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## The Indigenous Bhumij people and environment

Kalipada Mura

Assistant Professor, Department of History, Raghunathpur College, West Bengal, India

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### Abstract

The impact recent globalisation has become a cause of concerns for all the people of the world. The craze of consumerist lifestyle and neglect of nature has now brought the existence of not only human but all species to existing. Although all the indigenous peoples of the so called world continue to protect the environment by living their structured way of life. One such primitive clan is Bhumij. The people of Bhumij who included various natural things like water, forest and land in their lifestyle have been making various efforts to preserve them and since time till today. This is reflected in their various social events and also their religious rituals they observed the environmental consciousness. In fact from the earliest time in the women people have been accepting the issue of sustainable development through their minimum essential lifestyle. Yet the Bhumij has not reached its own way of lifestyle to consumerism. In modern times the most of Bhumij people lived in the various states and various parts of the country like West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand and Assam. It can be seen that in the part of these states of India where minimum forest has been reserved the Bhumij people have been living for a long time in this region. Therefore awareness programs on various environmental issues are being traditionally passed down from one generation to another. This issue needs to be researched in a broader sense and this research paper is written to shed light on that aspect.

**Keywords:** Indigenous, Bhumij, environment, consciousness, social, religious, rituals, preserve

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### Introduction

Most of the recent environmental movements have had a direct role of indigenous peoples. At present, in the sphere of materialistic life, nature is actually moving out of balance, thereby making the earth inhabitable. Tribal life and lifestyles have now truly become one of the subjects of research on this eco-conscious awareness. There is a demand to bring environmental awareness to the public and explore the environmentally friendly lifestyle of the people by investigating how the manners of the indigenous people, socially matters, actually live by maintaining the balance of nature.

Naturally, it is now very important that the Bhumij indigenous people are who and where they live? Recently, people of this race are seen living in vast areas of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Assam and some parts of Bangladesh. Although according to E. T. Dalton the Bhumij were living across the Ganges basin before the Aryan incursions with the expansion of the Aryans they were also penetrating deeper into the jungles. According to Risley, the Bhumij today became a link with the pure Munda. The Munda settlement and the wall that the Ayodhya Hills provided to the east.

Anthropologically, Bhumij are Proto-Australoid. Physiologically, the skin is black, short black hair, front part of the nose is raised, but now they have interbred and now have a mixed body, but no change has been observed in the racial interaction. Bhumij celebrate their various social activities like birth, death, marriage etc. in union with nature. As the forest dwellers have integrated their livelihoods with the forest, their social activities have become intertwined with the nature of the forest.

The way they keep nature together in all these social matters, the possibility of losing the balance of nature is eliminated and the balance of nature or the balance of the ecosystem is strengthened. Below are two discussions on various social events celebrated by the Bhumij community based on the awareness of various issues of the environment.

### Birth

Bhumij women have various restrictions during pregnancy. During this time no one in the family kills animals. Although hunting was one of the activities of the tribal and also Bhumij, it is currently banned, but in the past this practice was widely practiced and they used to stop it during that year. As a result, they were conscious of protecting the balance of the environment's ecosystem by refraining from killing animals for the well-being of their families. A ceremony usually takes place on 9 days after the birth of the baby and then again on 21 days the mother and baby start living a normal life in the environment with the purity of the mother and the baby. This is how the both grow together.

### **Marriage**

Marriage being a traditional ritual, Bhumijs perform the marriage ceremony in harmony with the environment of nature keeping nature as a witness. The mandap is made with the branches of Mahula, Sidha tree, the groom is first married to the mango tree and the bride to the Mahua tree i.e. in the marriage ceremony they begin their married life with the knowledge of the real environment, they start their married life with the vine leaves used in their wedding ceremony. On the other hand, on the day after the wedding, the bride and the bridegroom come to the groom's house and take a bath in the artificial small pond made in the house's farm to signify their physical purity. On the other hand, the bridegroom taking a bath while sitting on the jwal (the connector between two oxen) indicates the beginning of their economic life based on a certain nature. Again, on the day of 8<sup>TH</sup> day of their married life the bride and groom take a bath from the pond or river near the groom's house, then the groom reaches home by shooting arrow three times and the bride helps the groom by bringing those arrows. Just as the hunting tradition clarifies the matter of conjugal cooperation, the excess of male hunting demonstrates women's non-cooperation.

### **Death**

Bhumijs usually cremate the dead. The pyre is arranged with the head of the corpse facing south and the deceased's eldest son lights the mukhagni after which the ashes and bones are collected in a container and buried in his own crematorium after three or four days. Two or three large stone blocks are left there as memorials of the dead, which is called megalithic culture. It is important to mention here that there are separate cemeteries for each tribe, thus saving the environment from pollution. While the cholera virus spreads in the air, so they bury the dead person by the disease. In this way, bhumijs consciously adhere to the environment and health issues even through death.

**Worship of Nature:** Bhumijs are nature worshipers in true sense. They worship the Sun or Sinbonga and pray to maintain the balance of life and environment. On their practice, mountain and big trees accept their sacredness and worship them and acknowledge their existence and also acknowledge the contribution of hill forest trees in their daily life. So they worship all these mountains and forest trees of the environment at one time of the year in the form of Burudevata, forest deity, Jaherthan and village deity to please them and pray for the purity of the environment.

In this way, the earthlings bind themselves with nature and environment by adopting nature in various aspects of their life practices and life styles. They joined the struggle to survive the environment in which they were brought up. For that they fought unitedly. They fought again and again to save the forest. They really understood that if the nature and environment are saved, they will be saved and the living world will be saved. So they fought against different forces at different times which we can easily understand in the context of globalization now.

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