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The Socio-Cultural Transformation of Bhumij Tribe in Purulia District of West Bengal in Colonial and Post Colonial Period : A Historical Analysis

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Abstract

The three underdeveloped districts of West Bengal which are infested with tribals are Bankura, Purulia and West Midnapore. In the year 1956, Purulia became independent by dividing itself from Manbhum district. Purulia is the underdeveloped district of West Bengal. The people here are of Proto-Australoid origin, which consist of 45% of the total population. The tribals of this area are Santhals, Lodha, Munda, Kharia and Bhumij. The Bhumij are among the above group who are Bengali speaking. The census report of 1991 reveal that out of the population (4,27,786), 20% are Bhumij. But this Bhumij tribe who are offspring of Mundas got assimilated with the mainstream Hindus in the long run. Surajit Sinha opines that there has been 'Rajputisation' among the tribal in the 19th century. The process of Acculturation with the mainstream continued till 20th century. With the assimilation with Bhumij were brought into the fold of mainstream Hindu culture. All these led to the process of De-tribalisation & Aryanisation which got filtered down from Upper class to lower class.

Key words : Adivasi, Rajputisation, Kshatriyaisation, Sanskritization, Protective Discrimination, Aryanisation

Introduction:

The tribal dominated areas had been centralised around the Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia districts in the western regions of West Bengal. Purulia, now considered a backward district of West Bengal, was created out of the Manbhum district in 1956. Geographically speaking, Purulia district is an extended segment of Chotonagpur plateau. Being barren, heavily forested and getting very low rainfall, this region has been designated a 'Chronic Drought Prone Area' (DPA). Because of the heavily forested region, the Australoid ethnicity seems to dominate here, accounting for almost 45% of the population of Purulia district¹. Since it neighbours Jharkhand to the west, this region is often called 'Manbhuiya Bengali speaking region' or 'Bengali speaking region of Jharkhand'. A prevalence of Adivasi communities can be noticed in regions under police stations of south and south eastern parts of the Districts, such as Bandwan, Pancha, Balarampur, Arsha, and Manbazar. Despite the strong presence of