

A History of Adivasi Women in Post-Independence Eastern India- the Margins of the Marginals by Debasree De, 2018, SAGE Publications India Pvt. Ltd., ISBN: 978-93-81345-38-2, Hard Cover, Pages 340, INR 995.

This book is about the marginalised social groups of Adivasi women in some of the most backward states of India, i.e., Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. The main thrust of this book is on the historical process of social evils like killing of women in the name of witch-hunting, trafficking of girls, practice of dowry, etc. This book is presented in six chapters and four chapters are exclusively devoted to the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Odisha.

The first chapter 'Demystifying Adivasi Women: Some Epistemological issues' deals with the changing position of women in Adivasi society. There was less sex differentiation in the early tribal society where women had higher control over the economy. Land rights were with women in most Adivasi societies. The British revenue system has insured property rights to make as head of the household came as a blow to Adivasi women. After independence, in the name of development, the so-called democratic governments encroached upon the Adivasis, particularly the rights of women.

The second chapter deals with the changing livelihood patterns of Adivasi women in West Bengal. The people of the state are, by and large, following leftist way of thinking, rooted on social justice, economic equality and human rights. The Adivasi women in West Bengal are primarily occupied in agricultural activities and always fight for equal wages, minimum wages number of working hours. The tea plantation industry has opted for women workers rather than men. Deforestation has displaced several Adivasi families to migrate to the plains in search of employment. The industrial sector, particularly coal, quarrying, timber and non-timber forest produce, has provided some employment security. The Adivasi women suffer from low literacy rate and high child labour. To overcome these problems strong commitment to the protection of Adivasi rights is a must. De writes about Adivasi women in

Bihar, the poorest state of India. After the creation of Jharkhand, the tribal population has drastically reduced in Bihar. Adivasi women in Bihar have been subjected to displacement from social production which also resulted in domestic violence against them. Acute poverty forced them into the flesh trade. Modernisation and urbanisation drove the Adivasis into unknown social occupations and hence extreme exploitation of low wages and marginalisation of their work ethics. Economic, social, physical, and psychological exploitations push them below the poverty line.

Jharkhand is the state that is bifurcated from Bihar, and the new state faces so many challenges. It witnessed massive industrialisation and mining which has had a serious impact on Adivasi society, particularly their social and cultural life. Religious exploitation is at its peak in the form of conversion to Christianity and other minor religions. Environmental degradation and economic hardships have made it necessary for men to help women and force women to act as heads of households while men migrate. Thus, women are forced to depend on non-market access to environmental products and services because they have less access to private property resources.

Odisha is one of India's poorest states and yet it is one of the richest in mineral resources. The chief minister is an aggressive pursuer of rapid industrialisation that caused economic and social displacement of Adivasi women. The author has presented the issues in so many case studies that diminished Adivasi women's position and subjected them to much vulnerability such as domestic violence, trafficking and social exploitation. De makes the underlying links between modernisation, state policies, and industrialisation that resulted in the marginalisation and witch-hunting of Adivasi women. The government policies should be clearly drafted so as to understand their real problems and address them with people's participation.

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