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## A Study of Tribal Contribution in Indian Art's, Music and Culture

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### Introduction:

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission appointed by the President of India on 28 April 1960 pursuant to Article 339 of the Constitution of India in its report of 14 October 1961 stated that “As these groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the population, the term “Adivasi” (‘Adi’= original and ‘Vasi’= inhabitant) has become current among certain people. The International Labour Organization has classified such people as “indigenous”. The Government of India has initiated a number of steps to develop socio economic conditions of tribal population in the country.

India’s tribal communities, with their deep-rooted history and connection to nature, possess a cultural richness that is unique, diverse, and timeless. Their way of life—expressed through art, music, dance, and traditions—is a reflection of their worldview, steeped in spirituality, community, and a profound respect for the natural world. While much of modern society rushes forward in the pursuit of progress, tribal culture remains a testament to the beauty of simplicity and the strength of tradition. However, tribal art, music, and traditions often remain underappreciated in mainstream culture. It is crucial that these cultural treasures are celebrated and preserved, not just as relics of the past but as living

expressions of vibrant communities. In doing so, we not only honor the tribal societies but also enrich the cultural fabric of the nation.

Tribal communities have made significant contributions to India's arts, music, and culture, enriching its heritage through distinct art forms like Warli and Gond paintings, traditional crafts like weaving and pottery, diverse folk music and dances such as Garba and Bihu, unique festivals, storytelling, and valuable knowledge systems related to nature and sustainable practices. These traditions have not only preserved ancient customs but also influenced mainstream Indian aesthetics and social values, fostering a sense of cultural continuity and diversity.

Home to a large number of tribal people, known as Adivasis, India has the second largest tribal population in the world. Tribal Communities are an integral segment of Indian society since the days of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The tribal people throughout the country have rich traditions, cultures and heritage with unique life styles and customs. Despite some regional variation, the tribes share many common traits, including living in relative geographical isolation, and being relatively more homogeneous and more self-contained than the non-tribal social groups. The areas inhabited

by the tribal constitute a significant part of the under developed areas of the country. India's population includes nearly one hundred million tribal people. The two main regions of tribal settlement are the country's northeastern states bordering China and Burma, and the highlands and plains of its central and southern regions. The latter is home to more than 80 per cent of the tribes, which differ from the northeastern tribes in ethnicity and in having experienced greater "intrusion of the Indian mainstream and of the pan-Indian model of the state, society, economy and culture".

### **Traditions and Festivals:**

Tribal festivals and traditions serve as living reminders of the tribes' ancestral wisdom and their connection to the environment. Most tribal festivals are closely tied to agricultural cycles, celebrating the harvest, the rains, or the changing seasons. These festivals are a way for the tribes to express gratitude to the gods and to nature for their bounty.

For instance, the Hornbill Festival in Nagaland is a celebration of Naga culture, with tribes coming together to showcase their unique traditions, dance, music, and craftsmanship. The festival is named after the hornbill, a bird revered in Naga culture for its grandeur and beauty, and serves as a way to keep alive the diverse customs of the Naga tribes.

In central India, the Bastar Dussehra is an important festival for the Gond tribe, lasting for 75 days, making it one of the longest festivals in the world. Unlike the typical Dussehra, which celebrates the victory of Lord Rama over Ravana, the Bastar Dussehra is dedicated to the goddess Danteshwari and celebrates the region's tribal deities. It's a festival marked by elaborate rituals, offerings to gods, and colorful processions, bringing the

community together in celebration of their faith and culture.

These festivals and rituals are key to preserving tribal identity in a rapidly changing world. They allow the younger generation to participate in their heritage, ensuring that the stories, customs, and values of their ancestors are passed down.

### **Instruments:**

They utilize unique musical instruments, including the dhol (drum) and various flutes, which are integral to their performances.

### **Culture, Traditions, Festivals and Rituals:**

Tribal festivals celebrate nature, community events, and seasonal changes, adding vibrancy to India's cultural calendar.

### **Storytelling and Folklore:**

Their extensive collections of myths, legends, and folktales form a crucial part of India's rich literary and oral heritage.

- **Language:** Tribal dialects and languages contribute to India's linguistic diversity.
- **Values:** Tribal traditions often emphasize values of harmony with nature, strong community living, and respect for all life forms, influencing the ethical and philosophical dimensions of Indian culture.
- **Cultural Continuity:** By preserving ancient customs and oral histories, tribes maintain a continuity with India's past.
- **Influence on Mainstream Culture:** Tribal motifs, styles, and sustainable practices have inspired and influenced mainstream Indian art, fashion, design, and cuisine.
- **Social Cohesion:** Festivals and rituals strengthen social bonds and a sense of belonging within tribal communities and contribute to national integrity.

Bhimbetka cave paintings to their distinct customs, mythology, and craftsmanship, have profoundly shaped the cultural fabric of the nation.

While maintaining their unique identity and way of life, these communities have also actively engaged in trade, warfare, and religious exchanges with the broader society, contributing significantly to the evolution of Indian civilization over millennia.

- **Historical & Artistic Contributions:** From the prehistoric Bhimbetka cave paintings to Harappan seals and Munda linguistic influences in the Rigveda, tribal communities have played a foundational role in shaping India's artistic and cultural heritage.
- **Tribal Mythology and Cosmology:** Different tribes interpret celestial bodies uniquely. For example, the Banjaras view stars as a cluster of jewels, while the Gonds see them as stones thrown at birds.

**Temple Traditions Linked to Tribes:** Many significant Hindu temples have tribal origins, including the Jagannath Temple in Odisha and Murugan's association with Tamil tribal traditions.

**Unique Tribal Customs & Marriage Practices:** Diverse traditions include matrilineal societies like the Garos, polyandry in the Todas and Kinnaurs, bride price among Bhils and Baigas, and the youth dormitory (Ghotul) of the Muria Gonds.

**Craftsmanship and Cultural Traditions:** Tribes have enriched Indian artistry through metalwork, jewellery, and textiles, including Warli and Gond paintings, Naga weaving, and Dangi bamboo craftsmanship

- **Promoting Tribal Culture:** In the modern world, where globalization and cultural homogenization often erode local traditions, there is an urgent need to preserve and

promote tribal culture. This preservation isn't just about keeping these traditions alive for the sake of history— it's about recognizing the value that tribal cultures bring to the broader national identity.

Media initiatives like *Adilok* play a critical role in this process by creating platforms that showcase tribal art, music, and traditions to a wider audience. Through storytelling, digital exhibitions, and collaborations with tribal artists, platforms like *Adilok* can ensure that tribal culture is not only preserved but appreciated and respected.

Additionally, efforts must be made to support tribal artisans and musicians by connecting them to markets that value their work. Tribal crafts and artworks deserve to be promoted not just as folk artifacts but as valuable contributions to contemporary art and culture. Festivals and exhibitions that highlight tribal traditions can also foster greater understanding and appreciation among non-tribal communities

### Conclusion:

The beauty of tribal culture lies in its ability to harmonize with nature, its deep-rooted spirituality, and its celebration of life through art, music, and traditions. In a world that often prioritizes progress over preservation, the rich cultural heritage of India's tribal communities reminds us of the importance of staying connected to our roots.

As we celebrate and preserve tribal culture, we must also ensure that it continues to evolve and thrive. Platforms like *Adilok* are essential in keeping tribal voices alive, ensuring that their art, music, and traditions remain integral parts of the nation's cultural landscape. By embracing the beauty of tribal culture, we honor not only their past but also their future.

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