

The Tracing of Human Races in India and Religious Traditions: A New look

Athour: **Dr. Devartha Morang**

The author is a faculty of Philosophy at Cotton University, Guwahati, Assam, India and specialises in Ethical, Religious, Applied and Pragmatic studies. Research interests in Environmental Values, Pragmatism, Ecofeminism and Sustainability.

The tracing of human races in Indian subcontinent is a difficult task. Along with the human races, it is expected that there were certain customs which can be related to a religious traditions or rituals of the races. Though it is very difficult task to trace of various races and religions in India, still there has been curiosity percolated down to us regarding human and religion in India. In this paper an attempt has been made to see the human races and their religious tradition in India. The paper is based on the socio-religious and historical tradition and facts.

Keywords: Human, race, knowledge, tribal custom, religion etc.

Introduction: The tracing of human races is a very difficult topic. The geologists, archeologists and historians have been providing various clues for the tracing of the human migration history. Based on such various sources, this paper has attempted to trace the human history in India. It is true that in very beginning of the human races, there were no religion as such. Religion and spirituality gradually take place in the minds of the primitive people.

Objectives: The objective of the paper is to see the human races in Indian subcontinent. To see the religious traditions and customs of the ancient people based on the historical facts, is another

important objective.

Method: The method is of critical and analytical one. The reference and citation have been made from the secondary sources.

Discussion:

It is said that human migration had been occurred in different times from the African continent. The Human migration means different tribes and races had been wandering from one place to another in groups for different reasons. Thus, it is said that various groups of people arrived in different times in the Indian subcontinent. As the time passed by, the primitive people used to stay as a society and practiced various stable agricultural activities. The first agricultural seed of rice, barely etc. had been discovered at Mehrgarh, Beluchistan province, present day Pakistan.¹ Gradually these people migrated to the further East and South by the Sindhu River in India. They grew a civilization in the Harappa and Mohenjodaro which are known as Sindhu/Hindu civilization.

“The Harappan civilization arose from Neolithic settlements, like in Mehrgarh. Its people may have called themselves something like ‘Meluha’, which is mentioned in ancient Mesopotamian texts as a rich country to their ‘east’, which they traded a lot. Sanskrit texts use the similar-sounding word ‘mlechchha’ when talking of non-Vedic people who spoke foreign tongues.”² From the use of the word ‘Meluha’ which seems to be similar to the God Shiva and the word ‘mlechchha’ which known as ‘kirata’ tribes, it is assumed that in the Harappan civilization, there were tribal people who mingled with other group of peoples in India.

That the various groups of people at different times came to India has been found in various scholars’ writings. S. Radhakrishnan has discussed that the first troupe of human race in

India was Negroto. Then the Dravidian, following Aryans and Mongoloid race. The Indian subcontinent was like a melting pot of various human races. In this multicultural atmosphere, it is inevitable that there are intermixing rituals and practices. Thus, Indian family is a mixed family where a multicolored religious traditions are still enjoying.³

It is said that the Harappan civilization also known as Hindu civilization. The word ‘Hindu’ is a recent origin. It is emerged out from the tongue of the West who used to say ‘hind’ instead of ‘Sindhu’ (River). From those people the word ‘hind’ was written in their texts and those texts reached Europe through the Arab world. In the Roman and Greek the word hind transformed into the word Indu and then to India.⁴

It is also true that Hindu civilization was not completely a Vedic in nature. May be in the later period of the Sindhu civilization, the Vedas were written. It is said that the Vedas were written around 1500 B.C. and so, the expected age of the Vedas is 3500 years from now.⁵ But Harappan civilization had a long period. It lasted for a several centuries. In a recent article it has been assumed that the Harappan civilization is older than the Egyptian civilization. Its age has been predicted as 8000 B.C. based on the carbon dating on certain bricks and bone of the Bhirana site of India. In its long history, it is assumed that the Harappan civilization was a peaceful society avoiding the conflict.

Regarding religious tradition of the Harappan civilization, a clear picture is not available. But based on certain art facts and figures, it is said that Harappan people were worshiping female Goddess.

“We are not certain of the religion the Harappan followed. As lush terracotta female figures have

been found in many places, it seems the Harappans revered a ‘Mother Goddess’, probably worshiping female fertility.”⁶

It is seen that the Harappan people constructed bathrooms and large public baths. A 40-foot, brick-lined public bath has been found in Mohenjodaro- Daro. From those bath sites, it is expected that Harappan people were frequently used water for their bathing and purification of various rituals. As it is seen that various groups of people came to the Harappan site for trade and commerce, so there was a possibility of intermixing of one group to the another. It leads to take some rituals and practices from a group by another group.

“Some surprisingly recognisable Harappan religious practices and elements may have been absorbed into the Hinduism that later developed with the Aryans, like the peepul tree and the swastika. Harappan seals show a male, cross-legged figure with horned headgear, who may have evolved into the Hindu God Shiva.”⁷

It is said that the Harappan civilization didn’t use a temple or a building for religious rituals. Their worshiping were probably held under the trees and open fields.

“ Not a single building across thousands of kilometres has been identified as a temple, leading historians to think that perhaps Harappan religion was based around nature and fertility, and worship was under trees and in outdoor spaces.”⁸

Observation: It is observed that there were different races and tribes coming to the Indian subcontinent in different times. Though each and every race has its own culture and religion, still in the process of assimilation a mixed religious tradition has been emerged.

Findings: It is found that there are various race and tribes in the the Indian subcontinent. It is also

found that only a few religious tradition have been incorporated as a religious traditions in the main stream India. For example, in the Indian philosophy there are two groups of Philosophy - orthodox and heterodox. Within orthodox there six philosophical systems, i.e. Sankhya-yoga,

Nyaya- Vaisesika, and Vedanta- Mimansa. Within heterodox, there are three systems, i.e. Carvaka, Buddhism and Jainism.⁹

Apart from those Philosophical traditions, there are some other traditions which are not included in the main stream Philosophical tradition. The main reason is shown as not written document is available in those religious traditions, specially tribal traditions. But still there is a living philosophy in those tribal communities. Some scholars are there, who refuses to admit that the tribal people had not their religion at all. They refuse it basically lack of written document. But some other scholars are admitting that tribal people have their own culture and religious traditions. Though there is no historical document, still those people were mentioned in various ancient scriptures and texts. From such standpoint, it can be said that tribal communities have their religious backgrounds which can contribute to a greater and inclusive religion. Hutton did not separate the tribal religion and Hinduism.

“Hutton is the author of the aptly famous statement to the effect that the tribal religions represent a kind of surplus material which has not yet been built into the temple of Hinduism. He finds this material very similar to the material already used in building up post-vedic Hinduism.”¹⁰

It is also observed that a lot of tribal people are converted into the Hinduism and Christianity in recent times. The main reason of conversion is to get some material as well as social advantages

of the tribal people in the greater social development.

Eminent anthropologist Barrier Elwin echoed this issue in his various writings.

“Elwin also has, in his various monographs, pointed out the futility of distinguishing between tribal religion and Hinduism. He further points out that tribal people are always willing to worship a few more gods if by doing so they can enjoy some material or social advantages. This is evident from their contacts with Hindus and Christian missionaries.”¹¹

Conclusions: The migration of human races is a long and interesting history. It is said that a lot of human races in small groups migrated to India (Bharatvarsha). These groups of people also carried a various religious faith and tradition. In due course of time these groups mingled with one another and make a process of renewing faith and religion. Therefore, it is said that all the various human races are brothers and sisters in a distance past of the human history. It is also true that there are various religious traditions, still all religions appeal for a similarity and harmony. So, there should not be any religious tension and conflicts. Human race is one in absolute sense, but differ only in partial and appearance sense. Therefore, let us unite and promote the humanity by inculcating peace and spirituality.

¹ Early Indians: The History of our ancestors and where we come from, By Tony Joseph, Juggernaut, New Delhi, 2018.

² P.27, The History of India for children: From prehistory to the Sultanates, by Archana Garodia Gupta and Shruti Garodia, Hachette India, Gurugram, 2018.

³ The Hindu View of Life, by S. Radhakrishnan, London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1927.

⁴ The Wonder that was India: A Survey of the history and culture of the Indian sub-continent before coming the Muslim, Picador India, New Delhi, 2022.

⁵ The Vedas and Upanishads: For Children, by Roopa Pai, Hachette India, New Delhi, 2019.

⁶ P.36, The history of India, by Archana Garodia Gupta and others.

⁷ P.36, Ibid

⁸ P.36-37, Ibid.

⁹ The Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy, by Chandradhar Sharma, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1987.

¹⁰ P.98, Tribal India, by Nadeem Hasnawa, Palaka Prakashan, Delhi, 2019.

¹¹ P.98, Ibid.