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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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WESTERN AND INDIAN PERSPECTIVES ON CULTURE AND IDENTITY OF TRIBES AND THE INDIGENOUS ONES

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ABSTRACT

Dividing India in terms of separate race, ethnicity, language, community and religion has been a part of British policy of 'divide and rule'. It helped them to reinforce themselves in power for a long period of time. Another advantage to them of this policy was to prevent them from being united under the flag of nationalism as a formidable force against the external powers. So, India was viewed as a divided society in terms of tribes and non-tribes, indigenous and outsiders. The modern, advanced and literate people are called as outsiders-Aryas according to the western and British historians. The tribal people were called as original and indigenous and non-Aryas. This categorization helped the missionaries to convert the tribal ones into Christianity. A separate identity of tribes were created in terms of non-Hindu religion. The massive religious conversion of tribal people led to what is said as culturocide (suicide of a culture). The indigenous culture and religion were destroyed and replaced by a foreign culture- new indices of identity were created and fissures within Indian society between tribal people and the Indians were created to destroy the web of unity and harmony that was between them. On this issue there were Indian and western perspectives on identity between the two groups of people.

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INTRODUCTION

The period before the intervention of external powers of different cultural and religious hues was a period of golden age in India as historians and foreign travelers recorded very eloquently. The sanatan dharma flowing since time immemorial has been the basic foundation of Indian civilization for which it is adored till now as one of the greatest civilizations of the world still existing immortally though its contemporary civilizations have been already buried in the sands of time. The sanatan dharma has become the universal dharma because of its eternal values and search for spirit abiding in all and pervading the entire universe through various paths as enshrined in its Vedas and Upanishads. Because of its material prosperity and spiritual height, it had been the victims of many external powers' invasions but it had never attempted at any kind of military adventures outside in the past. Passing through an ordeal of trial and tribulations it has always stood glorious and unrefutably impeccable.

Western deindianizing Indian culture and religion: When the Britishers entered into India in 15th century and emerged successfully as its colonial master by defeating the other outside powers, the first victim was its great civilization, its enriched culture and great spiritual tradition. Knowing very much that Indian culture, civilization and spiritual tradition are its backbone and foundation,

they tried, and resorted to all kinds of tactics and sinister designs to defile, deface and distort and deconstruct it. Once, they succeed in their evil designs, there would be left nothing of India that they would be proud of. With their spiritual treasure-trove being ransacked they would be turned rootless and the very unity among all their diversities being the basis of their nationalism would be destroyed reinforcing Britishers to continue to be rulers of entire India. With unity distorted, the diversities were brought to fore to create divisions in the society in the name of caste, Varna and religion to the advantage of Britishers.

Reinventing caste and varna as race and ethnicity: Historicization of ancient India begun by the colonial intellectuals, administrators and scholars in a way that would serve the colonial interest best. Earnest Renan, a great philosopher was of the view that the Hebrews brought monotheism to the world and the Semites were self-centered, troublesome and static whereas, he eulogized the Aryans for their noble virtues like wisdom, imagination, foresight, dynamism, reason, science and dynamism. Stupefied by the ancient Indian wisdom reflected in their Vedas, Upanishads and other scriptures, the Britishers engaged the scholars and intellectuals to appropriate to their Biblical tradition what was best in ancient Indian wisdom by a process of plagiarism, mistranslations, extrapolation and misconstruction that would stripe India of its spiritual and cultural treasure trove and ultimately, there would be left nothing Indian. All these Indian would be tagged as western and came to be used similar

to the way clip-art-elements are used by a modern computer-based graphics artist. They could be cut and pasted to give colour and exotic appeal to what was being constructed as European civilization's history. India would enter into the European museum as primitive remnants of an uncultured, uncivilized and barbarian one. Real and pure Aryans are the Europeans and the Indian Aryans are the corrupted and impure one migrating from Europe (Malhotra and Neelakandan, 2011: 17). In a letter addressed to his wife in 1868, Max Muller wrote: "[The Vedas] is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure[is] the only way of uprooting all that has been sprung from it during the last three thousand years" (Muller, 1902: 346). Discovery of India was the rediscovery of Europe in its glories and grandeur. Reimagining what was best in ancient Indian wisdom they claimed that Christianity was the future of humanity and by the invisible hand they were destined to rule the world. Imperial evangelism shaped Indian ethnology. Christian-Aryan racism was reinvented to prove the superiority of European race. The proper religious orientation of the Aryan mind was monotheism, providing the justification for the Christian European Aryan to colonize Indian Aryans. Christianity is the synthesis of all that is good. It is destined to colonize India (Pictat). Friedrich added credence to this kind of theory by adding that only the Semitic saviour through Christ would save India from chaos. Aryan-Christian racism. the foundation of 19th century linked Indian caste with race. It is Varna (colour) which distinguished the white conquering Aryans from defeated blackman, the dasyu and so laid the foundation of caste. It is to Teuton branch of Aryan family, the first place in the world belongs. Scientific, philosophical and Christian elements were mapped into Aryan narrative. Lord Risley morphed Jati- Varna into race. Building on Max Muller's work human body parts were brought into harmony with language. Risley's race science built on Vedic nose reference created a nasal index which became a standard in the science of anthropology for British classification Indians. The social position of caste varies inversely to its nasal index. The purpose was to divide the unity in Indian society on the basis a concocted race science collecting selected verses from Vedas to justify their arguments. In a similar vein to divide the Aryans from Dravidians they invented a Dravidian race. Bishop Caldwell transforming linguistics into ethnology stimulated new local ethnic identity to reject its Hindu nature. All that are positive and good were isolated and mapped as indigenous into the Tamils. A conspiracy theory was reinvented to hold that cunning Brahmins exploited innocent Dravidians. The Tamil tradition, Sanskrit and Vedanta are deindianized and held as evils which need to be eradicated. The creation of DMK and Tamil movement was the result of this kind of colonial masters' tricks to destroy India and its Sanatan Dharma. Likes of Institutes of Asian Studies and Indological institutions were created and funded by the Britishers with an ostensible purpose of propagating and reinforcing Aryan/ Dravidian divisiveness.

Tribes and indigenous: conversion as culturocide: In this backdrop is to be studied the reinterpretation of tribe or indigenous people in the global landscape. A Biblical theory of race and myth of Ham was scripted to cut asunder the unity that was built into Indian harmonious diverse way of living. According to Bible, there was a great flood in ancient times after which the descendants of Noah repopulated the earth. Noah's three sons were Ham, Shem, and Japheth. On one occasion, Ham laughed at Noah's nudity, who felt humiliated and cursed the descendants of Noah must forever live in servitude to the descendants of the other two sons. This Biblical account of how the world was populated, became the history of the entire world. The various cultures and civilizations were reinterpreted homogeneously in this Biblical account and were held as populated by the descendants of Ham. The narratives of natives were dismissed and as myths and superstitions. It was the moral responsibility of the colonial master to make an account of the history of diverse nations colonized in Asia and Africa. In most such accounts the dark-skinned peoples were identified as the descendants of Ham who are uncivilized, barbaric and immoral. The logic of converting these blacks into Christianity lies in making them civilized and moral. Taking advantage of freedom of religion, the missionaries have been converting massively the tribes of India and other countries in Asia and Africa. The tribals

living in the forests and Dravid are being converted by these missionaries in India leading to what is called culturocide, the destruction of cultures and setting them apart from the mainstream of Hindu Sanatan Dharma. These converted ones were held as indigenous and the rest Aryans are being called as outsiders, degenerated Christian Aryans who invaded India. This version of Max Muller has been standardized into Indian history as truth by the leftist and western historians. 'Indigenous' has been used as a very convenient strategy by the historians, missionaries and western scholars and politicians to continue conversion and created fissures in India's long tradition of 'being together' like various threads of different hues woven into a beautiful tapestry of unity. Centuries of living together with nature had created a culture in harmony with the mainstream culture. Evangelization by the missionaries of the tribes has destroyed their age-old culture and created a new culture in consonance with western culture. Identity with their culture of the tribes has been subject to intervention by the western missionaries. Along with suicide of cultures a clash between the local culture and foreign culture has been taking place. A racial conflict between Dravid and Aryans has been created by the missionaries holding the former as indigenous and the Aryans as outsiders. Hindus are no more indigenous than the Muslims. This stand by the leftist scholars like Martha Nussbaum, Romila Thapa, Meera Nanda and others has corroborated this division in India between Dravid and Aryans, the tribes and the non-tribes ignoring the fact that both Dravidians and Aryans belong to same indigenous Hindu culture and religion.

US involvement: The International Religious Freedom Act passed in 1998 during Clinton administration was meant for intervening into the religious affairs of non-western states. US Commission of International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) under this act receives data on India's internal religious affairs for the purpose of strategic policy making. The intent was very clear. Under this act America was intervening to see that no evangelization was being stopped in India and other countries in Asia and Africa. US Government Agency for international development (USAID) has been funneling US financial aid to India through mostly Christian NGOs. The question is where is the religious freedom of the tribes? Taking advantage of their poverty and backwardness the missionaries have been proselytizing the tribes through financial aid, health facilities and education killing their own indigenous culture.

Tribals belong to which religion?

The western engineered theory has been always to demonstrate that what was good and is good belong to the colonial and western masters. The Biblical origin of the universe has been the beginning of human history and as such shapes the history of the nations quite oblivious of the fact the origin of Bharat has been since millennia eluding historian to find out its beginning. The ancient wisdom reflected in its Vedas, Upanishads and Puranas, its Himalayan and other holy rivers and mountains came from where? Have they come from West? The migratory theory related to Aryans is baseless, unfounded, concocted and mere fig of imagination of western historians supported by the leftist historians in India guided by sinister and invidious interests against the greatness of India. As depicted in section 4, chapter 13 of Shrimad Bhagavatam it is depicted that there was a pious and religious king named Anga living with his wife Sunitha without having any children. On the advice of the rishis and saints he performed a Yajna and blessed with a son. He was named as Vena, a very wicked, unrighteous and cruel person. No instructions and advice from the rishis brought any change in him. Highly displeased and disappointed with his son's conduct, he along with wife left the kingdom and retired into deep forest for sadhana. Without any alternative the rishis coronated Vena as the king. The people of the kingdom and all were highly oppressed and tyrannized by the king Vena. The rishis persuaded him to shun the path of cruelty and wickedness and follow the path of dharma. But he cared a little. Finding no other way for respite the rishis cursed him to death. Keeping the deceased body, the rishis started yajnas and churned out his thigh from which was born a very robust, strong and ferocious being. The rishis named him Nishad and on being asked to do what,

the rishis you enter into the forest and be king of the people living there. On churning out the right hand a great king Prithvi was born and became the king in whose name has been Prithivi, the other name of the earth. Nishad was the devotee of Lord Sri Rama as described in the Ramayana and Jara sabar was a devotee of Lord Krishna as described in the Mahabharat. From this it is very clear that the tribes are the descendants of Sanatan Dharma. The ethnology, philology, linguists, anthropology and science of race bringing Indian castes and Varna into its fold were masterminded and reinvented in such a way that it would serve the western and colonial interests best. At present, historians, anthropologist and philologists have made what was been bequeathed to them through western scholars and institutions dominated by missionaries as the base of their studies underestimating or completely negating the truth. The tribals worship nature, river, mountains and stones as deities. The invocations in Vedas and Upanishads are related to the worship of nature and all its aspects. By the divisive theories of the west and colonial masters, the tribes have been excluded from the mainstream of Indian dharmic tradition.

Profuse Proselytization has widened this and led to killing of culture, religion, memory and 'being together'. Search for new identities has ensued a clash between them and their earlier parts of being together. Many ethnic conflicts in various parts of the globe are due to this kind of clash catalyzed by the evangelization and imposition of external cultural ethos into their centuries years of culture.

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