

**Xaxa, A. F., & Devy. G. N. (Eds.). (2021). *Being adivasi: Existence, entitlements, exclusion*. Penguin Random House India. pp. xxvi, 182. Rs 699 (Hardcover). ISBN: 978-0-670-09300-7.**

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The book "Being Adivasi: Existence, Entitlements, Exclusion" is a notable contribution to the discourse on Adivasi communities, focusing on their existence, entitlements, and the challenges of exclusion. Edited by A.F. Xaxa and G.N. Devy, the book comprises eleven insightful chapters contributed by different researchers, offering a unique Adivasi perspective on various issues. As part of the "Rethinking India" book series and in collaboration with the "Samruddha Bharat Foundation (S.B.F.)," this volume stands out for its fresh and nuanced understanding of the Adivasi experience, which is unique from what is done in anthropology and ethnography.

The introductory section by G.N. Devy explores the genesis of Adivasis in India, critiquing theories and highlighting the impact of European colonialism. Adivasis were categorized by colonial hegemony as a distinctive ethnic group, and an alternative view sees them as a social legacy from pre-colonial times. Devy emphasizes the significance of descriptions of forest dwellers in epics and their autonomy during the pre-colonial era. The colonial period, post the 1857 rebellion, led to the categorization of forest dwellers as 'tribes,' subjecting them to the same structures as larger Indian society, resulting in displacement and challenges.

Moving beyond historical contexts, the first chapter by N.C. Saxena explores contemporary challenges faced by Adivasis in post-independent India, including land deprivation, indebtedness, limited control over resources, impoverishment, inadequate access to education, and prevailing illiteracy. Saxena critiques the government's administrative system for ineffective implementation of acts, policies, and schemes in tribal areas. He underscores linguistic disparities as a barrier to effective education and recommends the development of textbooks in tribal languages.

In the second chapter, sociologist V. Xaxa delves into the impact of the colonial period on regions, categorizing certain areas as hazardous and underdeveloped. This classification, formalized through the Government of India Act of 1870, is explored in its historical context, revealing perceptions and designations during colonial rule. Xaxa's focus includes an examination of the provisions in the Fifth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, explaining its principles and implications. The Fifth Schedule addresses the administration and control of scheduled areas and Scheduled Tribes, aiming to safeguard their rights and interests within the governance structure. Additionally, Xaxa provides an overview of affirmative action programs, designed to address unique challenges faced by tribal communities and protect their welfare. This exploration contributes to a nuanced understanding of the historical and constitutional dimensions shaping governance and protection mechanisms for Scheduled Tribes in India.

In the third chapter, M. Natarajan commendably addresses tribal heritage and rights, delving into the broader context of human evolution with origins traced back to Africa. She highlights

the displacement of the total tribal population in India from their original habitats due to socio-economic and political factors, leading to the loss of control over crucial resources. The chapter also explores the 'panchsheel' principles, elucidated by the first Prime Minister of India, focusing on equal rights and justice for tribal communities and reflecting a commitment to their unique needs and overall development.

In the fourth chapter, K. Bhuria and V. Bhuria delve into the question of integrating tribal communities with the mainstream. They highlight the persistent tension between the mainstream and Adivasi notions of democracy, with Adivasis advocating for greater autonomy to address social and economic disadvantages.

In the fifth chapter, A. Prasad explores the trajectories of Adivasi politics and its connection with working-class movements amidst structural transformations. She analyzes the long-term impact of systematic discrimination against Adivasis, revealing contradictory political trajectories—the politics of Adivasi identity and working-class politics for Adivasi rights. This complex interplay gives rise to issues such as the "identity crisis" within Adivasi communities.

In the sixth chapter, V. Ekka provides a detailed description of the 'Parha' system, emphasizing its effectiveness among the Kurux (Oraon) Adivasis in central India. The 'Parha' system, a traditional form of self-governance, reflects the Adivasi belief in the equality and interconnectedness of all life forms, advocating for respect rather than exploitation. Ekka identifies specific regressive forces that impede the growth and practice of self-governance within this system.

In the seventh chapter, A. Dandekar explores the origin and implementation of the Criminal Tribes Act (C.T.A.), 1871. The author delves into incidents like looting, robbery, and violence committed by tribals during the colonial period, resulting in their enlistment under the draconian C.T.A. Further, the chapter discusses the denotification of these tribes as criminal tribes in post-independent India.

In the eighth chapter, S. Choudhary discusses the non-democratic communication paradigm—an inequitable communication system that results in the Maoist problem. The author reveals that due to the mainstream media's failure to address Adivasi concerns, the Maoists resort to non-democratic avenues to voice their problems. Choudhary further elaborates on CGNet Swara, an e-discussion forum established in February 2010, serving as the voice of central Gondwana. The forum, accessible to all Adivasis in central India, has proven effective in responsively resolving people's issues that often go unaddressed by the mainstream media.

In the ninth chapter, Ghanshyam elaborates on the concept of the indigenous republic or indigenocracy, emphasizing community, labor, and equality grounded in variety, difference, and tolerance. The chapter takes a radical shape by exploring notions like self-dependence, self-governance, self-respect, production ability, and communality within the indigenous republic system, providing essential insights for understanding Adivasis.

In the tenth chapter, A. F. Xaxa examines the shortcomings and issues hindering the proper implementation of tribal acts, policies, and schemes in India. The outcomes of these challenges contribute to poor lifestyles among the Adivasis, analyzed in greater detail.

In the eleventh and final chapter, C. Choudhury and A. Aga pay tribute to Abhay Flavian Xaxa, one of the editors of the book, highlighting his life struggles and the legacy he left in

Adivasi society. They praise Xaxa's sharp, creative, and multifaceted qualities, describing him as a sociologist by profession and an indigenous activist at heart, capable of articulating the hypocrisies of Indian society in salty metaphors.

It is noteworthy to mention that the book "Being Adivasi: Existence, Entitlements, Exclusion" may serve as a comprehensive handbook for scholarly research on various aspects of Adivasi lives. It not only explores the challenges faced by Adivasi communities but also emphasizes their entitlements and the importance of acknowledging their existence in the broader societal framework. Well-written with proper citations, it covers topics in detail, presenting evidence related to the history, vulnerabilities, and issues faced by Adivasis. However, there could be, perhaps, one separate chapter at the beginning of the book that contains a piece of broad information about the concepts of indigeneity, aboriginality, and tribes in a succinct manner to make a crystal-clear understanding of the origination process of Adivasi communities. The authors have ethically referenced multiple valid sources, including research articles, books, and government acts. The lucid and standard language used in the book engages readers effectively. Overall, the book fulfills its intended purpose, providing valuable information for researchers interested in exploring various aspects of Adivasi lives in India.