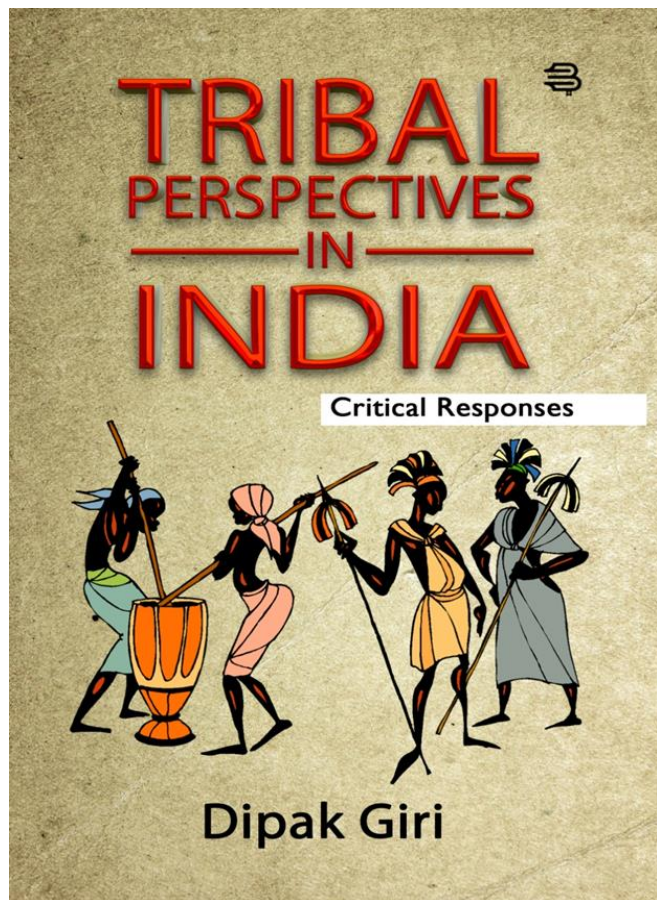


***Tribal Perspectives in India: Critical Responses* by Dipak Giri, Books clinic Publishing, Chhattisgarh, India, 2020.**

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The concept of egalitarian society has always been a very distant element for the people of tribal cultures even in the age of modernisation. Moreover, these people have always become a subject of curiosity and interest especially in the literary canon. Certain historical aspects like colonisation, industrialisation, world wars etc. have pushed the world towards development; but the tribal or indigenous societies may not be visible in these so-called developed communities, thus remaining as marginalised sections and becoming the victims of the centres (elite communities). Apart from celebrating the tribal cultures for their folk lore,



flora and fauna, distinctive art and tradition, certain writers focus on the plight of these people, their sufferings, humiliations, and their vulnerabilities which makes them 'other' in their own societies. Hence, to represent these marginalised people on the international platform, the tribal/dalit literatures from India were included in the umbrella term of 'Fourth World Literatures', which came into use following the formation of the WCIP (World Council of Indigenous People) in 1972. In this context, I want to present a book with the title Tribal Perspectives in India: Critical Responses, edited by Dr. Dipak Giri. The book is a comprehensive collection of essays on various tribal groups of India, which brings out the

hidden facts of some tribal cultures and deliberately puts forward the harsh realities of the lives of these people, thus giving a holistic approach in understanding the actual tribal perspectives. In the 'Introduction' itself, editor emphasizes on the origins and the meaning of the word tribe and its various connotations in Indian context. He gives a brief statistical data on the numbers of the tribal groups who are dwelling in various parts of the country based on the constitutional representation and also explains why these people in India were termed as 'Adivasis' (ancient dwellers). He explains how these Adivasis were very much disconnected from the mainstream society, leading peaceful lives far away in the mountains and how this peaceful life has been threatened with the arrival of the non-natives in the form of colonisers in history and political people in the modern day scenario. A tone of affliction can be seen in the words of editor when he says about the disturbed lives of people due to modernisation and the progress towards technological advancements. These lines delve deep into the reality of how the lands of the native people were confiscated without their consent in the name of mining, development etc., thus making them as labourers in their own lands. The tribals or the natives establish a deep connection with the nature and with the lands on which they are dwelling, but in the concepts of western thinking, land is always considered as a commodity on which one should exercise ownership. The theory of 'Manifest Destiny' which was executed by the Western people in usurping the lands from the natives, justifies their deeds as an attempt of giving civilization to the uncivilised people who are living in ignorance. Even in the post independent India, it is very difficult to find any remarkable change in the lives of the tribal people despite of constitutional representation, various policies by the governments for their education, well being etc. Still there are people who are very much distant from the basic facilities, and were being deprived of proper medical care, at least primary education to the children, proper transportation, sanitation, safe drinking water etc., which exhibits the fact that the said policies by the governments always remain only on paper rather than being executed.

The present volume highlights all these actualities of the tribal people as mentioned by the editor in his introduction, in the form of eighteen essays which gives vivid perspectives of tribal living in India. The collection of articles refers to the notable works of some writers who dealt with the sensitive tribal elements in their writings. Some of the prominent works are, Kocharethi: The Araya Woman, written by Narayan, Malayali writer, The Ancestor, by Gopinath Mohanty, Odia writer and the winner of National Sahitya Academy Award, Coffer Dams, by Kamala Markandaya, Sonam by Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi etc. The writers of the

essays give deep insights into the tribal cultures, their traditions, nature of living, and at the same time they also deal with the adverse effects of the government policies on the lives of these people, their implications etc. Despite of different negative elements, tribal people exhibit their perseverance and reliance in making their cultures and identities being recognisable by the mainstream societies. The essays reflect and examine the attempts of these indigenous people's resurgence, resistance and survival which invoke the tribal worldviews through their knowledge systems. For example the essay with the title "Kodava Culture: A Review with Reference to Kaveri Nambisan's The Scent of Pepper", presented by Dr. S. Mahalakshmi gives a complete picture of Kodava culture and its origins in the state of Karnataka. In an instance, it gives the information that it is the only tribal group in India which can own weapons without the license from the government of India, with a short reference to historical reasons. At the same time the essay focuses on how the Kodava tribe gives much importance to women with the description of the main character Nanji. She exhibits remarkable women power in managing household things and also the family businesses without any failure and thus becoming the centre of the family. Other essays with the title "The Self Speaks: A Probe into the Formation of Self in Laxman Gaikwad's The Branded" written by Subhasish Barua, explains the importance of an individual and his/her individuality. It is the autobiography of the writer Lakshman Gaikwad who hails from Uchalya community (The caste of criminals), and who himself was a victim of his community. The essay gives a gripping analysis of how the writer deliberately exhibited the harsh realities of his caste which was remained as so due to the existing system, and how the writer used these horrible and pathetic conditions to transform himself as "a man with no identity becomes representative of others identities" (17). Thus, according to the essayist, it is a journey from ignorance to enlightenment. The editor Dipak Giri himself presented an essay with the title "Interrogating Transgression of Monogamy in the Form of Polyandry in Monpa Community: A Study of Yeshe Dorjee Thongchi's Sonam" which deals with the severe difficulties that have to be faced by the people of Monpa community because of the practice of Polyandry. The essay depicts the plight of the protagonist Sonam who finally becomes the victim of this practice and ends her life leaving her two children motherless. In view of editor, this practice of Polyandry brings to light the suffering and pain of women in the community who have to live alone when husbands are away from them for the purpose of cultivation. Some other essays take on a serious note regarding the health problems being suffered by the tribal people due to the lack of basic amenities, with proper statistical information.

Thus, the anthology delineates various aspects of the tribal cultures from social, religious, political and gender perspectives. At the same time the essays also celebrate the tribal songs which are the rich sources of tribal knowledge especially from the state of Arunachal Pradesh and the folklore representing the north eastern part of India. Entire book and the organisation of the essays discloses the efforts of the editor in editing and also his deep insights on the tribal knowledge which makes it a worth reading. Such attempts like the editors and the writers writing on tribal people may highlight the tribal focused scholarship and insist on the need to decentralise the institutionalised knowledge in the academics which is mainly based on the eurocentrism.