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## **Contribution of Tribe in the Epic *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata***

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### **Abstract:**

Tribes have long been involved in the well-being of the Indian subcontinent; however, the Indian Epics also mention their contributions. They participated in the Mahabharata's great conflict, and the Ramayana also mentions tribes. Major Indian tribes the Bhil, Koll, and Gond are frequently mentioned in the epic Ramayana, particularly in the sections referred to as the Ayodhyakanda, Aranyakanda, and Kishkindhakanda. The Mahabharata mentions that other nations with numerous tribal monarchs took part in the epic subcontinental war; some of them sided with the Pandavas, while others backed Kourava. Adi Parva, Sabha Parva, Van Parva, Udyog Parva, Bhishma Parva, Drona Parva, Shalya Parva, Shanti Parva, Anushasan Parva, Ashwamedh Parva and Karna Parva, all have allusions to their names along with specifics. Indian society and culture always included tribes. Tribes played a role in the Indian liberation movement as well. They have made a significant contribution to the Indian Subcontinent's history. All we have to do is acknowledge it and help them.

**Keywords: Tribes, Epic Contributions, Indian Freedom Struggle Contributions, and Development Efforts for Tribes.**

One of the most resilient strands in the fabric of Indian civilization is the tribe. Depending on the context, the term "tribe" can mean many things. The British government was the first to use the term "tribe" in India. In India, tribes are called by similar terms such as Adivasi, Vanavasi, Girijan, or Adimjati. There are numerous tribes in India that go by different names depending on where they live. All of India's tribes were counted in the census following independence. According to Article 366 (25) of the Indian Constitution, "such tribes or tribal communalities 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 Constitution" are considered scheduled tribes.

Although their contributions to the well-being of the Indian subcontinent are not new, they are mentioned in the Indian Epics as well. They participated in the Mahabharata's great conflict, and the Ramayana also mentions tribes. The continuous presence of several tribes on the Indian subcontinent is reflected in these ancient epics, which are said to have been written thousands of years ago. In addition, the tribes have contributed to the fight for Indian independence. They fought alongside the British and backed the independence fighters. The paper's goal is to examine their contributions, which range from Indian epics to the Indian Freedom Struggle.

*In the ancient literature of India, their names, in the ancient language the Sanskrit, would appear to have been, respectively (i) Nishadas, Sabaras, Bhils and Kollas (ii) Kirats (iii) Dasas, Dasyus, Sudras, Dramidas and Dravidas. The ancient and epic literatures, The Vedas, The Puranas, The Ramayana and The Mahabharata, present good accounts about the peopling of India. All these emphasize that India is inhabited by several types of tribes or people. (Vidyarthi LP, P.26)*

*The Bhagawat Purana (Book IV, Cha, XIV) gives the story of the origin of Bhillas and Kollas. The other tribes were the Nishadas, the Sabaras, the Grdhrajas, the Yaksas and the Nagas. (Vidyarthi LP, P.27)*

## **REFERENCES OF TRIBES IN RAMAYANA:**

### **SHABARI, A DEVOTEE OF RAMA BELONGED TO THE BHIL TRIBE:**

A Shabari is typically called a Bhilani, indicating that she was a member of the Bhil tribe. Sage Matanga was Shabari's pupil. He became her Guru (Guide) once she accepted him. She was a loyal follower of his for many years. When Shabari's hour of death arrived, the sage Matanga granted her wish to visit her god. In order to achieve her ultimate spiritual objective of seeing the face of God, he advised her to wait for Rama to arrive and serve him. Sage Matanga also passed away. Shabari waited for Rama, aged, as he had advised. Ever since, she has made it a daily ritual to leave Ashrama and gather the berries for Rama. She used to taste them to see if they were bitter or sweet. The sweet ones she used to put in her basket and await him. She didn't know that offerings are not supposed to be tasted. As per the scriptural account of Ramayana, when all the sages were waiting to meet Rama in their ashram, Rama visited Shabari's ashram due to her unconditional devotion. At their first meet, Shabari became ecstatic and said, "*There were so many exalted Yogis waiting for your darshan, but you came to this*

*unworthy devotee. This clearly shows that you neither see your devotee lives in palace or humble hut, caste or color, whether he is erudite or ignorant. You will see true Bhakti (Devotion). I do not have anything to offer you than my heart. I have some berries for you, it may please you, my lord*'. ( Keshavadas 1988, p. 122)

She presented Rama and his younger brother Lakshmana with the chosen berries. She was commended by Rama for her devotion and service. He gave her a blessing. She advised Rama to ask Sugriva for assistance in finding Sita. And this led Rama to Hanuman, his unrivaled devotee, who was essential to the Ramayana as a whole. It demonstrates unequivocally that Rama's pioneering and pivotal moment was the encounter with Shabari.

### **RAMA BECOME CLOSE TO NISHADRAJ GUHA, A MEMBER OF THE NISHAD TRIBE:**

The ruler of the Nishadas was Nishadraj Guha. He assisted Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana in crossing the Ganges River. They were joined on the riverbank by his minister Sumantra in his chariot. In this sense, he became Rama's close buddy. He waited for Rama as well. The Nishad Community is described in the Mahabharata as hunters, fishermen, or forest dwellers. The Nishad Community is still present in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar today. They believe they previously belonged to the Scheduled Tribes, and they are striving for that position. In addition to this, there are other minor allusions that demonstrate how Rama interacted with numerous tribes while in exile. It is clear that Rama could become acquainted with the tribes because they typically resided in hilly and forested areas. Three significant Indian tribes, the *Bhil, Koll, and Gond*—are prominently recognized in the epic Ramayana, especially in the sections referred to as the *Ayodhyakanda, Aranyakanda, and Kishkindhakanda* (Chattopadhyaya B., P.27).

Tribe names are even included in Vanara and Rakshasa. In this context, Vanara refers to a guy who lives in a forest rather than a monkey facing a human. Rakshasa is the same. *The Ramayana also tells about some tribal people. It endorses that there were only two groups of people – The Aryans and Non-Aryans. Among the Non-Aryans the important tribes were the Rakshasas and Vanaras. Both being the aboriginal tribes of the Deccan.* (Ramadas G, P.5.1)

### **REFERENCES OF TRIBES IN MAHABHARATA:**

#### **1. EKLAVYA, THE TRIBAL PRINCE:**

The famous figure from the Mahabharata, Ekalavya, was the prince of the Nishadas. He was actually the adoptive son of Hiranyadhanu, who led the army of Jarasandh, the strong monarch of the time. When he was young, he traveled to Dronacharya, the Kuru dynasty's Master of Fighting Skills, to become a disciple and enroll in his ashram. However, because he is not of the established races, Dronacharya declines to enroll him. He was a member of the forest-dwelling tribes. Still, he continued to observe them from a distance in order to learn in secret. He made the statue of Dronacharya and accepted it as his master while he practiced in front of him. He developed into the ideal Archer. Ekalavya proves to be the best of all the Kuru Princes by demonstrating his archery prowess in one instance. Dronacharya then inquired as to where he had acquired his archery skills. He is honest with them, explains everything to him, and shows them the statue of Dronacharya. Because Ekalavya chose to make Arjuna the world's best archer, Dronacharya becomes insecure of him. Therefore, Dronacharya wants Ekalavya's right thumb when he is asked for Gurudakshina, an Indian custom in which the disciple gives the Guru anything he requests. And even though he is aware of his loss, he gladly gives his Guru his right thumb. In another episode, Yudhishtira's difficult horse is encountered, and he is congratulated by Ekalavya. Ekalavya had offered Dronacharya his thumb as a sacrifice. This illustrates the way, he treated the tribal prince.

In addition to Ekalavya's significant involvement, the Mahabharata mentions that several countries with numerous tribal kings took part in the vast subcontinental battle; some of these kingdoms backed the Pandavas, while others backed Kourava. *Adi Parva*, *Sabha Parva*, *Van Parva*, *Udyog Parva*, *Bhishma Parva*, *Drona Parva*, *Karna Parva*, *Shalya Parva*, *Shanti Parva*, *Anushasan Parva*, *Ashwamedh Parva*, and others all have allusions to their names along with specifics. The names of the tribes in all of South Asia, including modern-day China, Myanmar, Bhutan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, are listed in lengthy lists.

### **TRIBAL STUDY FROM THE COLONIAL ERA:**

The first part of the twentieth century saw the beginning of tribal studies, or the study of their culture, in India. Roy was the first Indian to write in-depth monographs on Indian tribes, publishing his seminal book on the Munda tribe in 1912. *The Oraon* (1915), *Birhor* (1925), *Oraon Religion and Customs* (1928), *Hill Bhuiyas* (1935), and *The Kharia* (1937) were the next five monographs to be published. (Page 13 of Vidyarathi LP) Notable early works include Radcliffe Brown's "Andaman Islanders" (1922) and S. C. Roy's "Mundas and Their Country" (1912). Numerous other Indians and British ethnologists have

also researched various Indian tribes. The re-tribalization process of the Khamptis, who were part of Arunachal Pradesh, was investigated by K. K. Mishra. He attempted to recreate the original screenplays they had written. Tribes were described by Ghurey as "*The Backward Hindus*." In this concern Srinivas says, "*When an Indian anthropologist is studying a different caste or other group in India, he is studying someone who is both the other and also someone with whom he shares a few cultural forms, beliefs, and values. That is, he is studying a self-in-other and not a total other, for both are members of the same civilisation, which is extraordinarily complex, layered, and filled with conflicting tendencies*" (Srinivas,1977, p. 22). Majumdar discussed about the transformation process of the aboriginal tribes in to the Hindu culture. According to him, "*Culture contact with Hindu castes leads to the adoption by the tribes of Hindu beliefs, rituals, customs, and participation in Hindu festivals and attendance at Hindu temples*". (Majumdar and Madan,1956, p.244). There are many scholars putting their own point of views on the development of the tribes.

Tribes played a vital role in the Indian liberation movement as well. The indigenous people also had to fight to protect their territories from the British throughout the colonial era. In the jungle regions, the British attempted to plunder their valuable and scarce resources. During the colonial period, tribes were encroached upon and made to labor. The Tana Bhagat Movement, the Santhal insurrection, and the Kol uprising are only a few instances of tribal upheaval in Britishraj.

#### **WORK OF GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT:**

India has rich tribal culture along with diversity in ethnicity. After the independence the status of tribes started gaining a respectable position. Indian constitution has played a vital role in creating a safe and livable environment and rehabilitation schemes for the tribal. Today development agencies are working for their wellbeing. Government is trying to provide them the easy access to enter into common social life of Indians. After Independence, the Indian constitution awarded the special provision for the tribal under 'Scheduled Tribes' category for their holistic development ensuring the reservation in the field of education and government employment opportunities.

Tribal always stick to their culture, customs and insistent for their own community behaviour. They are the nature worshipers. They are the true sons of the Indian soil. To promote the richness of their culture, every state has created a platform for selling their products to

market in every district. To promote the tribal virtues into the society, the Government of India established the Ekalavya Model Residential School Scheme for Tribal Students. State of Karnataka awards the athletes with Ekalavya Award is for outstanding performance in sports. Government of India runs the Comprehensive Tribal Development Program (CTDP) for the holistic development of the tribal society. Under this scheme Government provides them Land Development facilities, Improvement for the roof of their houses, Road works, Infrastructure facilities in Government Tribal Schools, Clean Drinking Water facility, Economic Development Schemes and provides the training skills to the Tribal People, who are living under below poverty line. The Loan Facility is made available of those who want to do some business. Hostels are built up in city areas, if they want to peruse higher education. They have given special reservation in Government Jobs.

To conclude, Tribes have been the part and parcel of Indian Society and culture. Everyone should recognize their contribution to since ancient times. There are references of their active contribution in overall Indian History. The need is to recognize it and facilitate them.

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