

## **SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES FOR SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS THROUGH THE TRIBAL CULT OF TODAS; THE INDIGENOUS TRIBES OF TAMIL NADU**

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### **Abstract**

*Todas are the ancient tribes Nilgiris. Their economy is basically pastoralists and they raise buffaloes for their livelihood as well as a part of their religious beliefs. Todas in present days are well educated and advanced. Still they preserve and carry their traditional beliefs and roots till date. They are considered to be the pride of Tamil Nadu. Their unique embroidery had gained popularity around the world countries, owing to globalisation. Their marked value system should be understood and followed by the students studying in secondary classes. So the idea of developing value framework was thought of. The Research Design followed is Historical Research Design. Still these tribes have so many challenges for survival which the government and N.G.O's could take up some relevant measures to protect the indigenous nature of this developed tribes.*

### **Introduction**

The todas are the ancient tribes of Nilgiris. Toda population has hovered from 700 to 900 in the last century. Although their population is very less they form a significant tribal community having their own culture. The Todas economy is basically pastoralists and they are very particular in raising buffaloes and consider it as their traditional practice. They worship buffaloes as their deities along with worshipping nature. They are skilled at specific embroidery tradition which has gained a worldwide market today. Todas live in 'Mutt' which is a semi circular building. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toda\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toda_people))

**Need for the study:** The study is very imperative as it is the responsibility of teachers to teach our students about indigenous tribal culture and inculcate the basic value system through toda culture as these tribes have much more advanced in educational and job attainments. They are the pride of Tamil Nadu as they have brought a significant contribution to national economy through their fabric embroidery. Our students should understand their uniqueness in preserving nature and protecting their distinct socio-cultural values till date.

### Statement of Research Problem

1. To emphasise the role of Teachers and Teacher Educators towards orienting and educating students on indigenous tribal culture of Tamil Nadu.
2. To emphasise the role of secondary school students in appreciating and following the path of indigenous tribal people towards protection of nature and environment

### Research Design

Historical research design is adopted for the present study. The historical process involved was to gather, verify and integrate the data of the past and study the implication of Toda culture and society, the way they preserve their indigenous culture till the present days and the marked values our students studying in secondary classes ought to learn and follow. The information is collected from Secondary sources. The Learning Value Framework is given for guiding secondary level students.

### Review of Literature

1. "In Toda terms Marriage must be defined an alliance by which a female of any age preferably the mother's brother's daughter or father's sister's daughter is incorporated into the patrician of the male who is thereafter considered her husband whether or not they live together. Marriages are negotiated or initiated before the partners or 2 or 3 years old and are completed at maturity when the husband takes his wife from her home to his own hamlet, in ritual terms children are as truly married as adults".
2. "Traditionally Todas practised fraternal polyandry, younger brother's becoming co-husbands of eldest's wife. Now abandoned, polyandry was necessary because of sexual imbalance caused by female infanticide".
3. L.P Vidyarthi and B.K Rai had made an elaborate study on the tribal culture of India in their book 'Tribal Culture of India' In the opening chapters of the book the authors outlines the history of India anthropology and provided historical appraisal of the tribes. The book gives a wide description of the economic system, social organisation, political life, religious life, folk lore. Art and craft of the tribes. The discretion of the tribal villages is also present in it. In the concluding chapters, the authors have discussed about the changes in the tribal culture and the factors effecting the change in their culture.
4. L.P.Vidyarthi had reviewed the ethnographic and folklore researches conducted by social scientists on tribal culture in different parts of India in his book 'Rise of Anthropology in India, Volume I. In the concluding chapters of the volume, the author also attempts at making theoretical and methodological appraisal of the study on the social change among the tribes of India.
5. In the book 'Reservation for tribal castes and schedule tribes, H.C., Upadhyay observes the problems of backwardness of schedule castes and scheduled tribes in

the society. He examines the Constitutional safeguards provided for the protection of interests of the weaker society, the reservation made in the legislature, education and services and the various welfare schemes introduced for the upliftment of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes. The author also has provided the valuable suggestions to improve the socio-economic conditions of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes.

6. The scheduled tribes edited by K.S.Singh presents the readers with a brief but descriptive anthropological profile of the tribals of India. This book is based on the contributions made by a number of scholars.
7. P.Gisbert gives a good account of various tribes of India and their culture in his book 'tribal India- A synthetic view of primitive man. This book includes the classification and the description of preliterate society according to the ways of obtaining food. The author describes their basic institutions like marriage and family, the position of women, law and justice, property and landownership, religion and also emerging social changes in those societies.
8. R.S.Mann's article, 'Tribal development, alternative strategy describes about various measures taken for the upliftment of the condition of the tribals. He examined over the weakness of these schemes and suggested dimensions for strengthening the existing model of tribal welfare to impart maximum benefits to the people.
9. Stephen Fuchs in his book 'The aboriginal tribes of India examine the historical background of the aboriginal tribes of India. He gives a detailed expression of political, socio-economic, religious and cultural aspects of aboriginals in India. He also gives description of tribes of India by grouping them geographically and gives in each chapter a presentation of general situation of the tribes of the region and pointed out the special features found in the individual tribes.
10. S.L.Doshi in his book, focus on the issues like tribal development, tribal ethnicity, tribal peasantry, tribal integration both at regional and National levels. In his article' the relevance of tribal development, he discussed the relevance of tribal development vis-a-vis their cultural identity. He also discusses on some of the attributes and issues of relevant tribal sociology. He observes the concept of development appears to be faulty and development programmes implemented did not tally with or corresponds to the needs of the tribal society.

### **Lineage of Toda Tribes**

Todas believe that they are the descendents of Pandavas. Some believe they are the descendents of the remnant of Alexander the Great, Macedonian army who invaded India in 327 B.C. True to their belief they followed fraternal polyandry alike Drupati, one woman gets married to all male members of the family and they all would be her husbands. All children of the family are deemed to be of the elder brother of the family. This practice may

be due to the disproportionate sex ratio. But this practice is totally abolished today. (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Todapeople>)discuss

### **Religious Belief of Todas**

Todas basically worshipped nature like hill Gods, Lord Amodr (the realm of the dead) and goddess Teikirzi. The toda culture centres on their cattle herds and dairy temples. (<https://www.indianmirror.com/tribes/todatribe.html>) Each of the six grades of temple dairies has its cattle herd of sacred buffaloes and they follow specific rituals for priest and other practises. Today we find to das who follow Hinduism, Christianity and Islamic religion.

### **Toda Economy and Society**

Toda economy is basically pastoralists as they depend on their cattle herd for their livelihood. They have their temple dairies and they sell their milk and milk products to the neighbouring people of Nilgiris. In previous times they got other products exchanged as a barter trade from other indigenous tribals of Nilgiris like Irulas and Badkas. They are experts in silversmith work also. Today many of them have adopted terrace farming system to sustain their livelihood.

### **Toda Men and their Folk Tradition**

Toda temple festival which is called "Bhavaneeswarar temple festival is observed by them for 150 years. This temple festival is observed during the Tamil month of '*Margazhi*' The main event of the festival is the car procession and the traditional dance by men. Men belonging to toda tribes dress themselves in their traditional costume, form a circle, hold their hands together and perform their traditional dance. Generally they pray for good health, rains and prosperity of the people and also for good harvest. During this festival men are clad in traditional dhotis, one shawl covering their neck and upper body. They also wear their traditional embroidered shawl which is called which is called 'pootkuly'

### **Challenges faced by Todas**

The entire traditional, socio-economic life of todas centre on particular floral species for observing particular festival or celebration. They do not make any compromise in this. If we are not going to show sensitive attitude in this regard, their culture is going to be in great peril. So all individuals and community should take up precautions steps and help in preserving the unique culture and belief of todas.

Todas belief is basically drawn from 100 varieties of plant species, which they consider very sacred. Their rituals from pregnancy to paternity are based on this. Now these plants are in the verge of extinction.

Even the British understanding their close relationship with nature did not relocate them. But today we find, the entire Nilgiri hills are surrounded by concrete structures, tea

gardens and hydel power plants. Toda agricultural lands are now a part of bio-reserve. So the following practises could be a support mechanism.

1. Patronizing or adopting the eco-friendly practices of todas
2. Government and agencies should be cautious to avoid encroachments
3. Measures could be taken further strengthen to preserve todas tiny hamlet temple structures as they stand as a testimony of a renowned architectural style
4. Encouraging todas conical house structures to enable them to withstand harsh weather conditions
5. Adoption of endangered floral species by NGO's

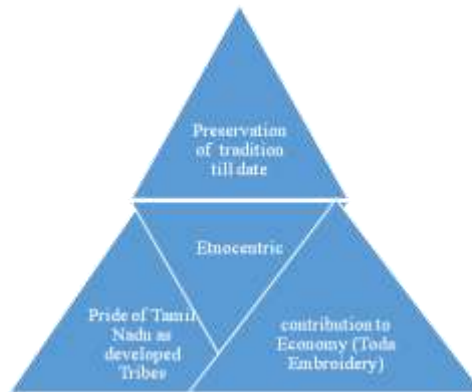
### **Unique Contribution of Women**

Toda embroidery is the unique feature revealing their clothing culture. The discovery conducted by Indian Institute of Science has stated that todas have been associated with Nilgiri hills for almost 3500 years. They have brought pride to Tamil Nadu in the unique art form of embroidery, which acquired a geographical indication tag in the year 2013. Toda women fabricate the embroidery in black and red colour. The embroidery is usually made in cloaks called, '*pootkhuly*'. These cloaks are usually draped both by men and women. The distinct feature of this embroidery is that the patterns are in the basis of thread counts which is different from modern embroidery. What is more surprising is toda women without modern numerical literacy, skillfully embroider patterns with accurate geometric precision and accuracy without using aids like scales/patterns. Moreover unlike modern embroidery, the reverse side of the fabric with embroidery is equally beautiful with no signs of hanging threads and knots. The embroidery is done on specific fabrics using specific colours. The primary colours used are red and black. The thickness of the thread of the thread ensures that the pattern projects the embossed look. Basically the fabric is unbleached matted and loosely woven cotton material. The other raw material includes needle and two ply woolen embroidery thread. The colour symbolizes their cultural beliefs. The base white indicates purity and innocence; red depicts adolescence and youth; black depicts maturity. The inspiration is mostly drawn from nature.

### **Value Inculcation through Toda Culture for Secondary School Students**

- Compassion towards Nature and Environment
- Maintaining indigenous culture despite achievement in academics and career
- Sense of Collective Living
- Housing structure in association with nature
- Toda embroidery as a part of Global economy and contribution to Indian Economy
- Pride of Tamil Nadu as developed tribes.
- Contribution of women in economy through toda embroidery

## Value Framework through Toda Cult



## Conclusion

It's really saddening to note that the great toda culture is now in crossroads. So government, NGO's and individuals should take enough responsibilities to enable todas towards their ethnic and cultural preservation. So it is very imperative timely actions are taken up by government and non-governmental agencies to preserve and protect the ethnicity of todas.

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