



Review Article

A Comprehensive Analysis Of Tribes, Tribal Writings And Some Pioneer Tribal Life Writers

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Abstract

Tribal literature is the creative energy generated at the national level post 1991 to protect the Tribal identity and existence in the face of intensified exploitation due to economic liberalization. The development of literature and of different art forms in Tribal communities predated the emergence of literature and arts in the so-called mainstream society. But the Tribal literary tradition was mainly oral. Even after being pushed into the jungles, the Tribal communities continued their creative literary exploits. However, as this literature was in unsophisticated folk languages and because the Tribals were far from the centres of power, their literature, like they themselves, was largely ignored. Even today, Tribal literature is being produced in hundreds of indigenous languages but we know little about it.

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Introduction

The last decade of the 20th century witnessed the rise of a host of new movements in India. Women, farmers, Dalits, Tribals and various ethnic groups came together like never before and raised demands and issues that could neither be understood nor settled through the established theoretical and political idiom. They asserted that their exploitation was due to their specific identities and to fight that exploitation and discrimination, they forged alliances with other groups/communities with similar identities and launched a joint movement for their

emancipation. Since identities formed the basis of their exploitation as well as their struggle against it, this process was began to be called “identitism”. Besides sociopolitical movements, literary movements also joined this battle against exploitation of the deprived. Feminist literature and Dalit literature were the by-products of this process. Now, Tribal literature, imbued with Tribal consciousness, is also trying to carve out a place for itself in the world of literature and criticism.

A referral to tribe :

The word tribes refers to a culture heritage and historical identity concept. It is used for the tribe as a separate group of persons having their own identity, and cultural traits. This society lives in isolated areas and their social life style is different from the main stream society. Its culture, customs, rituals and traditions are in heritage from the earlier generations and moves to the next generation. Tribes are named differently at different traditional identity places according to their customary, geographical positioning, their social stratification in the society and so on which makes them distinctive from others.

As Tribal literary discourse is still in the making, its issues are also just taking shape. Beginning with “Who are Tribals?”, the discourse has broached issues related to Tribal society, history, culture, language and so on over the last decade. Magazines play a key role in the launch and development of every literary movement. The following magazines have played important roles in raising Tribal issues in the world of literature and in promoting creative literature related to them: Yuddhrat Aam Admi (Hazaribagh, Delhi; editor: Ramnika Gupta), Aravali Udgosh (Udaipur; editor: B.P. Verma ‘Pathik’), Jharkhandi Bhasha Sahitya, Sanskriti Akhda (Ranchi; editor: Vandana Tete) and Adivasi Satta (Durg, Chhattisgarh; editor:

K.R. Shah). Besides, Pushpa Tete through Tarang Bharati, Sunil Minj through Deshaj Swar and Shishir Tudu through the evening newspaper Jharkhand News Line are also promoting Tribal discourse. Many mainstream magazines have also brought out special Tribal issues, thus contributing to the development of Tribal discourse. These include Samkaleen Janmat (2003), Kathakram (2012) and Ispatika (2012). Initially, the leading Hindi magazines showed scant interest in Tribal issues but with the growing acceptance of the discourse, Tribal life is increasingly finding place in the columns of such magazines. Tribal writers are getting adequate space in small magazines.

Tribal writings are diverse. Tribal authors have benefitted from the rich oral literary tradition of the community. There is no central genre of Tribal literature like autobiographical writings in the case of women’s literature and Dalit literature. Tribal and non-Tribal writers have portrayed Tribal life and society through poetry, stories, novels and plays. The Tribal writers have made poetry the main weapon in their struggle for Tribal identity and existence. Autobiographical writings are few and far between in Tribal literature and that is because the Tribal society believes more in the group than in the self. Concepts like “private” and “privacy”

remained alien to most of the tribal communities for a long time. Their tradition, culture, history, exploitation and its resistance – all are collective. And collective feelings are much better expressed through folk poetry than through autobiographical works. The sharp Tribal pen is expanding its reach at a fast pace.

On the other side tribal folk tradition and literature are gradually falling into nothingness as the tribal villages are being uprooted and tribes are displaced from their environment. Their oral traditions have been recorded and documented by those who first came in contact with the tribals. The socio-religious structure is differ from tribe to tribe but most often, they run along the same line and categories. The religious practices, customs, and political system changed significantly under British colonialism in the 19th century.

Some defining literature on tribal life :

1. Rajam Krishnan is a famous women indigenous writer of Tamil Nadu. In India she is known as fourth world writer. She is a social activist who supports tribal people and their Manuscript received May15, 2019. R. Jinu, Department of English, Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Kanyakumari,

India. (e-mail: jichelnu@gmail.com) R.S. Suganth, Research Scholar in English, Noorul Islam Centre for Higher Education, Kanyakumari, India. (e-mail: suganthrs1992@gmail.com) living. She has written so many short stories, novels and essays in Tamil and English. She brings out the hidden facts about the tribes through literature. She mainly focuses upon tribes who are living in the mountains of Tamil Nadu. She jots down how the ethnical value of tribes have been degraded from generation to generation. She uses literature as a tool to explain how the earth loose its native people. Devi Mahasweta in an interview in 1998, plots the sufferings of the tribal people in the modern society. Rajam Krishnan toobrings out the suffering of tribes by using literature as a medium. She brings generation gap as an important concept with the change of ethnicity and living style from one generation to the other. She is against the destructive nature of modern technology in the name of development.

2. The acclaimed writer, Mahasweta Devi, has written several novels, short stories and articles for voicing the issues of the tribals, particularly focusing on the tribal women. She was also exceedingly involved with welfare activities concerning the tribals in the Chota nagpur region. She was awarded the Jnanpith Award in 1996, and the Magsaysay Award in 1997 for her outstanding contribution to literature and for standing for the cause of the tribal people. She has recalled and documented the oral tales, legends and myths associated with the tribals and vividly reconstructed their past. Her writings are intrigued by recurrent themes of tribal history and the tribal struggle for existence. Her short story Draupadi, narrates the ordeal of a Santhal tribe woman Draupadi who is subjected to third degree in sexual violence. The story draws parallel to the mythic Draupadi from the Mahabharata. However, unlike the Draupadi from the Mahabharata, the tribal Draupadi of the contemporary post-colonial times has no saviour to save her from disgrace, since the 'saviours' in the

form of policemen are the ones who gang rape her. During the course of the story, the marginalized tribal woman Draupadi, derives strength from her body and her inner feminine core to fight against her marginality.

3. Gopinath Mohanty is first Indian Oriyan language tribal writer, he has composed 24 novels, short stories, plays, and autobiographies. His mostly literary works have translated into colonial language, who has made a bold attempt in raising of Canon in tribal literature. Mohanty represent to their identity, traditional or historically transformed images, rituals and social structures of their own common, but diversified culture. The Ancestor represents a fantastic tribal world as a tiger wilderness society. The "ancestor" is an ancient date-palm tree representing the eternal ancestor; it stands for cultural heritage of the tribal identity manifest in their rituals and customs. Mohanty, in the novel visualises life in a tribal community against a cosmic background.

4. Susheela Samad Belonging to the Munda tribe, Samad is known as

one of the earliest tribal writers. She was born in the village of Laujoda in Jharkhand, and went on to receive higher education. In fact, she was the first Indian woman from a Scheduled Tribe to get a BA Honours degree in 1934, which also earned her the title of the first Hindi Vidushee of Indian. Samad edited the Hindi literary magazine called Chandni from 1925 to 1930, and is also well known as one of the key voices in the Gandhian freedom movement—a point to be noted here is that she was the only Scheduled Tribe woman of prominence in Gandhi's Satyagraha. Samad published two of her poetry collections, Prallap in 1935, and Sapne Ka Sansaar in 1948.

5. Alice Ekka Also belonging to the Munda tribe, and born in Ranchi, Jharkhand, Ekka is also considered to be one of the pioneers of Scheduled Tribe literature. In 1938, she became the first Indian woman from a Scheduled Tribe from her region to graduate in English (she studied in Scottish Church College, Calcutta). However, as a storyteller, Ekka did not choose English. Instead, she wrote stories

in Hindi throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s—mostly published in the magazine, Adivasi Patrika. A collection of her stories, Alice Ekka Ki Kahaniyan, was published posthumously in 2015.

6. Usha Kiran Atram Based in Kachargarh, Maharashtra, Atram hails from the Gond tribe and writes predominantly in Gondi, Marathi and Hindi. She is also the director of the Adivasi Bhasha Shodh Sansthan, Dhanegaon. Married to a scholar of Gond philosophy, Sunher Singh Taram, who also started a magazine called Gondwana Darshan, Atram started publishing her works there while also working as an editor. The first anthology of her poems, Motyarin, was published in 1993. Her other works of prominence include Morki, Katha Sangrah and Gondwana ki Veeranganayein.

Conclusion

As Tribal literature draws its energy from the tradition of tribal uprisings, the language and geography of those uprisings also assume significance. The original writings of the Tribal authors are in their languages. The Tribal literature in Hindi is greatly influenced by the rich literary

tradition of indigenous languages. A part of this literature has been translated into other languages. The literature being written in different Tribal languages is being translated into major languages like Hindi, Bangla and Tamil, thus acquiring a national form. Tribal literature is marching ahead, imbued with the rebellious sentiment of the Birsa, Sidho-Kano and other revolutionary Tribal leaders and their movement.

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