

# THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

## Tribal Literature in India: Some Features

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### **Abstract:**

*Tribal Literature in India is a colourful one. It is indeed a vast one. One of the basic problems leading to its slow recognition is that it is unrecorded or more appropriately it is unwritten. One of the best solutions to this issue lies in our modified notion of literature. It means that we need to concede that literature is not just written, but also oral in nature or form. In addition to this, India is best known for its rich oral traditions. Orality as a feature of communication embodies in it both traditional and modern characteristics. Timeless and unanchored, it freely travels from age to age, country to country and genre to genre. In fact, every written piece of literature contains substantial layers of orality.*

*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.*

*The literature of the tribal groups is marked by a great variety of songs, dance forms or dramatic performances. A sincere effort is now being made to collect them, to compile them through translation or transcreation.*

*The tribal story -teller can imagine the unimaginable; readers, listeners and viewers will be rendered willing to believe the unbelievable and to forget the demarcating lines between art and non-art. It seems that the primary aim of the tribal art is to amuse the audience*

**Key words:** Orality, Multilinguality, Complementary, Posterity, Bodo, Santhali

### **1. Introduction**

Tribal literature is concerned with the customs, cultures, contributions and creativities of the tribal communities. Some of them are the Munda who dwells in many parts of the Indian Union - Jharkhand, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The Kondhs are found in several districts of Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra etc. The Adi dwells in a couple of districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Some salient features of Tribal Literature:-

- Philosophy of Life
- Immense variety: song, dance, drama
- Multilinguality
- Patriotism
- Tribal voice in .English translation.

#### *1.1. Philosophy of Life*

This literature may remain unrecognised or marginalised but it contains a very practical, sound philosophy of life , based on a close relationship between man and nature or God .The tribal people are more guided by heart and nature .They associate the events of life with sunrise or sunset , with moonrise or moonset ; they tend to change themselves or life styles with the change of the seasons . They have distinct rituals, dances or songs for the occasions like birth, puberty , marriage , demise , etc .They believe in both gods and ghosts . They have also embraced Christianity.

### 1.2. Immense Variety

This literature shows immense variety in terms of dance forms , songs and dramas . Among the tribal dance forms are - Nongkrem dance performed by the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya; Dhimsa dance performed during festivals in tribal regions of Andhra Pradesh , Orissa , and Madhya Pradesh ; and young tribal men and women perform Kabui dance in Manipur .Tribal dances are almost inseparable from tribal songs. Tribal songs are sung to suit the occasions or ceremonies or festivals. They believe in celebration of the events of life and the laws of nature. As far as tribal dramatic performances are concerned they provide us great fun; they are indeed hilarious. Tribal artists perform wearing masks and fabulous apparel. Folk or tribal performance is a composite art in the country. It is a total art with fusion elements from music, dance, pantomime, versification, epic ballad recitation, religion and festival peasantry.

### 1.3. Multilinguality

One can trace the availability of tribal literature in heterogeneous tribal languages and dialects . Among the most prominent tribal languages are- Santhali language, spoken in Assam and other states, Garo language mainly spoken in Meghalaya, Munda language spoken in Jharkhand and Andhra Pradesh. Bodo language and Santhali language are popular literary tribal languages which abound in poetry, drama and fiction. Bodo language is being patronised by the Bodo Sahitya Sabha. Bhogla Soren is a famed Santhali playwright; has written five plays and won the Sahitya Academi Award (2010) for his Santhali play Rahin Rawa Kana –a tragic comedy, focussing on romance and the culture. It is a great mission to revive Santhali language and to read Santhali literature. Chandramohan Hansda and Sadhu Ramchand Murmu are also associated with Santhali literature. Bodo poets like Mangalsingh Hazowary, Aurobindo Uzir, Premananda Mosahari, Guneswar Mosahary, Anil Boro etc and Bodo novelists like Katindra Swargiary, Vidyasagar Narzary, Manoranjan Lahary, etc. have enriched and elevated Bodo literature through their literary contributions . Their works are nationally recognised.

### 1.4. Patriotism

Tribal persons are patriots . They are fond of the country. Birsa Munda (1875-1900), a brave tribal leader and an Indian freedom fighter, fought against the unjust British colonial rule and the exploitation of the fellow tribal men. He is remembered today with pride and honour; he is the source of courage and inspiration for the others. His sacrifice did not go in vain. His dream has come true.

### 1.5. Tribal voice in English translation

Tribal songs and stories are being translated into English – a global language, to preserve them for the future generations. It is a fact that translation could not provide original sweetness and rhythm, but at least it does a great service by making tribal pieces available, readable and enjoyable. Without translation we would have lost for ever these precious pieces of Tribal Literature. It is indeed a great delight to read a tribal story in which one can expect the unexpected, hear the unheard, read the unread.

## 2. Conclusion

Indian Tribal Literature is a delightful one. It has some distinctive features and known for its orality, its philosophy, its variety, its multilinguality and other qualities. It merits to be recognised and read with other literatures of the world. In addition to it , India is a land of languages and literatures-ancient and modern ,oral and written.

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