

FROM EXCLUSION TO ASSERTION: POLITICAL MOBILISATION AMONG ADIVASI COMMUNITIES IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

Adivasi communities in India, numbering approximately 104 million people according to the Census of 2011 and constituting 8.6 percent of the national population, have a continuous history of political organisation stretching from the anti-colonial rebellions of the nineteenth century through the constitutional struggles of the present. This history is routinely underrepresented in mainstream accounts of Indian politics, which treat Adivasi movements as peripheral or reactive rather than as sustained and often structurally significant forms of political action. This article traces that history from the Santhal Hul of 1855-56 and the Munda Ulgulan of 1899-1900 through the Jharkhand statehood movement, the Forest Rights Act campaign, and the Niyamgiri gram sabha process to contemporary forms of digital activism and identity-based political assertion. It draws on election data, Forest Rights Act implementation records, constitutional law, field-based scholarship, and newspaper documentation to situate Adivasi political mobilisation within concrete institutional and demographic contexts. The article argues that Adivasi political agency has been continuous, has taken different forms in different historical periods, and has produced measurable institutional outcomes, from the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act of 1908 to the Forest Rights Act of 2006 to the Niyamgiri Supreme Court ruling of 2013. It also argues that the gap between formal legal recognition and actual implementation of rights remains the defining challenge for Adivasi political mobilisation today.

KEYWORDS: *Adivasi; Scheduled Tribes; Political mobilisation; Forest Rights Act; Gram Sabha; Niyamgiri; PESA; Electoral Politics; Indigenous Rights.*

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