

Conclusion

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This thesis carried out the study of megalithic culture among the gond of chhattisgarh. The work is mainly confined to the Bastar, Dantewada, Mahasamud, Durg, Rajnandgaon and Raipur districts.

The continuation of the tradition of megalithic culture did not die in Bastar region. Several beliefs and rituals followed by the gond people have proved useful in the study memorial stone monuments. This tradition of megalithic culture has not died because of the continuing tribal social customs and obligation and beliefs. As it is related to perpetuating the memory of a person or ancestors, the tradition has continued so far and might continue in future. The continuation of this tradition of megalithic culture faces several impediments- religious conversion by the Christian missionary is chief among them; however most of the tribal continue to perpetuate their earlier practices of the megalithic culture despite the missionary attempt to convert.

Megalithic cultures emerged in various parts of the world in different periods; however no direct connections can be seen between these cultures. The only common point in the megalithic cultures is that special care was taken to preserve the bodies buried under the stone monuments. In various parts of India people constructed monuments using huge stones, mainly for the purpose of burial and memorial.

The Chhattisgarhi Megalithic people had an advanced knowledge of erecting sepulchral architecture involving cutting, shaping, transporting and erecting huge Menhir as memorials. They transported huge quantity of boulders and arranged around the menhirs in the northern half and then at the bottom level and a distinct circle of stone was made using logs, ropes and levers. The sharp end point of the monuments show either to

the East or West. The angles of deviation from the magnetic north shows that they were deliberating, as a result erected that, indicates about the sense of direction and solar position. It is not necessary that this memorial menhir were erected right away after the death of a person. Memorial menhirs were erected even after a lapse of time, but one can see that their position indicates the time and period of the years when the deceased expired

The megalithic farmers of Chhattisgarh shared the traits of sedentary settlement. The animal domestication, manufacture of pottery, cultivation, iron smelting bear similarity with their counterparts from other areas of India such as Vidarbha and northeast (meghalaya, nagaland, manipur). The agricultural implements like plough share, sickles etc, indicate that the megalithic people of Chhattisgarh were partly agriculturists and partly hunters. Agriculture and hunting formed the main basis of their economy as attested by ploughshare. The way of subsistence pattern was based on cultivation, hunting and fishing.

The megaliths are concentrated on high rock-bench areas, where the large quantity of iron ore and traces of gold is available. The burials are noticed over rocky high land near the water sources. In this region they lived near by burial, where the bounty of stone was available. The Chhattisgarh megalithic people show an advanced knowledge of sepulchral architecture. With the knowledge of iron technology, quarrying of stone was a continuing activity, like cutting, shaping, transporting and erecting huge menhir as memorial monuments.

Very limited number of decoration is found on the Chhattisgarhi Megalithic pottery. The megalithic people believed in “punarjanma” or post-death life. Due to this

belief they placed many materials such as pottery, iron implements and foods in the burial ground for use throughout the believed life after death.

All of the burials are secondary and no skeletal remains are found. If we see the case of Chhattisgarh, on the basis of iron plough share of C 14 carbon dates and on typological basis the iron ploughshare is dated to 1000 BC. As such the anthropomorphic figures and sculpture menhir can be dated 1000 B.C to 500 B.C.

In this region the megalithic culture of gond is undergoing rapid decay. In some parts like Pujharikanker, Avapalli, Abhujmarh and some parts of Bhopalpatnam the practice of erecting menhirs, dolmen and wooden memorial pillar continue, but with moderate changes. The following are the difficulty faced by the people for not erecting megalithic monuments: lack of proper surface stone, lack of time, heavy expenditure on the feast, ban on animal sacrifices, lack of unity among the tribal, influence of Hinduism and modernity.

Many changes have occurred in the practices of Megalithic culture. One can observe the structural change of death practices amongst the gond. But we cannot say that the present tradition is continuing from the past megalithic tradition. These changes elicit the changing human psychology and thought process throughout various historical times. More or less they continue to practice the aboriginal knowledge and belief towards the superstitions and these superstitions further the tradition of menhir erection by appealing to their fear of the supernatural.

For the sake of continued existence in hilly and forest environment, even today they have not forgotten to practice their indigenous knowledge, where natural resources play a dominant role. The deep-rooted belief in the existence of a supernatural power also

exists to influence each and every step of their life and this belief system gives them the conviction for living.

Whatever we do with megaliths in the present, e.g. study them, excavate them, restore them, erect an information board and a counter next to them, is a contribution of contemporary history of culture to the monuments' present and future lives.

The tribal search for a better source of livelihood, attraction towards the 'modern' world, better employment opportunities, better healthcare, etc. have forced them to move out of location of their origin and migrate towards modern settlement areas. If this 'pro-modern' attitude continues, the doom of the megalithic belief and rituals is imminent.

In Chhattisgarh, different communities erect almost same type of memorial stone and wooden monuments as a common feature of their culture, but their way of practice and belief towards the monuments vary from place to place. It is observed that in order to reconstruct realistic models of past culture, an exclusively archaeological approach is insufficient and we need to incorporate an ethnographical approach. The ethnographical approach reconstructs models by not being limited to artifacts excavated (archaeology), but by going further and reconstructing the model from the practices prevalent in the present. The present practices of a community can be extrapolated to the past bringing forth a clearer and more sound model of the past culture.

Thus, the ethnographical approach has proved to be of the greatest importance by high caliber of its contribution to our understanding of the human being.