

DECOLONISING SOCIAL SCIENCES: RETHINKING ADIVASI KNOWLEDGE AND INDIGENOUS EPISTEMOLOGY IN POSTCOLONIAL INDIA

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ABSTRACT

India is home to more than 104 million Scheduled Tribe (Adivasi) people, representing some of the most ancient and continuous knowledge traditions in the world. Yet this knowledge systems remain largely excluded from the mainstream social sciences, where they are treated as informal practices rather than as legitimate bodies of theory. This article examines the historical roots and present-day effects of this exclusion, drawing on colonial history, ecological science, legal studies, and education policy. It argues that decolonising social sciences requires more than adding Indigenous content to existing curricula. It demands a rethinking of what counts as knowledge, how knowledge is validated, and who is recognised as a knowledge producer. The article engages with the Niyamgiri case in Odisha, the ecological knowledge of Baiga and Gond communities, and the role of oral tradition as theory production. It also draws on global frameworks from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the IPBES Global Assessment to situate India's experience within an international conversation. The article concludes by calling for a plural epistemological framework in which multiple knowledge systems coexist without hierarchy.

KEYWORDS: *Adivasi Knowledge, Indigenous Epistemology, Decolonisation, Social Sciences, Niyamgiri, Oral Tradition, Ecological Knowledge.*

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