

In 1950 when evans-
pritchard made a plea



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In the case of Jharkhand movement for autonomous state in south Bihar, the problem which the Oraon, Munda and Ho peoples had was that of the exploitative relations between them and the dikus or non-tribals (high caste Hindus). The movement, which lasted for more than five decades, has recently come to an end with the formation of new, separate Jharkhand state. On the other hand, the demand for a separate state for south Rajasthan, which was raised by Marxists in 1970, has now almost died. Yet another case is of the tribals of western Madhya Pradesh consisting of Dhar, Jabua and Ali Rajpur districts where the Bhils and Bhilalas are reduced to the level of sub-human life but they do not resist exploitation. Rather, they are participating in some or the other ethnic/reform movement. Quite opposed to this, the Gonds of Hyderabad (Adilabad) have taken up Naxalism as an ideology to fight against exploitation.

Thus, in some places, the tribals are rebellious while at others, they are possessed by some reform movement or revivalism. How do we explain such a situation? It is the social structure of the tribal community which is responsible for leading the tribals to rebellion or withdrawal. It was as early as 1950 when Evans-Pritchard made a plea that anthropologist should study problems rather than area or people. Unfortunately, in India, ethnography has still such a grip over the minds of anthropologists that analytical social anthropology has still to make headway. If we are really concerned with the lives of the tribals, we should, as anthropologists, immediately abandon ethnography.

If the tribals have an ethnography which is characterized by bride wealth, elopement, magic charms and avoidance of Brahmin in ritual performances;

so the caste Hindus have their own ethnography. Ethnography is ethnography whether it is of tribals or caste Hindus. If we make a brief survey of the situation of tribals pertaining to the country as a whole, we would find that only a small number of tribal groups today, out of a total of 461, are engaged in some kind of protest or rebellious movement. Most of the tribals in central India are engaged in movements which are essentially ethnic or reform movements. More and more are becoming teetotalers; engage themselves in Bhajan Mandalis and sing songs in god's praise. They are even today victims of exploitation either at the hands of high caste Hindus, political workers, and officials or by their own elites who have become new exploiters. Social anthropologists have hardly paid heed to such a situation. In their analysis of tribal movements they have lumped tribal movements together with peasant or agrarian movements.

Condemning such an approach, K. S. Singh writes: There has been generally a tendency to link up all tribal movements, no matter how distanced they are in time and to lump peasants and tribes together.

Such an approach tends to gloss over the diversities of tribal social formations, of which tribal movements are a part, both being structurally related.