

Religion of the Gond Tribes of Middle India

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ABSTRACT

Every society has religious beliefs, rights and organization. Religion very often influences ones understanding of everyday life. In many societies, religion affects the way one relates to each other. Religious beliefs often guide our social interaction. Religion can be a unifying factor in some societies. The Gond tribes in India invariably had oral religion. That was, the theory and beliefs about religion were not written in any language. The beliefs were transmitted by word of mouth and were passed on as tradition from one generation to another. They are still reflected through the myths and legends popular among them. In Gond society, religion was an integral part of total ongoing way of life. The attitude of the primitive's mind was very different from that of the civilized man. The natural world they lived was itself a quite another aspect to them. All its objects and all its entities were involved in a system of mystic participation and exclusions; it was these, which constitute its cohesion and its order. In general terms, the word religion is understood as a set of institutionalized beliefs and practices that deal with the ultimate meaning of life. Religion, like the essence of a culture, provides a blue print for the behaviour of the individual member of society on the basis of principles sustained by the divine, supernatural or transcendent order of morality. Religion is something that human beings follow as members of social groups and therefore the study of religion invariably leads to the study of people and culture.

The Gonds were not included in Hindu religion by Hindus as they were very much different to the Hindu people and were different to the untouchables of Hindu society. Hindu religion did not consider them untouchable; neither had they have been marginalized in any other religion. The background of Gond religion might be existed in the early religious life of the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh. The Gonds of the Middle India had a religion of their own, which was practiced widely in the past and present too. It is still known as Koya Punem in Gondi culture. However, with the changing time and intervention by the various intruders its originality is corrupted. The Gond tribes were driven by intruders from their original places and were forced to remain aloof from the rest of the world. Thus, their religion is not recognized even today as a distinct identity, instead it is considered as savage by many. The religious ideas of the Gonds are no less influential than any other religion of the world. The traditional religious ideas were enough to maintain peace and harmony among the community people. Hence, its existence and presence should be recognized to interpret the cosmic world of Gonds and to understand the ethnic development of the Gond tribe of Middle India.

Keywords: Oral Religion, Primitive mind, Koya Punem, Gondi Culture

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