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AN OVERVIEW OF SOCIO CULTURAL IDENTITY IN TRIBAL LITERATURE.

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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. 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. The foremost objective of this research is to analyse the tribes identity issue in literature as a discourse in societal, customs, traditional. Historical and material factors led to the emergence of the contemporary Tribal literary movement. About two decades ago, the central government adopted the policy of economic liberalization, thus throwing open the doors to market economy. In the name of free trade and free market, a no-holds-barred race for earning more and more profits commenced. And this translated into wanton loot of water, forests and land – the prime resources of the Tribals – even to the point of putting their lives at risk. Figures speak for themselves: Over the last one decade at least 10 lakh Tribals have been displaced from the Jharkhand state alone. Most of them are working as domestic servants or daily-wage labourers in metros like Delhi. Ironically, the government then argues that as there is no Tribal community native to the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi, there is no provision for reservations for the Tribals in educational institutions and government jobs in the region. Where should these people, displaced from the land of their ancestors in the name of development, go? It is said that when the United Nations decided to observe the year 1993 as the “International Year of Indigenous Peoples”, the Government of India’s official reaction was that “The Indian Tribals or STs are not indigenous peoples as defined by the UN” and that “all Indians are indigenous people”. It also asserted that the “Tribal’s or STs in India are not being subjected to any political, social or economic discrimination”.

Tribal literature is the literature of a search for identity, of exposing the past and present forms of exploitation by outsiders, and of threats to tribal identity and existence, and resistance. This is a pro-change, constructive intervention, which is dead opposed to any sort of discrimination against the descendants of the original inhabitants of India. It supports their right to protect their water resources, forests and land and their right to self-determination. 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.

Various literatures came up with their voices into main stream to raise their identities into society. Tribes, Dalits, Women and Peasants were the ethnic groups who came up with the issues of their identity in the society. Tribes and Dalits held their culture and traditions. They usually formed their literature into oral form. Ethnic group called Tribal held the major parts of India. They settle down at the out-skits of the cities. They are supposed to be the earliest settlers in the territory of India. Indian oldest tradition is manifested in

the culture of Tribes. India is the country which has witnessed the most industrialization in the tribal belt resulting in major changes in the tribal culture. But of all the aspects of culture religion is one of the least changeable. Tribal literature, imbued with Tribal consciousness, is also trying to carve out a place for itself in the world of literature and criticism. For the present study, the presenter is trying to study the history, cultures and religion of different tribal groups of India which emerged in the latter half of the 20 th century.

M.N. Srinivas, the well known sociologist, tried to analyse tribal society through his theory of Sanskritisation. His was a pioneering work in this field. The theory of Sanskritisation originated from Srinivas' observation of the dynamics of what can be called as 'Brahmanization' in Coorg in the southern part of India. He argued that Sanskritization is the long-term dynamic process through which a "low" Hindu caste or tribal or other group changes its customs, rituals, ideology in order to associate with the dominant communities. Interestingly, what we comprehend from the Lambada narratives is very different from the much-criticized theory of Srinivas. The Lambadas do not aspire for higher status by altering or changing their present customs or rituals but claim that they are actually Rajputs. They invoke historical memory to support this claim and assert themselves politically and culturally. We can find numerous such thematic Lambada Bhat narratives. Such an assertion goes against and challenges the Sanskritization theory that Srinivas proposes.

The tribal mind has a more acute sense of time than sense of space. Somewhere along the history of human civilization, tribal communities seem to have realised that domination over territorial space was not their lot. Thus, they seem to have turned almost obsessively to gaining domination over time. This urge is substantiated in their ritual of conversing with their dead ancestors: year after year, tribals in many parts of India worship terracotta, or carved-wood objects, representing their ancestors, aspiring to enter a trance in which they can converse with the dead. Over the centuries, an amazingly sharp memory has helped tribals classify material and natural objects into a highly complex system of knowledge. The importance of memory in tribal systems of knowledge has not yet been sufficiently recognised but the aesthetic proportions of the houses that tribals build, the objects they make and the rituals they perform fascinate the curious onlooker.

Tribal literature is nothing but the folklores and oral stories and poems of the tribal community. Every country has rich tribal literature and in India, it is known as 'Adivasi' literature. The availability of the same is in two forms; oral literature and the modern written literature. They call themselves the 'Orature' –the literature of the oral tradition. Tribal literature or Adivasi Sahitya is available mostly in the form of songs or dance forms. These songs have been orally transmitted from one generation to another and have survived for a long time. Even some of the folk songs are lost forever. It is high time for us to collect and conserve tribal literature for the posterity. The glory of the mainstream literature in the country lies in the fact that it accepts oral or folk as complementary, as it gives a complete picture of the Indian culture and thought.

Tribal people dwell in different parts of the Indian Union. They are found in small and big groups; they speak their own tongues or dialects; practice their own customs or culture; and attract the attention of linguists, anthropologists, scholars and researchers now –a- days. Tribal men and women are natural singers, dancers or performers. They are emotionally attached to their motherland; they are full of patriotic feelings and work for the progress of the nation. The tribal vision of life or the tribal philosophy of life cherishes close contact between man and Nature.

Every year in India more than 100 books are published in English and other major Indian languages of tribal literature. But the writing of tribal literature did not just start for expanding their stories and poems, but it is a search for identity, exposing the past and the present from the exploitation of outsiders and threats to the tribal identity and crisis. It is their form of resistance.

While tribal literature is lost among the piles of un-understandable languages, the literature is being translated to major languages giving it a national form. Amidst the diversity of India with more than 800 spoken languages, tribal literature tries to find its way in-between the official 22 languages, to be seen, to be heard, and to be identified. There is now some persistent solidarity undercurrent working among different indigenous peoples as a resistance to the ongoing economic, political and cultural denial. Indigenous communities, peoples and nations are those which, having a historical continuity with preinvasion and pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories, consider themselves distinct from other sectors of the societies now prevailing in those territories, or parts of them. They form at present non-dominant sectors of society and are determined to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories, and their ethnic identity, as the basis of their continued existence as peoples, in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal systems.

Community based sentiments are very strong among the indigenous people and their whole lives revolve around community and group. Self determination thus forms an essential condition for indigenous people to live a dignified life because it gives the power to determine for them the value and necessity of collective life and decide their future course of action. They have all the right to determine for themselves the relationship with one another and the state and the other people that influences their lives. Tribal Policies in India is based on Isolation, Assimilation and Integration and last Democratic Decentralization of Tribal People. The Government of India has adopted a policy of integration of tribals with the mainstream aiming at developing a creative adjustment between the tribes and non tribes leading to a responsible partnership.

The current understanding of tribes as a concept in independent India continues to be adopted from the original term as used by the European Colonialism and racist ideology. The term tribes reflects the vocabulary of the colonial power which overloaded with the so called "White Men Burden", describes it in several disparaging and contemptuous ways. Even after independence, India has not been able to wholly expose the completely political nature of the term. Thus, the limited definition continues to be used in order to manage the current unequal national/international system.

The tribals should be allowed as much control as possible over their own economic organization and social economic development which could lead to conflict resolution in multi- cultural societies. Many sociologists called this strategy ethno-development/self development, wherein the ethnic groups/tribal's retains control over its own land.

According to Oxford Dictionary "A tribe is a group of people in a primitive or barbarious stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor. D.N Majumdar defines tribe as a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous with no specialization of functions ruled by tribal officers hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes. Lucy Mair defines tribe as an independent political division of a population with a common culture. Gillin and Gillin considers any collection of pre-literate local group that occupies a common general territory speaks a common language and practices a common culture as a tribe. The origin of India's scheduled tribe has been traced to such races as the Proto- Australoids who one time practically covered the whole India, secondly, the Mongolians who are still located mostly in Assam, and finally to a limited extent, also to the Negritos Strain as indicated by frizzy hair, among the Andaman's and the Kadar's of the South-West India⁵. It has now become an established fact that the aboriginal tribes in India are, in most cases, survivals from the later prehistoric groups. They do not form a uniform race. They belong to different races. However, our knowledge is vague about the origin and subsequent history of the numerous aboriginal tribes of India. The Indus valley civilization and the advent of Aryans is most probably a genuine gradual growth on Indian soil, but an importation by immigrant foreigners establishing a colony in India. To sum up, it is clearly observed that even after 60 years of independence; Tribals in the state continue to suffer socio-economic deprivation despite many policies and programmes. Their socioeconomic condition still remains the same with the poor implementation of ST sub plans. In this situation the researcher has felt that it is necessary to review all the previous studies, which include, books, journals and research studies of both published and unpublished. After striving hard a few of reviews are collected which are presented in chapter II along with constitutional safe guards.



According to Ralph Linton tribe is a group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in a culture, frequent contacts and a certain community of interests. A common definition for a tribe is a group of people that all have common ancestry, or a common ancestor, a common culture, and live in their own enclosed society. Other names for a tribe are a clan, which is used in some European countries, and family. The idea of a tribe goes back to ancient times when Rome would create divisions within society due to class, family, and money. These divisions were tribes. This term has evolved while the people it describes may not have. Many tribes and tribal communities are in areas that lack industry.

Some books on tribal literature are here they appreciate the array of cultural diversity-

- 1- Mizo Songs & folk Tales, edited by Laltluangliana Kiangte.
- 2- Black Lilies: Telugu Dalit Poetry in English Translation edited by K. Purushotham.
- 3- Kocharethi: The Arya Woman by Narayan, Translated by Catherine Thakamma.
- 4- Painted Words: An Anthology of Tribal Literature, edited by G.N. Devy.
- 5- Tribal Language, Literature & Folklore: Emerging Approaches in Tribal Studies
- 6- Tribal Culture: Study of Bastar Region) Hindi Nivedita Verma.
- 7- Tribal Perspectives in India: Critical Responses.

While the government of India recognizes twenty-two official languages, there are over 880 languages spoken in the country. Until recently, the tribal literature created in non-mainstream languages has not been very recognized or available for an Indian or global audience. One of the primary reasons for this is that tribal discourse, including folktales and songs, is mainly oral in nature. In addition, the communities who produce it tend to be far from developed metropolitan cities, and so their creative works have been largely overlooked. There are over 700 scheduled tribes notified under Article 342 of the Constitution of India. According to the 2015-16 Annual Report of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs the population of the Scheduled Tribes in the country is 10.45 crore which as per 2011 census constitutes 8.6% of the total population. It is a time to acknowledge that traditional tribal cultures and knowledge system has much to offer the imperial planet and hence it cannot be separated from the collective rights of the peoples. Most tribes are concentrated in heavily forested areas that combine inaccessibility with limited political or economic significance. Historically, the economy of most tribes was subsistence agriculture or hunting and gathering. From the above findings and discussion it can be said that despite the drastic changes due to urbanization and industrialization the different tribes of India is still maintaining its religion and culture. We can conclude that in spite of the fast pace of modernization the tribal people are still maintaining their traditional religion, values and culture.

References:-

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- 2- Tribal Literature: A Perspective From Within Dr. V. Rajunayak.
- 3- Emergence of tribal Literature in 20th Century.
- 4- Tribal Identity Concerns in Literature: A Critical Study of Tribal Literature.
- 5- Gopinath Mohanty's The Ancestor Sayar Singh Chopra.
- 6- Indigenous People and the International Discourse: Issues and Debates Arunima Deka.
- 7- Voices Unheard: Tribal literature from India to Read Now- Pooja Shankar
- 8- A new paradigm shift for Tribal Development Strategy- By: Som Kamei.