

BODY AND SEXUALITY AMONG ADOLESCENT TRIBAL GIRLS: A STUDY OF SANTHALS IN JHARKHAND

In an attempt to record the discourses around gender, body, and sexuality in everyday life, this research focuses on an ethnographic lens to study adolescent tribal girls from the Santhal Parganas region of Jharkhand, prioritizing two districts named Deoghar and Pakur between 2015- 2018. The major objectives of this study has been around understanding the various ways Santhali girls experience body and sexuality in their everyday lives. The ways adolescent bodies in tribal communities live through rites of passage and ritual practices and internalize an understanding of body and sexuality through social construction in one hand and also through agency in the body on the other hand has been crucial to this dissertation study.

The chapters in this study indicate that the body is not a mere object but a condition contextualized through relations to 'other' from the culture and spaces it occupies and hence the sociological discourse around power, resistance, risk, negotiation and acceptance of the lived in experiences of the adolescents has been integral to this dissertation study. The articulation of the embodied experiences of the body through language, perceiving beauty and body image, deconstructing marriage and motherhood, and living through the socio-cultural locations, inner dilemmas, beliefs, and selves were critical to the everyday life of the adolescent bodies in the Adivasi Santhal Parganas region and are documented through the chapters of this thesis. Furthermore, to investigate the vulnerability among adolescents in knowing about puberty, sexuality, and sexual behavior, the focus of the study was on understanding how adolescents experienced sexuality and sexual relationships in their everyday lives. The immediate context of being represented through lived realities and adolescent voices from the ground, this thesis represents an embodied historical self, gender, and body constructed by a matrix of social and political processes in a marginalized land contextualized through hunger and poverty.