divide and rule policy. Reflecting on the issues of enumeration of tribes as Hindu, Oommen (2001) comments, “The British Indian census category variously labelled as “primitive”, “animist”, and “tribal”, which counted around 2.5 to 3 percent of the population has been counted as Hindu in the post-British period (Oommen 2001: 228).

Shaping the public discourse on stratification and inequality as an institution, census plays significant role but when it comes to make decision regarding definitions, categories and ranking system, this institution is not untouched with political contests as well (Sundar 1999)<sup>92</sup>. Sundar (1999) argues that recently scholars are using Foucauldian perspective, for analyzing the role and impact of caste and Indian census in shaping and freezing the identities, along with the ‘substantlized’ (Pant 1987, quoted in Nandini Sundar, 1999: 104) form of the concept itself. While analyzing the ethnographic and historical accounts, Sundar (1999) mentions that it provides in detail the *“homogenizing account of abstract native, colonized and classified, as well as the abstract colonizers”* (Sundar 1999: 104). By using the Foucauldian perspective, Sundar (1999) mentions that scholars have highlighted on the *“politics of writing, or production of ethnographic texts and the power of representation”* whereas unnoticed the other aspect which accompanies, how the text itself is the part of politics and it is not confine to the writing of the text, but extends to the social relations which constitute the understandings of the text. It clearly applies in the context of census report which is used as a text to fulfil the political purposes (Sundar, 1999).

### **3.13 Conclusion**

The present discussion has tried to elaborate the construction of tribal identity starting from colonial to post-colonial period. Tribe as a category which emerged during colonial period for specific condition but later it became the subject-matter of anthropology. Even though the term emerged during colonial period along with various prejudices and stereotypical characteristics, it is still being used in the contemporary period with certain changes. In post-colonial period,

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<sup>92</sup> Sundar, Nandini “The Indian Census, Identity and Inequality” In Guha R. and Beteille A. (1999) “Institutions and Inequalities: Essays in Honour of Andre Beteille, pp. 100-120.

they are designated as Scheduled Tribes for administrative purposes but scholars have also accepted this term. Most of the scholars of post-colonial period have challenged the colonial constructed notion of tribe and emphasized on the tribe-caste interaction, and communication. In the contemporary period, aspect of change among tribal society is also being raised. Most of the scholars have emphasized on the historical perspective for the understanding of tribe and relation between tribe and caste in Indian context. Throughout this discussion, it reveals that colonialism is not only responsible factor behind the emergence of tribal category, but the idea was already present in Indian context in which colonial theories were applied. Census is one of the important factor behind the consolidation of tribal identity and features in Indian context.



## Chapter-4

### Sociological Analysis of Three Indian Scholars: G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas, and N.K. Bose

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the work of three distinguish Indian sociologists and anthropologists who have written extensively on various issues such as, caste, tribe, Indian village, Indian unity, civilization, social change, mobility and etc. All the three scholars had the imprint of national movement in their writings and were highly influenced by Indian nationalism. Tribe is the common theme on which all three had dealt their idea but with different aspects. For instance, G. S Ghurye (1893-1984) was mostly concerned with the national integration and national unity and in that context, tribes are the problematic group of people for Indian unity which, according to him, needed to get assimilated into Hinduism. M. N. Srinivas (1916-1999) gave the concept of Sanskritization in order to understand and analyze the social change in India. Through this concept, Srinivas also propagated the assimilation process of tribes into caste hierarchy; and N.K Bose (1901-1972) also supported the tribals absorption into caste system through the adoption of caste mode of production to whom Bose called it 'Hindu method of tribal absorption' (Bose 1941). On the matter of methodology and key conceptual frame, all the three relied on Indology, orientalist constructed notion of Indian culture and civilization, colonial modernity, and empiricism of British ethnology. Nevertheless, Srinivas and Bose have substantiated their arguments through field-work method as well. Moreover, all the three scholars have used caste or Hindu society and Hinduism as a reference group for the analyses of tribes and for substantiation their arguments, they depended on books and field-view method.

Every social thinker is the product of a particular time and context shapes his/her understanding about any society. Impact of colonialism, emergence of nationalism and the dialogue between both influenced the mindset of early post-independence social anthropologists and sociologists. On the ideological position and analytical understanding of Indian society by the above three prominent Indian scholars, Nagla (2008) comments that "a section of our sociologists such as, Bose, Ghurye and Srinivas has become protective of Hindu ideology. Their civilization is Hindu civilization, their history is *pedantic* history" (2008: 5). Further, three scholars, G.S. Ghurye, M.N. Srinivas and N.K. Bose have been discussed in detail who followed and viewed tribal identity through the use of indology and orientalist approach.

## 4.2 G.S. Ghurye (1893-1983)

Ghurye is considered as the 'father' of Indian sociology who shaped the sociological discourse about Indian society. Ghurye was the first non-British sociologist who had the firm faith in Indian unity and national integration which emerged through the going-on nationalist movement. Nevertheless, his understanding of Indian civilization and society was shaped by the brahminical ideology whose marks can be seen in the production of nationalist sociology.

Method applied by colonial state officers, and scholars especially anthropologists for the construction of various forms of information was adopted by Indian scholars. Starting with Ghurye and his fellow scholars who argue that the groups residing in India are integrated into the cohesive Indian identity and Hindu religion provides a civilizational canvass to it. They further attribute the Indian identity to the Vedas, the first scriptures. In the argument of Sujata Patel, these scholars understand the structure of Indian society through the institution of caste, Kinship and family (Patel 2006: 386). According to Patel (2006) adaptation of colonial understanding by post-colonial scholars for the study of post-colonial society further legitimized the other binaries. In this projection, India projected as preliterate and pre-modern society. Here, Sociology has been considered the domain of modern western societies while pre-modern, preliterate and non-western societies were considered the areas of social anthropology.

Ghurye's understanding of Indian culture mostly depicts that religion, values and norms of Hinduism are considered as the binding thread of Indian society. The situation of tribes in Indian context has been analyzed by Ghurye through social, historical, and administrative aspect. Acculturation is more important than diffusion in the matter of Hindu civilization because of its complexity where Brahmins play a vital role in this one-way process. However, for the unity and integration of nation, Ghurye outlined five major groups, viz., the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes, Muslims as religious minority groups, and linguistic minorities which can create problems<sup>93</sup>. The concept of 'cultural unity' which is the

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<sup>93</sup> This idea of possible threat for national unity, depicted by Ghurye came in the form of book. Ghurye discusses this idea in three books, *Social Tension in India* (1968), *Whither India* (1974), and *India Recreates Democracy* (1978).

central argument in the writings of Ghurye, is totally based on the notion of ‘Hindu culture’ which synonymously, used as ‘Indian culture’ also.

Xaxa (1999) mentions that the adoption of regional language by tribes can provide the possibility of integration into caste society. In the similar manner, Ghurye also talked about the adaptation of regional language for tribes which constitutes symbolic integrational value. For the study of tribe and caste, Ghurye was relied on the historical and Indological sources. Depending on the scriptures and sacred texts for the interpretation and understanding of present situation also generate a limitation on the relevance of past for the understanding of present. Ghurye’s diverse themes predominantly reflect the influence of Indo-European civilization. His major concern was establishing the cultural and structural relationship between Indo-Aryan and Indo-European civilizations. Ghurye was trained in Sanskrit. He combined the Indological and sociological-anthropological approach together for the study of Indian society. It was Ghurye’s national concern which led him to move from colonial sociological framework and led him to establish post-colonial sociological tradition with the emphasis on the process of change and transformation together with those concerning issues and problems which affect national interest. Besides this enduring national concern, Ghurye produced a ‘Brahmanical model’ (Momin, 1996: vii)<sup>94</sup> where the existence of other traditions had been neglected in the formation of Indian culture. This Brahmanical model for Indian society was based on the notion of assimilation and homogenization processes. The impact of on-going nationalist movement where the ideology of ultra-nationalism and revivalism were dominant factors produced by Brahmin elite in Maharashtra along with the Ghurye’s own interest and training in classical textual and scriptural sources were the main cause behind the characterization of Brahmanical model of Indian society. India’s national identity have the two very vital features, multiculturalism and pluralism in the formation of modern nation-states. On the critique, Oommen says that Ghurye’s whole policy of assimilation of untouchables according to was based on the “*coercive equilibrium institutionalized through upper-caste hegemony rather than a consensual equilibrium (Oommen 2011: 233)*”.

In the context of tribes, Ghurye, proposed the Hinduization method for tribes of Central India and political integration method for North-East tribes. Ghurye argues in the preface of his book “The Scheduled Tribes”,

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<sup>94</sup> Momin, A. R. (1996), “The Legacy of G. S. Ghurye: A Centennial Festschrift” (Edited) *Popular Prakashan Bombay*

*“Most of the contemporary nations are composite wholes formed of many ethnic stocks which had their own separate cultures before the nation-making epoch....The process of assimilation of smaller groups of different cultures into larger ones or less homogenous cultures has been steadily going on... This process of assimilation was upset with the appearance of the British on the scene. It is the problem of these peoples (that is, tribes) which is the subject of this essay (Ghurye, 1963: xiii-xiv)”*.

Oommen (2011) argues that when Ghurye talks about the integration of tribes into Indian society and nation, then Ghurye neglects the composition of Indian nation which is based on the diverse group of people where size and social milieu make this feature more complex. Oommen mentions that comparison to other countries, *“Indians lived mainly in their original homelands”* (Oommen, 2011: 235). The main concern that Ghurye overemphasized, is the formation of composite ‘nation’ (Oommen 2011: 236) and in that consequence, Ghurye (1963) supported the clubbing of SCs and STs as Backward Classes by overlooking the distinctiveness of both entities. The tendency among scholars to lessen the demarcation between animism and Hinduism and support the integration of tribes in Hindu fold. It illustrates the ‘clubbing of tribes with lower castes on the same status within Hinduism, and incorporation of both groups into Hindu fold, and upholds the superiority and hegemony of brahmins (Oommen 2011: 236). Ghurye’s over excitement in the terms of nation building or composite nation by neglecting the identities of two separate entities reflects the impact of *“colonial proclivity to stigmatize everything Indian”* (Oommen 2011: 236).

While dealing with the question of ‘antiquity of settlers’ in Indian continent, Oommen (2011) criticized the stand point of Ghurye which seems like the argument of a political activist. No doubt, Ghurye (1979: 117)<sup>95</sup> endorsed the theory of Aryan immigration and argued that it must be taken as a historical fact that people calling themselves ‘Aryan’ poured into India through the North-West, somewhat about 2000 BC (Ghurye, 1979: 117). However, to maintain the unity of country, Ghurye did not deal with the question completely. But this fact cannot be denied that Ghurye (1963) was unaware of the fact that tribes of central India are the earlier settlers of the respective land and their lands are getting grabbed by the Hindus. Ghurye’s characterization of ‘Indian Nation’ reflects the aspect of ‘cultural monism’ (Oommen 2004b)<sup>96</sup>,

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<sup>95</sup> Ghurye, G. S. (1932/1979) “Caste and race in India” Popular Prakashan, Bombay.

<sup>96</sup> Oommen, T.K. (2004b) “Futures India: Society, nation-state, civilization”, Futures, 35 (61): 745-55.

which emphasizes on the religious aspect of nationalism, and according to Oommen, religion became the critical marker of Indian society for the traditionally privileged caste Hindus.

K.S. Singh (1996) presented the arguments, contradictions and position regarding the work done by Ghurye on tribes of India. Singh (1996) highlighted the several major arguments given by Ghurye either in contradiction to Elwin's stand point or in supporting his own position. Even, in the support of his argument, Ghurye (1963) quoted Ambedkar's analysis on the discussion of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution,

*"The tribal people in areas other than Assam are more or less Hinduised, more or less assimilated with the civilization and culture of the majority of the people in whose midst they live (Ghurye 1963: 385)".*

Ghurye claimed that his position was supported by "the wise statesmen of my country" (Singh, 1996: 43) which got reflected in the provisions of the constitution of India. He states, "The Scheduled Tribes are neither called the 'Aborigines' nor the 'Adivasis', nor are they treated as a category by themselves. Singh (1996) argues that Elwin's notion on tribes had the resemblance with the colonial regime's binary division of the world into two segments, barbaric and civilized. And the implication of that segmentation reflected in the description of tribes as different from others which needed special care.

Venugopal (1996) focused on the myths and legends of diverse ethnic groups about peace and strife. Through the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata, scholars have tried to explain the marital relation as well as conflict among diverse ethnic groups. Venugopal (1996: 49) argued that this process has helped in understanding of complex religion, like, Hinduism. If we analyze the ethnic composition then we can find that Aryans are depicted as warrior inhabitant of North, whereas non-Aryans of Southern region are described as autochthons having "totemic animal symbols" (Ibid).

By reflecting on the role of pilgrimages and sacred centers which play a crucial role in the integration of caste and tribal groups. Venugopal (1996) comments that Ghurye and Bose have commonality on this issue. Through the two concepts, great and little tradition,, Ghurye showed the incorporation of folk-tribal deities in Hinduism or acceptance of folk-tribal deities without any changes because of the pantheistic nature of Hinduism where every icon of God and Goddesses including folk-tribe deities, are made of Shiv, Vishnu and Shakti- are considered as

the core of Hinduism. That is why Ghurye<sup>97</sup> claims “the strengthening philosophical source was the impulse to rationalize the animistic features of the folk religions of the country. This impulse and tendency in their turn stemmed from the slow but steady process of ethnic integration into a complex-culture-pattern, known to later generations as Brahmanism (Cited in Venugopal 1996: 51)”.

Hinduization of tribal population is one of the major arguments given by Ghurye. This process happens through promotion of ethical manners and temple building activity. Ghurye described two types of Hinduization, firstly “Hindu missionaries from ascetic organizations founded ashrams in or near tribal locales to inculcate Hindu beliefs, and practices. Secondly, the tribals regarded themselves as Hindus, albeit at a lower level. In this respect, they became followers of Hindu gurus and sanskritized their customs” (Cited in Venugopal 1996: 51-52). According to Venugopal (1996), Ghurye has taken a relativist position which is generally used in Sociology of knowledge stream. In contrast to the Western understanding of static and unchanging characteristics of Indian society, Ghurye emphasized on certain changing aspects rather than total transformation of the society. Ghurye argued that flexibility in *Dharmasastras* and relativist position of ethics, classification of Vidyas on several time all depict the changes rather than static image.

Contextualization is the important aspect in the analysis of any thought process because the way Ghurye has adopted some versions of colonial knowledge and orientalist interpretation of Indian society and history, it portrays Ghurye’s inclination towards nationalist movement and as a consequence, a cultural nationalist sociology emerged (Nagla 2008). In the establishment of social sciences in India, orientalism and empiricist surveys have the major contribution. Pradip Kumar Bose analyzed the most distinguished work of Ghurye “Caste and Race in India” (1932) where Bose decoded the whole notion on which Ghurye primarily relied upon for the descriptive narration of caste system. Bose (1996) also involved the role of orientalists, colonial census officials and others in the colonial construction of Indian society in general and caste system in particular. Ghurye at one side emphasized on the role of Sanskrit for the understanding of Indian society whereas on the other side used the concepts and images set-up by colonial knowledge. Bose (1996) claims that it basically goes against Mukerji’s (1954)<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ghurye, G.S. (1962) “Gods and Men”, Popular Prakashan, Bombay pp. 3

<sup>98</sup> Mukerji, D.P. 1954. 'Social research', in K.M. Kapadia (ed.): Professor Ghurye felicitation volume (234-37). Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

comments on Ghurye of being “an Indian sociologists”. Along with Bose, Oommen (2011: 228) also proved incorrect this remark by describing that Ghurye’s understanding on SCs and STs in terms of assimilation/integration as well as his notion of nation influenced from European conceptualization. Ghurye’s social analysis should be based on the combination of various disciplines including Indology. Understanding of caste was largely shaped by the publication of several “volumes on castes and tribes, census reports, field investigation, observation, and reorganization of historical accounts” which provided a base for Ghurye who also relied on the empirical description of caste. Ghurye’s major concern was the identification of the “facts” which provides an empirical base to Ghurye’s narrative construction nevertheless, this empirical gaze is based on the method of ‘orientalist empiricism’ given by David Ludden which derived from the ‘rubric of objective science’ (Bose, 1996: 69).

Notion of caste in Ghurye’s understanding was based on “a certain notion of Hinduism; allegiance to racial theory; a search for certain universalistic features of caste in terms of status; an acute focus on the boundary and discourse and subdivisions within caste groups resulting in the view that sub-castes are the “real” castes; and future direction of castes” (Bose 1996: 64). This understanding of caste features developed through four perspectives- Indology, racial theory and physical anthropology, empirical sociology and anthropology and orientalist history. On the relation of caste and race, Ghurye (1969) have incorporate the racial theory of caste given by Risley where Hindu population gets divided into six different physical types such as, Indo-Aryan; pre-Dravida; Dravida; the Western; the Munda; and the Mongoloid (Ghurye 1969: 137) and later displayed their admixture. According to Ghurye (1969) caste is not confined to only Indian itself rather through focusing on the aspect of status, Ghurye tried to build a common linkage among Indo-European cultures. Here, Bose (1996) mentions that Ghurye went against the colonial understanding of caste which was based in the racial features as well as an essential part of Indian society. According to this racial theory of caste, each caste is unique in its racial features. After the advent of colonial rule, colonial state through the help of colonial state administrators, and census officers produced a larger number of descriptive work on every section of Indian society, and especially caste and tribal population. Therefore, positivism, racial and cultural distinction between the west and the east, and evolutionary and diffusionist theories were the ideological foundation behind the knowledge production on colonial society. By applying the racial, diffusionist, and Indo-European theory, Orientalists scholars interpreted the Indian history (Bose 1996: 65).

In this whole interpretational process of Indian history, by establishing the connection of Indo-European language speaking people with racial theory, Orientalist scholars propagated the theory of caste. It emerged through the encounter of two distinct racial group of people where one group of people are generally referred to as fair-skinned Indo-Aryan or ‘Aryan’ is considered as invader whereas other groups referred to as dark skin ‘Dasas or Dasyus’, are considered as inhabitants of the land or aboriginals. This conflict between two groups of people created a division where invaders try to preserve their purity by strict regulation of endogamy. These rules and regulation were maintained through the institutionalization of caste system. The whole construction of language and race link in Indian context reflects ideological biases of European scholars. In accordance to that, Cohn argues,

*“Nineteenth century European scholars and British administrators attributed their own feelings of racial superiority to the Indo-Aryans, saw them as the bearers of civilization to the Indians, and saw the caste system as the Indo-Aryans’ effort to keep themselves aloof and racially pure by relegating the Dasa to the lower orders of society and prohibiting marriage with them (Cohn, 1971: 61)”<sup>99</sup>.*

On the basis of anthropometric data, Ghurye wrote,

*“In Hindustan... the gradation of physical types from the Brahmin downwards to Musahar corresponds very closely to the scheme of social precedence prevailing among the Hindustani castes. The state of things can be the result only of such regulations that prevented the possibility of Brahmin blood being mixed with aboriginal blood but allowed the mixture of blood of the other group in varying proportions (Ghurye, 1969: 125)”.*

The whole knowledge construction related to Indian society and culture in the form of census and ethnographic reports reflects the basic assumption that orientalism influenced or shaped the mindset of European scholars in general and British officers in particular, in the division between east and west. This division was further visible in the production of social theories because “orientalists observed East through Western epistemologies in cognitive relation to the West (Bose, 1996: 67)”. Further, this orientalist construction legitimized various things in Indian context, such as, ideology of hierarchy Varnashrama dharma and religion became the

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<sup>99</sup> Cohn, Bernard S. “India: The Social Anthropology of a Civilization” Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall.



guiding principle. Brahmins were at the center of social system because of his knowledge of the sacred texts as well as maintainer of sacred tradition (Bose, 1996: 67).

Even though, both orientalist and missionaries have accepted the whole assumption regarding Indian society and culture but according to Cohn (1990: 146) there is some differences between both of them. The orientalists 'admired the civilization and religion embodied in the texts and saw the Indian society as having fallen from a golden age. The missionaries saw the society and culture as always having been corrupt, pernicious and filled with absurdities (Cohn 1990). Missionaries always looked or analyzed caste as the system based on inequalities. Ghurye in his writings glorified and idealized the role of Brahmins and brahminical Hinduism either in the maintenance of 'cultural unity' of Indian society, in preserving Indian social Institutions or in forging a Brahminical way of life full of aesthetics. Hence, Venugopal (1986: 305)<sup>100</sup> describes Ghurye's Hinduism as "*normative Hinduism*<sup>101</sup>".

Bose (1996) argues that the way colonial census officers were engaged with classificatory method for the classification and collecting information of Indian people, it provided a new sense of identity among various groups of people. Ghurye, first of all, accepted the classification and relation of Indo-Aryan people with Indo-European racial groups, and secondly, tried to justify the relation between Indo-Aryan and Indo-European by establishing the cultural and structural affinity through caste-like features. After analyzing the whole argument of Ghurye's caste and race, Bose comments that "as if the basis rules of his narration are already set; Ghurye only fills the relevant gaps" (1996: 72). By explaining the three major groups of nationalists, such as, modernists, traditionalists and traditional nationalists Sujata Patel (2013a) says that on ghurye's civilizational approach had the impact of traditional nationalists<sup>102</sup>. Through the interpretation of Indian history and civilization orientalist highlighted the role of Indo-Aryan social group and established the idea that Aryan the bearer of Indian civilization. Upadhyaya (2002) insists that British orientalism, nationalism and diffusionism were three ideological underpinnings which shaped Ghurye's sociological

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<sup>100</sup> Venugopal, C.N. (1986) "G.S. Ghurye's ideology of Normative Hinduism: An appraisal" Contributions to Indian Sociology (n.s) Vol. 20, No. 2 pp. 305-314

<sup>101</sup> Defined as "idealized version of Hinduism serving as a means to judge or analyze diverse social phenomena in Indian society" (Venugopal 1986: 305).

<sup>102</sup> These group of people had the notion that India was a civilization. They reinterpreted the orientalist understanding of Indian civilization. It emphasizes on the aspect of antique civilization and Sanskrit texts.

imagination. By highlighting the role of Brahmins in Indian society Patel (2013a) writes that for Ghurye,

*“Indian civilization drew its unity from Hinduism and that Brahminism and its ideas and values provided the core values of this Hindu civilization. Brahmins were considered “natural” leaders, the torch bearers, and bearers of this civilization and its ‘moral guides’ (Patel 2013a: 114)”.*

Venugopal (1986) argues that Ghurye never proposed the idea of acculturation rather process of domination and superimposition. According to Ghurye (1968) influence of Indo-Aryans can be seen on non-Aryan groups such as, Dasyus, Vratyas, and Nagas. Both groups have exchanged various things but Aryans have given a value system through which diverse groups are integrated. In the context of tribe, he argued for their Hinduization. He divided the tribal groups into three sections<sup>103</sup> where the last one is not perfectly integrated within the Hinduism because of their geographical inhabitation. He called them as “tribal classes of Hindu society” and “Backward Hindus” (Ghurye 1963: 19). He argues that due to the British intervention the process of assimilation got interrupted. He (1963) says,

*“India too has been the home of many ethnic stocks and cultures from prehistoric times...The process of assimilation of smaller groups of different cultures into larger ones or less homogenous cultures has been steadily going on...The results achieved up to the middle or the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century were very hopeful...there were still larger sections of the Hindu populace which, in comparison with the uppermost sections, appeared to belong to a different culture altogether, when the British appeared on the scene as the rulers of the land. The old process of assimilation was upset (Ghurye 1963: xiii)”.*

Ghurye says, “If the Rigvedic Aryans came later than others, they made up for the lost time by energizing the local people, creating a high culture, and making India their permanent home” (Ghurye 1963: 13). One side he argues that Aryan did not come in empty space rather there were non-Aryan group of people who already existed. Nevertheless, He denied to call anyone as the aborigines of India because of the complex history of migration. He argues that along with Indo-Aryans, Dravidian and Kherwari speaking language group are also immigrant people (Ghurye 1963: 11-12). By bringing various instance where tribal group of people have accepted the Hindu customs, he argues that census officers had mistakenly classified them as “Animist”

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<sup>103</sup> High Status within Hindu Society, Partially Hinduized tribes and tribes inhabiting in remote hill areas (which resist the Hinduism).

(Ghurye 1963). On the question of cultural contact and increasing distress and discontent among tribes, he argues that British rules and regulations are more responsible than Hindus. Through the contact with Hindus they learnt methods of cultivation and gave up the habit of drinking. On the question of tribal status in India, he argues that predominantly, the Scheduled tribes should be treated together with Scheduled castes and later, it should be considered as one group of the Backward Classes (Ghurye 1963: x-xi).

Ghurye in his work "Caste and Race in India" (1932) endorsed the civilizational perspective which includes the orientalist and ethnological classification of Indian society. He accepted the view that Indo-Aryan came from outside and conquered the 'Dasas'. Further, he says that Indo-Aryans are the part of the Indo-European stock which entered in India with Vedic religion, 'Brahmanic variety' of Indo-Aryan civilization and caste system (Upadhyaya 2002: 40). Moreover, Ghurye brought similarity in the cultural forms of Indo-European and Indo-Aryans, nevertheless, two features of exclusivity and social stratification, Ghurye wrote that "...the Indo-European people, of whom Vedic Aryans were but a branch, had early developed the exclusive spirit in social behavior and had cultivated a partially for ideas of ceremonial purity" (Ghurye 1969: 171). Even though, it seems that Ghurye has adopted the whole orientalist point of view regarding Indian civilization and society but Upadhyaya (2002) mentions that he was very selective as well. Influence of cultural nationalism can be discerned from his writings. His interpretation of racial, linguistic, cultural and historical data, was mostly associated with nationalist discourse. Venugopal (1986) says that for Ghurye, non-Hindu groups or cultures are considered as deviation from normative Hinduism. Therefore, Muslims, Untouchables and Tribes are three social groups that create problem for the national integration because according to him "national unity could be achieved only through cultural homogeneity" (Upadhyaya 2002: 50). Dirks (2001) argues that it was Ghurye who identified the impact of colonialism on caste. According to Ghurye, the present avatar of caste emerged through the census enumeration which generated competition and conflict rather among caste groups.

#### **4.3 M.N. Srinivas (1916-1999)**

Srinivas was such scholar who used 'field-view' as the tool to comprehend the social reality of Indian society. Nevertheless, he also applied the ethnographic method of social anthropology. Srinivas's theory of change is based on the adaptive nature of caste system which provides mobility to the system. His methodological position was that of an insider who had better knowledge of his or her society.

Nevertheless, Srinivas's position regarding the construction of sociological knowledge was primarily influenced by the nation-state framework. Patel (2006) remarks that earlier, in the orientalist construction, 'religion' was the basis of identity, now, 'nation' and 'nation-state' became the identity marker. This perspective is not based on merely a conservative approach, but also on exclusion as number of groups such as tribes, religious and ethnic groups who constitute the sociological space habituated by the nation-state, came to be excluded (Patel 2006: 390).

Radcliffe-Brown's structural-functionalist perspective led Srinivas to understand Indian society in the frame of 'totality' where components are interconnected with each other. Srinivas's approach of functionalism in Indian situation get reflected in the maintenance of status quo of various groups in the society in which higher caste hegemony gets sustained over other subaltern groups by imitating higher caste values and ways of life.

Srinivas also remarked on Elwin's position of plough-cultivation. Srinivas argued that "Elwin here forgets a fact which every trio in Anthropology knows: cultures are never static, but dynamic. Old traits are thrown off or modified and new ones adopted. And that is life. Of course a certain immigrant trait may be disastrous to the group. But that has to be proved in every case. There is nothing to prove that the Baigas are incapable of taking the [plough] agriculture. We may have to do it with special caution and slowness, but that is quite different from maintaining that it can't be done at all" (cited in Guha, 1996: 2385). Srinivas (1973) also argued that the census officers, such as Riskey, were aware of the absorption of tribes into Hinduism. It initiated the process of creating division between Hindus and other sections of the society and this process got strengthened through the census enumerations which created a competition, as well as self-awareness for getting higher status in caste hierarchy.

Traditionally and locally approved model of social mobility had been transformed due to the emergence of census enumeration processes. Knowledge about Sanskrit language helped British officials and scholars to know about Indian culture through Indological studies which promoted other disciplines as well, such as, comparative philology, comparative mythology and comparative jurisprudence. In this whole process of collecting information for administrative purposes by Britishers, not only highlighted the richness, antiquity, and versatility of India's heritage by some scholars, such as, Max Muller, but this construction of India's ancient past also provided the base to upper caste Hindus for national myth-making (Srinivas 2002: 483-485).

To understand the pattern of religious, social and cultural change in India, Srinivas formulated the concept of Sanskritization<sup>104</sup>. S. K. Chatterjee writes,

*“The progressive Sanskritization of the various pre-Aryan or non-Aryan peoples in their culture, their outlook and their ways of life, forms the keynote of India through the ages. And in the course of this ‘Sanskritization’ the affected peoples also brought their own spiritual and material milieus to bear upon the Sanskrit and Sanskritic culture which they were adopting and thus helped to modify and to enrich it in their own circles ( Chatterjee, 1950: 148). (Cited in Srinivas 2002: 221).*

According to Srinivas, hierarchy in caste system does not stop the movements of castes from one status to another, especially in the middle regions. Lower castes and outlying tribes can claim the higher status or even Kshatriya status by Sanskritizing their rituals and pantheon. This process of claiming higher status reflects that “an essential features of caste as an ongoing system” (Srinivas 1966: 4)<sup>105</sup>. Through the process of Sanskritization, lower caste and tribes acquire the customs, rites and beliefs, institutions, values, habits, new ideas both secular and sacred available in Sanskrit literature, of Brahmans and two other ‘twice-born’ caste which is theoretically prohibited but practically not impossible. Srinivas (1966) defines “Sanskritization”, as a process by which a ‘low’ caste Hindu, or tribal or other groups, change its customs, ritual, ideology, and way of life in the direction of a high and ‘twice-born’ castes (Srinivas, 1966: 6). He (1987) argues that the influence of Vedic tradition on isolated communities (living in mountain areas) cannot be neglected. Further, he provides the instances of tribal folk societies from across India, such as, Tribals of Central India, Mizoas of North-east (own version of Ramayana), and Todas from South India which show their belief in sacred rivers and Hindu pilgrims. Moreover, Srinivas says that Varna model is being used by four ethnic groups<sup>106</sup> living in the Nilgiri Mountains, for the maintenance of mutual relation and inter-ethnic relation (Srinivas 1987: 136). On the matter of tribe-caste relation, Srinivas accepts the transformation of tribes into caste from a historical period as well as cultural similarities between both of them. Therefore, he states, “there are 'continuities' between tribes and castes

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<sup>104</sup> This term appeared first in Srinivas’s book “Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India” (1952).

<sup>105</sup> Srinivas, M. N. (1966) “Social Change in Modern India”, Orient Longman Private Limited.

<sup>106</sup> Todas, Badagas, Kotas, and Kurumbas.

in a few areas, and drawing a sharp cultural line between the two does violence to reality” (Srinivas 1987: 136)<sup>107</sup>.

One of the main feature of Sanskritization process is that if any caste wants to get mobile in the hierarchy, it cannot jump over the locally higher caste otherwise castes at the local level will not accept its claim that’s why this happens as a chain process. Sanskritization just provides the model for castes who are ambitious in nature for higher status, but over all it does not alter the whole hierarchical structure. Brahmins are considered as most ritually high and sanskritized rather than other castes but brahmins are not the only agents to whom other castes and tribes imitate. Scholars have suggested a larger number of other locally dominant castes. These castes would not be Brahmin in every condition. Pocock discusses the Kshtriya model of dominant caste, whereas Milton Singer emphasizes on more than three caste models<sup>108</sup> of local dominant castes, who work as a reference group (discussed in Srinivas 1966: 13-14).

Srinivas has analyzed the process of social and cultural change through the concept of Sanskritization in tribal and semitribal groups where he found that certain tribal groups such as, Bhils, Gonds, and Oraons and Pahadis have adopted the values and rituals of Hinduism. According to Srinivas, through the process of Sanskritization, tribes were become a part of caste system and Hindu order. Along with the process of Sanskritization, Kalia<sup>109</sup> talks about the process of ‘tribalization’, where high-caste Hindus absorb the elements of tribes, temporarily. Srinivas (1966) accepts the facts that Brahmins also adopt the culture of locally dominant castes. While describing the pre-colonial mobility process in India, Srinivas (1966) argues that instability in political system provided the opportunity to capture the political power for various castes, who established their marital relations, numerical strength and ownership on land. After that Sanskritization plays its role. Srinivas (1966) mentions that due to the establishment of British rule, this process of mobility stopped and they generated another avenue of social mobility in India. Srinivas’s assessment sounds similar to Ghurye’s proposition that due to the arrival of Britishers the process of assimilation interrupted.

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<sup>107</sup> Srinivas, M.N. (1987) “Development of Sociology in India: An Overview” Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 22, No. 4, pp. 135-138.

<sup>108</sup> Brahmin, Kshatriya or Vaishya Models.

<sup>109</sup> Kalia, S.L. found this process among the Jaunsar-Bawar in Uttar Pradesh, and Baster regions of Madhya Pradesh, pp. 19 (Cited in the chapter ‘Sanskritization’ in Social Change in Modern India).

But Srinivas in his article '*A note on Sanskritization and Westernization (1956)*' argues that if other caste groups are dominant in the region rather than Brahmins then Sanskritization will be slower and values will be less Brahmanical in nature. Some of the caste groups who acquired political and economic power, but ritually considered as less than Sanskritization fulfill the gap. Srinivas argues that most of the Sanskritic values had been included in Constitution of India and even promoted by parliamentary democratic system as well. Acknowledgment of India's glorious past and Sanskrit language by western scholars, especially the contribution of Max Muller provided the confidence to Indian leaders and educated Indians who utilized these materials 'to make extravagant claims for their culture, and to run down the West as materialistic and unspiritual' (Srinivas, 1956: 487 )<sup>110</sup>. Srinivas mentions that Sanskritization was not the only process which was going on during British period. Along with it, Srinivas proposed another concept called Westernization (impact of Western culture on Indian population). In that process, as Srinivas explains 'a new and secular caste system' (Srinivas 1956: 488) emerged where Britishers (as Kshatriya) were kept on the higher position than Brahmans. Therefore, "Brahmans became the filter through which Westernization reached to the rest of Hindu society in Mysore" (Srinivas, 1956: 488).

Uncertainty of the mutual rank in the middle regions of the caste hierarchy, economic freedom and spatial movement of lower caste people are certain reasons which made possible the claim for mobility. Even though it is claimed that Sanskritization helps lower caste and tribes to attain the higher status by acquiring the traits of higher varna but it is not possible to happen all the time. Srinivas writes,

*"It is indeed an anachronism that while groups which were originally outside Hinduism such as tribal groups or alien ethnic groups have succeeded in entering the Hindu fold, and occasionally at a high level, an untouchable caste is always forced to remain untouchable (Srinivas, 1956: 493)".*

Folk or local elements always get absorb into Sanskritic Hinduism through the help of the translation of sacred Hindu scriptures in regional languages which brings regional variation as well as a common religious culture. Hence, Sanskritization is considered as two-way process. There are various ways through which Sanskritization happens by either improving the political and economic condition or becoming self-consciousness through "sources of 'Great Tradition'

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<sup>110</sup> Srinivas, M. N. (1956) "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization" The Far Eastern Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 481-496.

of Hinduism such as a pilgrim centers or monastery or a proselytizing sect” (Srinivas, 2002: 222). Srinivas did not negate the idea of absorption of lower caste and tribal deities into Sanskritic Hinduism but he refers to them as a part of Hindu polytheism. Importance of brahmins was never reduced because to claim the position of Kshatriya, brahmins play an important role. They helped to provide legitimacy to the authority of Kshatriya king and in return, land was granted to them.

According to Srinivas, impact of Britishers cannot be neglected. British rule aided in the shaping of modern India’s values, ideas, and attitudes by the discovery and interpretation of Sanskrit literature. But, in the case of Madras, where regional self-consciousness of Tamil people challenged the acceptance of Sanskrit words and phrases because of the identification of Sanskrit with Brahmins, and Tamil language with the non-Brahmins. Thus, brahmins were regarded to be the Aryan invaders from the north, who were suppressing the indigenous Dravidian culture (Srinivas 2002: 233). The emergence of self-consciousness of Tamil people in twentieth century against the North Indian projection of Sanskritic Hinduism transformed it into a non-Brahmin and cultural and political movement. During the nationalist movement Srinivas (2002) explains that how national leaders utilized the Hindu symbols and Hindu idioms as cultural resources to build the foundation of nationalist movement. Along with Gandhi other Indian leaders accepted the values such as, vegetarianism and *ahimsa* (non-violence), idea of *Rama Rajya*, *satyagraha* and love for cow which are considered as core of Sanskritic Hinduism. Srinivas has overemphasized on the role of Hindus, Sanskritic Hinduism, Brahmins, Sanskrit language, and values, described in Sanskrit literature. To overcome the problems of Independent India, Srinivas suggests,

*“It is necessary for Hindus to accept the entire Indian tradition to which all sections of the population have contributed, and for the latter to regard the Sanskrit heritage as their own (Srinivas 2002: 235)”*.

Oommen (2011) argues that ritual and secular are bi-dimensional status system that works in Indian society where untouchable can achieve secular status but its ritual position will never change therefore it contradicts the process of Sanskritization as well. Like other methods of transformation of tribe into caste, sanskritization along with Hinduization is considered as an important tool to explain the changing process in tribal society. Sanskritization is not only the term which have been used by social anthropologists to reflect the complex social process of transformation, but terms, such as, ‘Kshatriyaization’ and ‘Rajputization’ (Xaxa, 1999: 1521)



have also been used. Applying the concept of sanskriization in tribal context became problematic because one of the essential feature for defining tribes is that they are not a part of either Hindu or caste society. Therefore, tribes can't perceive Hindu faith and practices by laying outside the caste structure as well as can't claim for any higher status. Even though, it is considered that the process of Hinduization transforms tribes into caste, it is only lower position that tribes get in the caste strata. Mann and Mann (1989)<sup>111</sup> as quoted by Shaoo (2013), they argues in the context of west-India where the process of 'Hinduization' occurs among tribe through the contact of dominant caste Hindus who entered their regions through various process. These groups of people work for them as reference group behavior in order to uplift and attain higher status. In contrast to the idea of reference group for whole tribal group, Xaxa (1999) argues that apart from those royal lineage groups, which constitute the upper strata of tribal society, establish their contact through marital alliances. The process of becoming Hindu through Hinduization can't be generalized at a large level. Xaxa (1999) further states that tribes do not have the intention to climb in the caste hierarchy. Even the allocation of the position to tribes are nothing but lower status and therefore there is no space for asserting for higher status. Bose (1949/96)<sup>112</sup> also accepts that besides acculturation tribes acquired lower status of Hindu society. Therefore, adopting the values and ideas of dominant caste is no longer the case of getting being absorb into that structure rather than become like a dominant group.

Therefore, the concept of Hinduization is more appropriate than Sanskriization in order to understand the situation of transformation in tribes. Perceiving a form of Hindu belief and practices without becoming a part of Hindu social organization, at the theoretical level can constitute any group as Hindu but Caste and Hinduism are intrinsically link with each other that's why after getting Hinduized also, tribes cannot become a part of caste system. Ghanshyam Shah (1999: 314) argues,

*"If Hinduism means the institutional four-fold brahminical social order, the model prescribed by Manusmruti, accepting Vedantic philosophy, etc, the adivasis are certainly not Hindus".*

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<sup>111</sup> Mann, R.S. and Mann, K. (1989), 'Hinduization among Western Indian Tribes', Tribal Cultures and Change, New Delhi: Mittal Publications, pp. 156-183.

<sup>112</sup> Bose (1949/96) 'Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption' in *The Structure of Hindu Society*, Calcutta: Orient Longman, pp. 168-81 (Cited in Shaoo, 2013)

Further, Shah (1999) mentions that conversion is only a politically motivated method to bring adivasis into Hinduism because both, caste-Hindus do not consider adivasis as part of caste social order and adivasis also keep themselves outside of it. Any kind of transformation or integration into structures of Hindu society can't take place unless the acculturation of language of regional community happens. Caste and dominant regional linguistic community, both are interrelated with each other. In that way, Hinduization alone cannot make any tribe Hindu until/unless they gets absorbed into regional community. It is basically 'religious/cultural movement' (Xaxa, 1999: 1522) through which the idea of Sankritization and Hinduization takes place. But these movements are referred to as 'Bhagat movement' (Xaxa, 1999), (Shaoo, 2013) among tribes. Thus, tribals identify themselves as Bhagats rather than Hindus. Shaoo (2013) in the context of Rajasthan maintains that Bhagat movement promotes the ideas of Sanskritic traits and Hindu religious values among tribes. However, apart from the influence of Sankritization or Hinduization tribals still refer them as tribe rather than dividing their population into caste and tribe into two separate categories. Their population gets divided on the basis of their different religious values. Baviskar (2005) also argues that through the influence of Hinduisation, many tribal families have become Bhagat, and in that consequence, started abandoning adivasi practices, and excommunicating non-bhagat adivasis. Bhukya (2008: 108), while quoting Dirks (2004), states that the impact of Hindu nationalist ideology can be observed in the theory of Sanskritization through which he tries to counteract the emerging non-Brahman movement in south India. While critically analyzing the role of Srinivas on the concept of Sanskritization, Bhukya (2008) says that the interaction and co-existence of various groups from a long period has generated a fresh synthesis which can't be described them as 'Hindus'.

The continuous influence of structural-functionalism and Indological hegemony which works as "cultural watchdog" (Garada 2013: 07) in Indian sociology, make this situation more complex for the presence of subaltern people and their autonomies and identities. The whole understanding of Indian society was got shaped by the dominant and macro-perspective of structural functionalism which neglected the micro aspect of society which include dalit, tribes and gender issues. Sundar (1997: 160)<sup>113</sup> also points out that scholars such as, Ghurye, Srinivas,

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<sup>113</sup> Sundar, Nandini (1997) "Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar 1854-1996" Oxford University Press, New Delhi.

and Bose's notion on tribe along with other scholars had the baggage of nationalism and through that background they provided a critique to the earlier constructed idea of 'tribe'.

On the critique of Sanskritization, Oommen (2007) brought another source of mobility that is Tamilization (Oommen 2007: 211). Oommen (2007) argues, "Tamilization goes against the very grain of India and Hinduism's diversity; it promotes a monistic Hinduism" (Ibid). Due to the strong presence of Dravidian customs in Tamil Nadu, the Aryan culture gets overestimated. Berton Stein (1997) mentions, "Tamils involved the symbol of Tamilakam. It symbolizes the distinction between Tamils who are internal to Tamil Nadu and contrasts them with the 'external other', the Aryan Hindus, who follow Sanskrit Hinduism" (Oommen 2007: 211-12). Oommen (2007) describes that a larger number of social groups<sup>114</sup> can't become the agents of Sanskritization until/unless it goes beyond the domain of Aryan Hinduism,

#### **4.4 N.K. Bose (1901-1972)**

Bose did not confine himself into one particular disciplinary boundary. He explored and used the knowledge from anthropology, sociology, archaeology, social history, prehistory, geology, geography, Indology and he was also influenced by Gandhian philosophy. By using the anthropological knowledge and method, Bose tried to find out India's unity in the diversity of cultures. He used civilizational perspective for understanding the spread of Indian culture and civilization. Historical-civilizational framework was applied by scholars to comprehend a social system, a nation and a civilization and in that context three essential things are used "cataloguing (listing of cultural traits); cultural essence (to identify the essential underlying process); and cultural communication (enduring elements that are transmitted among the parts of the society)" (Nagla 2008: 268).

Scholars of civilizational perspective try to understand the structural foundation of any civilization through the historicity, continuity and interlinkage of various structures. In order to analyze the Hindu social structure, Bose combined the three different perspectives, ethnography, Indology and social history into one frame. Bose has conducted his ethnographic studies among the tribes of Juangs, Munda and Oraons. Although, Juangs, according to Bose, does not constitute the part of Hinduism or are still outside the Hindu social, nevertheless, they are under the influence of Hindu religion. On the other side, Munda and Oraons are considered as highly Hinduized tribes. "Level of technology development and degree of their geographical

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<sup>114</sup> SCs, STs, OBCs, Sikh, Muslims, Christians, and Tamils (Dravidian Hindus).

and social isolation” (Nagla 2008: 272) are the two basis on which Bose has divided the tribal communities. Bose (1971: 7)<sup>115</sup> classified tribes into various levels from hunters and gatherers, animal herders, shifting cultivators and settled agriculturalists. Bose had the inclination towards Hinduism, and ‘Brahminical civilization’ through which he explored the nature and degree of relation of tribes with larger society. In the matter of tribes Bose gave emphasis on the economic changes that forced tribals to leave their isolation and absorb into wider society. Bose accepts that impact of Hinduism is present among tribes despite the maintenance of tribal social and religious culture. One of the major Idea on that Bose overemphasized was the connection of jati with occupation. And in that context, whenever new jati gets formed through the absorption of any tribal community, monopoly over occupation has been given to tribes.

Bose (1967) argues that absorption of any tribal group into new jati reflects that intention of ancient social and economic legislators who wanted to “*build up a social organization on the basis of heredity monopolistic, non-competitive guilds (Bose 1967: 209)*”. According to Bose different types of productive system provides a base for the interaction between ‘Hindus’ and ‘non-Hindus’. Despite the existence of diverse cultures under the rubric of Indian civilization, all of them were connected through networks of interdependence in economic affairs. For Bose, economic change and material linkages are the important aspects of Indian society. Introduction of new technology and system of production by Britishers brought a change in the traditional economic structure based on caste system. In order to analyze the unity of Indian civilization Bose proposed that material culture provides a unity beyond the barrier of language differentiation. Bose also admits that the division of Indian population into two broad segments-Aryan in North and Dravidian in South region. Language is also one such factor of this division. N. K. Bose in his paper “*Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption*”<sup>116</sup> argues that if we look the connection between tribe and larger society from “sufficiently broad geographical canvas and a sufficiently long historical scale” (Beteille 1986: 314), then we become able to understand the symbiotic relationship between both of them. This symbiotic relation between both of them has an unequal basis where the economic system of caste is considered as superior than tribe, which provides security to the larger section of population without any competition among them. It provides lower status to tribes in caste system as well.

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<sup>115</sup> Bose, N.K. (1971) “Tribal Life in India” National Book Trust, Delhi.

<sup>116</sup> Bose, N. K. (1941) “The Hindu method of tribal absorption” Science and Culture VII, 188-94, Again published in English in the book “The Structure of Hindu Society”.

Bose has supported his argument through materials drawn from fieldwork. While describing the situation of tribes of India, Bose (1971)<sup>117</sup> have used economic or mode of living as major tool for the analysis of tribals' integration or adoption within caste system and changes in cultural and social domain. He writes,

*“Culture...seems to flow from an economically dominant group to a poorer one when the two are tied together to form a larger productive organization through some historical accident (Bose 1967: 205)”*.

Further he mentions,

*“Culture...flows from politically and economically dominant group to a subservient one. In social matters too, the former occupies a higher status in contrast to the latter (Bose 1967: 214)”*.

Going back to pre-colonial period, Bose (1971) argued that during the period of Ramayana and Mahabharata, tribes were present as well, mostly known as Jana, and their living space as Janasthana. Therefore, Bose said that it reflects the continuous contact along with conflict between both of them about whom Vedic literatures discuss as well. Tribes are mostly regarded as different in terms of physical appearance, religious practices, economic condition, social organization and linguistic basis from other communities. Yet, Bose (1971) considers economy or mode of livelihood, as an appropriate basis for the classification of tribes.

Through the classification of tribes on the basis of economy into diverse sections, Bose claims that all tribes are not totally dependent on one kind of occupation apart from hunting, fishing and gathering. Except this group of tribes, others moved towards the economic structure of non-tribal peoples, contact with market, with peasants and artisans, and work as laborers in several fields. Along with these changes, influence of social structure of Hindus could also be noticed. He gave the example of Juangs' association with productive system of peasant community. Some sections of Juangs have converted into Hindu caste by maintaining their distinct identity. From a long period, either in the form of antagonism or friendly relationship between tribal and non-tribal community shaping the structure and nature of Indian civilization. Economic system of tribes are termed as comparatively simple that's why according to Bose (1971), they feel attracted towards greater specialized economic structure which has the more advance method and security to get food. Therefore, a large section of several tribal

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<sup>117</sup> Bose, N.K. (1971) “Tribal Life in India” National Book Trust, New Delhi.

communities for instance, Juangs of Orissa, Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, Santals of Bihar and Bengal and others “come within the orbit of the peasant civilization of the Hindus...and classified under the categories of cultivators, agricultural labourers and workers in certain other primary types of occupation” (Bose 1971, 23).

One of the major arguments that Bose has given that through the economic connectivity with neighboring communities bring a larger transformation in other sectors of tribes as well where religious and puritanic social movements, and revivalistic movements also play an important role. Thus, they begin to leave their indigenous culture and become close to Hinduism. Bose (1971: 25-30) mentions that Bhakti movement rather than caste, through which tribals entered into Hindu fold. Relying on the Indological sources such as, Mahabharata, Bose (1971: 25-30) provides an evidence of those sections of tribes which become part of *jatis* or castes. All these tribes were not classified into one section of Varna. Some of them become part of upper section through the help of Brahmins and mythological stories and majority of them became part of the Sudra Varna. Therefore, some of them adopted the specialized work as well on which, eventually, they got monopolization.

Despite the close connection or inter-dependence between tribe and caste, tribes still maintain their customs which marked them off as different community but within caste system. In accordance to that Bose says,

*“privilege or benefit of exercising cultural autonomy which tribes continue to enjoy even after they have been fully integrated into the Hindu economic system have to caste a resilience which helped to perpetuate it in spite of centuries of Muslim and British rule (Bose 1971: 28)”*.

The way Bose (1971) praises the utility of caste in the maintenance of rural population during the political upheaval in the other part of the country, brings resemblance to Metcalfe’s notion of ‘little republics as well as isolation and self-sufficiency’<sup>118</sup>. In spite of several negative features associated with caste, it provides a *“minimum sense of security, guarantee of cultural independence (Bose 1971: 29)”*. In reaction to that, tribes do not show any violent reaction against the assigned lower position. Another section of tribal communities are nomadic, semi-nomadic and de-notified in attributes, but they are also connected with peasants and artisans through economic structure but in a docile manner. Over a period of time, when Britishers

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<sup>118</sup> Srinivas, Shah (1960) “The Myth of Self-Sufficiency of the Indian Village” Economic and political Weekly, Vol. 12, No. 37, pp. 1375-78.

became the ruler of India, they brought significant change in the economic structure by introducing new technology and production system. Bose (1971) argues that several developments introduced by Britishers, brought a drastic change in tribal areas. It also altered the ‘symbiotic relationship’ as well with non-tribal people (Bose 1971: 41).

Bose identified that the tribal groups suffer from similar disabilities to which the non-tribal people are also subjected (Bose 1971: 65) which depicts the likeness with Ghurye’s notion of tribal backwardness. Bose (1971) has accepted the contribution made by indigenous people in shaping of Hinduism, however, they modified their faith and practices. Bose states,

*“Hinduism is spread over a wide spectrum encompassing tribal beliefs at one end and the highest forms of philosophical freedom at the other (Bose 1971: 66)”.*

Caste system provides a structure through which they maintain their distinctive identities. He mentions that Hindus kept following the policy of non-interference in the social and religious practices of tribal, even they became part of Hinduism (Bose 1967: 210)<sup>119</sup>. But in order to absorb them within Hinduism, some of the changes were introduced by Brahmins. These changes emphasized on the preservation, rather than eradication of tribal social and religious practices. But it doesn’t confine itself to the complete non-interference and tried its best to take the tribal culture, in tune with Brahminism. Hence some of the ideas of old culture, get modified and some remain intact (Ibid: 212). Along with these features, Bose also mentions that Brahmins put check as well on such progress if subjugated peoples move higher and higher standards of culture. While criticizing the position of Bose, Ray comments that, “tradition Hindu method of tribal absorption is sheer madness... and simply anachronistic” (Ray 1972: 23)<sup>120</sup>. It neglects the tradition method of tribal integration that is no longer valid in nature. Bose describes that “sudras...were usually the remnants of the conquered tribes” (Bose 1967: 220)<sup>121</sup>. There is no doubt that Bose has completely relied on the empiricist who provided data related to various aspect of India (Bose 1967: 14). Along with indological sources, Bose was also relied on census data as well.

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<sup>119</sup>“The Hindu Method of Tribal Absorption” in Bose, N. K. (1967) “Culture and Society in India”, Asia Publication House, Bombay.

<sup>120</sup> Ray Niharranjan (1972) “Introductory Address” in Singh, K.S. “Tribal Situation in India”, Indian Institute of Advanced Study Simla.

<sup>121</sup> “Caste in India” in Bose (1967) “culture and Society in India”, Asia Publication House, Bombay.

To understand the process of tribal absorption, it is necessary to analysis the foundation structure of Hindu society. In the case of Juangs, Orans, and Munda, Bose observed that religious and economic practices of Junags are getting change. But, they “are still outside the pale of Hinduism” (Bose 1967: 204-5). Similarly to Srinivas argument, Bose also remarked,

*“Caste is not exactly as immutable as it is generally assumed to be. There are occasional fissions within one caste, as well as an absorption of tribal groups from outside into the Hindu social organization (Bose 1967: 207)”*.

In the matter of cultural contact and acculturation, Bose provides an evident from Indological text that a larger number of foreign tribes had been adopted into caste structure through various methods. It depicts, as Bose argues,

“Some Jatis are undoubtedly of tribal origin; and this has been the result of a conscious plan of Hindu society to dominate over and absorb tribal groups within its economic and social framework (Bose 1967: 208)”.

Bose further points out the tendency of lower order of castes of imitating the rites and customs of the higher order of castes. They come to the easiest conclusion of following the honorable in the caste order to be honored. (Bose 1975: 94) (Cited in Munshi 1979: 295)<sup>122</sup>. Bose further explains that this caste system gets “modified by a feeling of racial superiority” (Bose 1975: 221)<sup>123</sup> and due to this fact, Brahmins “never succeeded in giving to the vanquished a place equal to their own (Ibid: 175)”. This feeling of superiority in Brahmins and allotting the lower social status, creates a division within caste system and in the consequence, one group becomes a conqueror and the is conquered. Contrary to Bose’s idea of Hindu method of tribal absorption, Ray mentions that “the tradition Hindu method of tribal absorption is therefore, sheer madness to my mind. In the present context this is simply anachronistic” (Ray 1972: 23).

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has discusses the role of three Indian Scholars such as, Ghurye, Srinivas, and N.K. Bose. Through their works, this chapter analyzes the impact of Orientalist constructed idea of Indian culture and civilization and its implication on the construction of tribal identity. Through

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<sup>122</sup> Munshi, Surendra (1979) “Tribal Absorption and Sanskritization in Hindu Society” Contributions to Indian Sociology (NS), Vol. 13, No. 2. pp. 293-317.

<sup>123</sup> Bose, N.K. (1975) “The structure of Hindu Society”, Orient Longman, New Delhi.



the works of Ghurye, Srinivas and N.K. Bose, it analyzed their view on tribal people related to identity, changes and Hinduization process. This chapter examined the ideas of these scholars about caste and Hinduism, as the parameter to examine the change and transformation among tribes.

## **Chapter-5**

### **Conclusion**

This dissertation has analyzed the role of orientalism in the construction of the category of tribe and thereby, in the formation of tribal identity in India. Along with the construction, it discusses the impact of orientalist knowledge production in the work of three Indian social anthropologists/sociologists. No wonder that 'tribe' is a modern category that became a part of Indian social reality during colonial period through the process of census enumeration and diverse forms of documentation of socio-cultural traits. The whole of knowledge production, classification and categorization transformed the Indian history, culture and civilization which started after the conquest of India by Britishers. After the colonization of India, in order to sustain, maintain and strengthen its domination, Britishers started acquiring knowledge about Indian culture, language, customs, tradition and other information about each and every community. It started after the foundation of Asiatic Society of Bengal, established by William Johns. Johns and other scholars were referred as orientalists who were interested in the study of Indian language and culture. These orientalist scholars along with the indologists produced knowledge on India through the interpretation of religious classical texts, therefore, caste, Hinduism and Brahmans became a central image and core element of Indian society and culture.

Learning language, and understanding and interpreting culture constituted the new image of India and established new categories as well. Over the period of time, Britishers introduced diverse forms of technologies and methods for the knowledge production on Indian society. These new procedures of knowledge production such as, ethnography, census, anthropometry and survey not only helped Britishers to get a comprehensive understanding about India but it also consolidated old categories into new forms of identity. Therefore, emergence of new social science disciplines such as, anthropology and sociology also consolidated these identities by including them in their subject-matters. Tribe was such category that became an identity marker for anthropology.

Chapter one of the dissertation discusses the role of colonial knowledge production in the formation of tribal identity. In India, tribe was totally a new term which became a permanent identity marker for various heterogeneous communities. Thapar (1993: 1-2) mentions that European scholars initiated the historical writing of ancient India. They were mostly orientalists

and Indologists who developed a command on Indian language. This early interpretation of Indian history and culture through religious texts created different social identities such as Indo-Aryan language people, Aryan race, Dravidian language people, and Dravidian race. Tribe was also a category which never existed before but through the ethnological construction of India it became an identity of various groups of people. Carol Updhaya (1996) and Bhukya (2008) argue that the orientalist construction of Indian civilization and culture shaped the identity of tribe which later got established as an identity through racial interpretation of India. Orientalist scholars clubbed caste and Hinduism with each other. In this way, tribe is always understood in opposition of Hinduism and caste becomes a parameter to decide the features of tribes. Categorization, classification, documentation, ethnographic reports and other methods were applied by colonial state to facilitate its control through knowledge production. The whole endeavor by colonial state reflects the nexus of knowledge-power in order to occupy colonial world. Cohn (1996) said that for Britishers, translation was the important instrument for knowing the unknown. Therefore, orientalist scholars learned the classical language of India. Translation, interpretation and documentation of one text into another language by orientalist scholars through getting command on Sanskrit and other languages provided them an authority to control the process of knowledge production.

In Indian context, Britishers were not alone in the process of interpretation and construction of Indian's ancient knowledge and religion but it was a dialogue between the Brahmins and the Britishers. Brahmins had the command on the Sanskrit language and they were the only one who could help Britishers. Singer and Cohn (1968) mentions that this interaction established a notion of Brahmins as a dominant group as well as center of the social order. During nationalist movement, theory of Aryan invasion and Aryan race re-emerged in India and this time various social groups, such as, Dalit and Hindutva groups utilized it for their own social and political benefits. Through the reinterpretation of Indian history by Dalit groups, they argued that Aryan invasion is responsible for their exploitation and subjugation and claimed that Sudras are the indigenous people of this land. On the other side, Hindutva groups claimed that Aryans are the indigenous identity and they are the one who built Indus civilization. They developed the notion of Hindu nation where foreigners could not live until they left their identity.

The next chapter focuses on the construction of tribal identity in Indian context. In India, tribe as a category emerged during colonial period through various statistical, historical and anthropological studies, especially to serve the purpose of administration. Hence, tribe is also considered as an administrative category. Various studies conducted by British administrative-

scholars produced a large number of literature on tribes but they were not able to develop a clear cut demarcation to differentiate between a tribe and a caste. Bhukya (2008) argues that prevailing anthropological theories, like evolution, racial classification and anthropometric method, constructed tribal identity in India. In this way, tribes were defined as outside and opposite of Hindu civilization. It was not only British administrative scholars who produced knowledge on tribal community but missionaries were also one amongst them. Missionaries were the one who had direct communication with these communities. Later in post-colonial period, scholars challenged the colonial constructed tribal identity and tried to depict the interaction and communication between tribe and caste or say with mainstream society. Even though, most of Indian scholars, have shown interaction and relation between tribe and mainstream society but they have never abanded the category of tribe.

In both colonial and post-colonial periods, tribes have been understood as presenting a certain stage in the process of evolution. But they never looked tribe as a society in itself, they rather projected its assimilation and absorption in mainstream society. Most of the post-colonial scholars have argued that tribes are no longer in the same condition and they are in the process of transition. In Indian context, scholars emphasize that pre-colonial understanding is very important. Xaxa (2014), mentions that Indian civilization and culture have also constructed certain images and ideas regarding certain communities in a negative form. Romila Thapar (1978) also claims that certain communities were designated as *mleccha*.

During colonial period, caste and Hinduism became an important identity for Indian civilization, therefore tribe was defined as just opposite to caste thus neglecting its own societal characteristics. Xaxa (1999, 2003) argues that tribes are different category and have distinct identity as well. But the way tribe as a category of knowledge as produced by colonial scholars was totally new. After Independence, tribe became a constitutional category, that is, Schedule Tribes. Therefore, political and administrative classification dominated anthropological understanding of tribe. After independence, government established various commissions and committees to understand the condition of tribal communities, to decide their definition and reformulation of tribal schedule. Due to larger number of differences and various changes, committees were not able to produce a definite characteristic of tribes.

Beteille (1998) says that identification is more important than definition of tribe in India. He contested the existence of separate tribal identity. Over the period of time, scholars have given various different names and terms for tribal people. Indigenous was one such nomenclature

which became disputed among Indian academics and in the constituent assembly debate. Constituent assembly debates had an important role in the formulation of tribal identity after independence because tribes were accepted as Scheduled tribes and various privileges and benefits were being provided to them for their development and enhancement. Srivastava (2008) by analyzing the Draft National Tribal Policy, argued that seventy five identified Primitive Tribal Groups are still living in the same condition and tribes are still being studied by value-loaded assumptions. During colonial period, census emerged as an important method for the classification and construction of tribal identity. Through census enumeration process, identity of every community got fixed. There was an effort to mobilize SCs and STs to get enumerated as 'Hindu' in Census category. This enhances the importance of numbers. The projection of tribes as 'Hindu' challenged the colonial understanding of tribe. Post-colonial government also supported the classification of tribes as Hindu by abolishing their separate column of Tribal identity.

The next chapter emphasizes on three distinguished Indian social anthropologists/sociologists. Through the works of Ghurye, Srinivas, and N.K. Bose, the chapter looks at the impact of orientalism in the analysis of tribes. Orientalists constructed the idea of Indian civilization, and culture which in turn had an impact on Indian scholars. Most of the Indian sociologists were also part of nationalist movement, it largely shaped and affected their ideas as well. During nationalist movement, most of the upper caste middle class Indian intellectuals accepted several ideas projected by orientalist scholars related to Indian civilization, culture and history. Later, when sociology and anthropology emerged as social science disciplines most of the concepts and ideas such as caste, village, tribe, culture and civilization, became the subject-matter of the said disciplines.

Sujata Patel (2013b) and Carol Upadhyaya (2002) argue that Ghurye had incorporated the orientalist construction of Indian history and culture. His civilizational perspective had the major impact on the study of Indian society, moreover, he was an Indologist by practice. In matters of tribe, all the three scholars, shares the same point of view that tribes should get assimilated into Hindu fold. By analyzing the situation of tribes in India, Ghurye projected them as backward Hindus and clubbed the economic problem of tribes with other communities, therefore, for him, tribes are not different from other lower strata people. He argued that backwardness is the major problem of tribes which can be solved through their assimilation or Hinduization. He endorsed the identity of Aryan race, and supported the Aryan/Dravidian

conflict and differences by saying that Aryans did not come in vacuum. They conquered the early inhabitants of this space. But, he did not support that tribes are indigenous in India.

M.N. Srinivas, who was a student of Ghurye, also argued how the tribes changed into caste through the process of Sanskritization. Even though, he focused on the field work, he also endorsed indological approach. He analysed the changes which were coming in the society and how the various categories which were described in Sanskrit texts were in the process of change. But in the matter of tribes, he proposed the concept of Sanskritization. Through the process of Sanskritization, tribes can become the part of caste system. But Xaxa (1999) criticized the process of Sanskritization, because for Sanskritization that group should be part of the caste system first. N.K. Bose, clubbed social history, anthropology and indology for the analysis of Indian civilization and culture. In the case of tribe, he proposed the “Hindu method of tribal absorption”. He analyzed the change and transformation of tribes through economy. For him, mode of production that caste system presents, attracts several tribal communities. According to Bose, through the economic exchange tribes become close to Hindu culture and deities and they also participate in Hindu festivals. He studied three tribal communities, among which Juangs were not Hinduized but the impact of Hinduism on them couldn't be denied.

National integration and development was the major concern in the analysis of tribes. But Xaxa (2010) and Srivastava (2008) say that in the name of development, tribes are facing the problem of displacement. All the three scholars have projected the interaction and communication of tribes with mainstream society. Surendra Munshi (2014) identified various similarities between Ghurye, Srinivas and Bose in terms of caste system, distinction between Varna and jatis, and influence of Hinduism on tribal groups. After the analysis of literature on tribes, we can conclude that as a category, tribe was forcefully justified, adjusted and located in Indian context. It generated a difficult task for British administrators and anthropologists to identify and separate tribe from caste at the local level.

It was not only Britishers who played an essential role in the construction and bracketing of tribes into a certain form but brahminical interpretation of classical texts also strengthened the existing notion of backward and primitive people of India. So, we can say that Britishers had applied those existing theories and ideas in the already constructed identities to prove the anthropological theories. Both the terms, either, ‘tribe’ or ‘indigenous’ are nothing but the imposition of other's understanding by neglecting the social reality or community point of view. Even though the reference group, that is the caste, has diluted the social reality of tribals,

it only gives overemphasis on the acculturation, transformation, and interaction accompanying with the process of assimilation. Certain situations such as economic exchange creates possibilities for interaction between caste and tribe, even in the context of hurdles such as geographical boundaries. While several studies have accepted the heterogeneity among tribal societies even from within itself, certain similarities also exist in opposition to non-tribes in terms of closeness to nature, modes of subsistence, social organization, worldview and ethos.

The concept of tribe has been used differently in different contexts that reflects diverse implication and consequences as well. It seems that the debate of modernity in other parts of the world had affected the identity of so-called primitive society. The debate of modernity after enlightenment created bifurcation between worlds, societies, and countries into binaries, such as, west vs. east, orient vs. occident, and primitive vs. modern. After decolonization, anthropological knowledge production is being accused for supporting the colonial imperialism and colonizing the people of other cultures and races by producing knowledge about them. Ethnographic work based on collection of information regarding tradition, customs, and beliefs of various tribes and castes got textualized and published through diverse forms of documents. Later, after the establishment of ethnographic survey of India, relation between culture and criminality of certain tribe and caste groups were established through the help of anthropometric method.

Beteille (1998) emphasized on the historical perspective in order to trace the transformation among tribes rather than looking for ideal type characteristics. Process of development and welfare are going simultaneously in post-colonial period for the upliftment of the tribal life. A larger number of scholars, starting from colonial to post-colonial period, suggested various policies, parameters and ideas for the development and protection of tribal culture and way of life, whereas some supported the assimilation and integration within mainstream society. Nevertheless, Indian state, even though never explicitly declared, adopted the philosophy of 'Panchsheel' which was based on the principle of protection and promotion of tribal culture, custom and traditional way of life. Prior to the formulation of 'Panchsheel' policy, the debate between Ghurye and Elwin also influenced the position of tribes in India. Elwin supported the isolation of tribes but Ghurye opposed his standpoint and supported assimilation of tribes. Ghurye was more concerned about national unity and integration of India whereas Elwin was being accused of promoting 'divide and rule' policy.

Albeit the constitutional provisions and welfare measurements, the situation of tribes are getting worse and tribes are becoming vulnerable in post-colonial era due to the negative attitude of state towards tribal development. The overall agenda of the post-colonial state was to encourage the inclusion process of tribes in mainstream society and state but the method adopted by the state had the different intention which brought adverse impact on the tribal way of life. Xaxa (1999) says that tribes were accepting the status given by others. In the contemporary period, tribal people are reconstructing and rearranging their tradition and customs for the construction of indigenous identity or adivasi (in Indian context) to reclaim their land, forest and other several rights and privileges which has been denied to them by the state. This reformulation of tribal identity is coming from already documented tradition and customs by colonial anthropologists and ethnologists into various forms of documents. Tribes are being studied as group of people whose identity will change and they will become caste, and peasants over a period of time.

This study started with examining the colonization of India through knowledge production process that shaped or created new identities and new way of looking at the self-identities in India. Knowledge production about tribal people provided power to colonial state to formulate and differentiate tribes from rest of the society through developing different laws. Even though, most of the scholars like, Ray (1972) and Thapar (1978) accept that in pre-colonial period also some of the hunting-gathering community were in existence, colonial construction with various parameters, methods and theories, established a strong and permanent notion of tribal identity. Cohn (1996) and Dirks (2001) argue that how knowledge production in India and about Indian customs and traditions provided power to British government to maintain and sustain their domination and power over colonized people. This knowledge production later increased with the establishment of social science disciplines but it revolves around the prejudices established by orientalism.



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