



# Cultural Resistance in Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*.

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**Abstract:** This study has been undertaken to investigate the framework of cultural resistance as found in the story of Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. Shekhar belongs to the Santhal community of Jharkhand. Most of his works are written from the very experiences of his community. In the story, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* the writer has exposed the voice of resistance through the protagonist Mangal Murmu, a musician and a farmer. He has a troupe of musicians and singers. He feels pride in his art which represents his community. It is sacred to his community. His community represents the Adivasi culture of Jharkhand. But in return, they find nothing- only fearful disease and displacement. All the opportunities in education, job, and other fields go fast to Diku (outsiders). So, on a specially arranged program by a businessman on their land, Mangal Murmu with his troupe resist not dancing on the stage in front of the then President of India, Pranab Mukherjee.

**Index Terms - resistance, community, culture, displacement, Diku.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

“Do we have reason to be happy?” (Shekhar, 2017, p.187)

This is a question of the perpetual suffering of the Santhal community. The people of the Santhal community live in South Asia. They are the largest tribe in Jharkhand and West Bengal and are also found in Odisha, Bihar, and Assam. Santhals of Jharkhand are especially known for their indigenous culture. No other tribe adhere to their culture so sincerely as the Santhals of Jharkhand do. They represent the very Adivasi culture of Jharkhand. They are the sons of this land. If the state has dreams, obviously dream for them. But, with the changing political scenario, their fate is under threat. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar has beautifully portrayed the very chaotic situation of this community in post-independence India. India has got freedom from the very shackle of British colonizers. But, the very ideology of colonialism remains the same in postcolonial India. Their condition is like colonized people in the hands of outsiders. “Even Bihari and Bengali and Odia people say that Jharkhand is theirs. They call their culture and music and dance superior to those of us Adivasi”. ( Shekhar, 2017, p.179) Neither the capitalists, Christian missionaries nor the political leaders help them. Together all of them try to displace them from the land.

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar has aptly portrayed the pangs of Adivasis. His voice is political enough to satirize the very discourse of exploitation. Santhals feel outcasted in their land. Being an Adivasi Shekhar knows the exploitation of Santhals. But when they feel more humiliated the voice of resistance raise from the turmoil situation as in Mangal Murmu. His resistance against the oppressor falls in the same path as in *Kurukku*, a bildungsroman by Tamil writer Bama on the life of Dalits in south India and *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, a novel by Mahasweta Devi on the resistance movement in the late nineteenth century in the district of Chhotanagpur against the eviction of Munda people from their lands by British colonial administrators.

## II. FRAMEWORK OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE

Cultural resistance is predominantly used in postcolonial studies. Using the same approach of cultural resistance writers assume the acts of resistance to the cultural binary. It is perceived when the colonial narratives are underlying in culture and when the colonial epistemology is functional. The very resistance challenges cultural presuppositions. In doing so, the marginalized communities or groups show the act of refusal. Sometimes it is done through reconciliation, sometimes through violence. The main purpose behind cultural resistance is to claim liberation from the oppressor. When a community is under threat of outer force in their territory, the members of that community try to alternate the very discourse of exploitation. They challenge the exact system of enslavement, motifs of capitalism, and political discourse. Finally, we can say cultural resistance provides a scope to challenge the authority of dominants and strength among the resistance group members.

### III. CULTURAL REPRESENTATION IN *ADIVASI WILL NOT DANCE*

*Adivasi Will Not Dance* is a fictional work by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. The story is based on the life of Santhals- their misfortunes in their land, Jharkhand. The protagonist of this story is Mangal Murmu, a farmer with a passion for music and dance. The story represents the conditions of Santhals in twenty-first-century of India. It is the same as the Britishers had created the concept of 'Otherness' presenting Indians as inferior. In the name of education, missionaries are displacing Jharkhand's Adivasi identity and culture. As the protagonist expresses, "...those Kiristan missionary schools where our children are constantly asked to stop worshipping our Bonga-Buru and start revering Jisu and Mariam..." (Shekhar 2017, p 172). Santhal villages in Santhal Pargana are replaced by the Muslims. Outsiders like Marwari, Sindhi, Mandal and Bhagat have captured the land of the indigenous people. Day by day outsiders develop in the land of Jharkhand from the coal and stone mines and local people become the victims. represent the indigenous culture of their land, but in return, they get as the protagonist said, "We used to pay paid money. We used to be given food, awarded medals and shields and certificates. We used to be written about in the papers". So everywhere in the name of culture, Adivasis are being exploited by the Diku. Thus, cultural domination is prevalent throughout Jharkhand. The outsiders possess the power to govern the local people. Presenting the natives as inferior, the dominant people try to erase the native values and cultures as done by colonizers during the colonial period.

As said the education system is wholly dominating. The Christian missionaries try to alter the cultural aspects through their education system. As the protagonist says, "For education, our children are at the mercy of either those free government schools where teachers come only to cook the midday meal or those Kristian missionary schools where our children are constantly asked to stop worshipping our Bonga-Bura and start revering Jisu and Mariam." (Shekhar 2017, P 172). So, the writer is concerned about the exploitation of Tribes people in the name of education. Sometimes, their original names are changed in the schools by sisters and fathers. It indicates the loss of freedom. Thus, they are at the mercy of outsiders. Parents begot their children only to lose their own freedom. Mangal Murmu expresses his deep anguish "We are losing our Sarna faith, our identities, and our roots. We are becoming people of nowhere". (Shekhar 2017, p 173)

Thus, in his short story, *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, Shekhar gives focus on the postcolonial identities of Tribes in Jharkhand. How the structures of colonialism of the British era are prevalent after the twelfth decade of Indian freedom. Such colonial experiences bring forth the struggle against the oppressors for national or social liberation. The outsiders destroy the very framework of local people. In the name of development, they force the local people to work on other's land. "Today, all Diku, Bihari and all, they have broken up our Santhal Pargana for their own benefits." (Sekhar 2017, p 177).

So, the Adivasis resist such exploitation by not dancing on the stage in front of the Indian President. Their refusal is the expression that defends the very honour of the tribes. They are not puppets. The President was to inaugurate a new power plant in the Godda district of Jharkhand. But the very establishment is the end of the fortunes of the local people. A narrative is always heard that Jharkhand is always for Adivasis. But, the way Adivasis were removed from their own land is endless suffering. "You will now start building the power plant, but this plant will be the end of us all, the end of all the Adivasi". (Sekhar, 2017, p 187). The resistance of the Adivasis is acts, processes, or values that perform a politics of transformation.

### III CONCLUSION

The paper attempted to unearth the exploitation, presentation, and resistance of Adivasis in the rich land of Jharkhand. Transformation is necessary in the modern world both culturally and psychologically. Shekhar's voice is the voice of urgency. The way Adivasis are humiliated is through the failure of state politics. The need is to facilitate the better enhancement of the own culture, not alternation: understanding, not suppression; freedom of choice, not intellectual exploitation. Shekar's story *The Adivasis Will Not Dance* is a groundbreaking narrative on the reality of Adivasi people in their own land. He shows how the natives are trapped in the discursive framework of the outsiders.

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