

## Chapter 9

# Impact of Modern Education on the Indigenous Knowledge System of the Tribal People of Ajodhya Hill, Purulia

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Education is a major topic in sustainable development agendas. Here, indigenous education is an explosive subject. Modern education represents the nation's outlook, which often conflicts with indigenous values. This study investigates the impact of modern education on the indigenous knowledge system of the tribal people residing in Ajodhya Hill, Purulia. Modern education is influencing their ethics, customs, culture, politics, economy, religion, and environment. This study examines the relationship between education and the Santal and Bhumij of the Ajodhya hill of Purulia. This is a descriptive study; the primary data is collected from the six mouza of the study area through personal interviews and focus group discussions. The secondary data are collected through various books, journals, and the internet.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Indigenous knowledge systems, which are firmly ingrained in the cultural tapestry of tribal communities, have been the source of sustenance for cultures for years past. These knowledge systems provide a comprehensive understanding of the world, which includes traditional customs, folklore, languages, and sustainable ways of interacting with the environment. The influence of modern education on indigenous knowledge systems is an elaborate and diverse subject. Indigenous knowledge encompasses the

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ancestral knowledge, expertise, and customs that have been cultivated and transmitted between generations within distinct communities or civilizations. Conversely, modern education frequently pertains to formal educational systems that are influenced by Western models. The Indian educational system typically disregards the indigenous languages spoken by various tribes. In India, there are many different socio-cultural groups, these educational system does nothing to support the holistic development of local cultures, particularly tribal cultures (Rupavath, 2016).

The traditional learning system imparts to children values such as kindness, ethics, the significance of family, and the ability to survive by utilizing their traditional knowledge and resources from their environment. In contrast, the Western modern education system separates children from their family and culture, and transforms them into participants in the consumerist economy, fostering a competitive mindset (Rahman, 2022).

Throughout the course of history, indigenous communities have endured the consequences of invasion and persecution, frequently witnessing their knowledge being overshadowed by Western knowledge, which has been enforced upon them through Western institutions. However, indigenous communities have successfully endured for generations by adjusting to various harsh climatic circumstances and establishing sustainable subsistence patterns (Karunamay, 2023).

After India gained independence in 1947, efforts were made to meet the educational needs of tribal communities across the country. Education serves as a catalyst for both the economic development of tribes and the overall progress of tribal communities, enabling them to effectively address the emerging issues of existence. (Ahmad et. al. 2022). The Government of India and various state governments have recognized the importance of providing education to tribal communities as a means of their socio-economic development, preservation of their unique culture and integration into the mainstream society. During the post-colonial period, the welfare and development of tribal communities became part of national goals and mainly became a special responsibility of various state governments (Rupavath, 2006). After independence various policies and initiatives have been implemented for the development of tribal education. In post-independence India, several policies, programs and initiatives have been adopted for the spread of tribal education, which have accelerated the rate of growth of tribal education. As a result, the trend of taking modern education among the tribes has gradually increased. And this has seriously affected their traditional education system. According to the last 5 census reports of India, the rate of increase in the literacy rate of the tribal communities is higher than the increase in the literacy rate of the total population of India. (Table 1 & Figure 1)

Ajodhya Hills in Purulia is no exception in this regard, one of the most protected tribal areas in West Bengal. The indigenous groups that live in the area of Ajodhya Hill consider it to be not just a geographical marker but also a cultural and ecological gem. There is a separate indigenous knowledge system that has been developed by the indigenous peoples, such as the Santals, the Kurmis, and the Mundas. This system includes traditional farming methods, medical knowledge, folklore, and rituals that are strongly related to the local terrain. As a result, the spread of modern education has greatly affected their socio-economic and cultural life.

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