

The Status of Tribal and Their Quest for Recognition with Reference to Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's the Adiwasi Will Not Dance

Mr. Sandip C. Kurkute

Assistant Professor, Department of English MVPS, KANM Sonawane Arts, Commerce and Science College Satana, Ta- Baglan, Dist- Nashik (MS)

Abstract:

The paper aims at delving into the deplorable conditions of Indian Tribal due to several reasons and their struggles to prove their existence. India is a country well-known to the entire globe having its peculiar recognition of diversity. It is a home to a multiple of cultures, traditions, and communities. Among these communities are the indigenous tribal groups that have a unique and rich cultural identity. These tribal groups, often referred to as Adivasis, live in different parts of India, mainly in rural and forest areas. With the advent of liberalization, globalization and industrialization, the community has remained unnoticed and thrown out from the main stream society and development, one of the reasons being their isolation from the main stream society. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar is basically a doctor by profession, a short story writer and an acclaimed novelist of an extraordinary caliber. He received the Sahitya Akadami Yuva Puraskar in 20215. 'The Adiwasi Will not Dance' represents a collection of little history which contributes to the character of India as a developing, diverse and evolving nation. The most of the stories in the collection underscore the plight and deplorable conditions of the marginalized tribal community.

Keywords: Identity, Industrialization, Deplorable, Tribal, Quest, Tradition, Marginalization and Vulnerability

INTRODUCTION

The history of tribal in India dates back thousands of years, with their existence traced back to the pre-historic era. "Besides, the Aryas and Anarya, there were tribes such as Asur, Daityas, Danavs, Manavs, Devas, Bhutas, Das, Dasyu, Pishachach, Yaksh, Marut, Nag, Sarp, Garud Vanar and Aswal" (72). Of them the Dasayu are said to be the Tribal in India who have been inhabiting in remote, forest and rural areas since time immemorial. They have their own distinct cultural practices, beliefs, value system and way of life that have been passed down through generations. They have played the pivotal role in sustaining the ecology of environment which has become the truism to discourse when it comes to Environmental Imbalance and which is something all humanity needs be concerned with.

However, despite their significant contributions to India's cultural diversity and maintaining ecological balance, the tribal communities have long struggled to find recognition and acceptance in mainstream society. Many political events are a quite symbolic that entirely overlook the presence of any such

community such as STs, in terms of their existence. In spite of having the ample proportion of population, and four seating MPs representing STs in Lokshabaha, the lower house of parliament, the tribal seems to have a secondary or hardly any role in the decision-making process of politics. Given the fact that, the population of STs comprises of 8.6 % of the total population of India as per the 2011 census. They are not taken into consideration when it comes to represent in the higher capacity. They have still been far away from the mainstream society. This phenomenon has prompted them to look for their identity.

Their Search for Recognition

The search for identity among tribal of India generally and Jharkhnad specifically is to be found deeply rooted in their history of being marginalized and discriminated against. For centuries, the tribal communities have faced oppression and exploitation by dominant castes and classes, leading to a loss of their cultural identity and sense of belongingness. This has resulted in a constant struggle for recognition and an ongoing search for their place with dignity.

There are numerous reasons why the tribal in the country are lagging behind in every respect. The remote locations of their settlements have made it problematic for them to have free access to education, healthcare, and other elementary conveniences. This has resulted in high illiteracy rates among tribal communities, making it challenging for them to assert their rights and demand recognition. They are consistently being attacked by all corners, In Jharkhand, the Santhals, in spite of being greater in proportion in terms of population, have to live the secondary lives putting their rich cultural practices in danger. The same is typically visible while they have to act to display their dancing and singing at the important events. Mangal Murmu says-

“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. Why don't they get their women to sing and dance in open grounds in the name of Jharkhandi culture? For every benefit, in job, in education, in whatever, the Diku are quick to call Jharkhand their own-let the Adivasi go to hell but when it comes to showing Jharkhandi culture, the onus of singing and dancing is upon the Adivais alone” (179)

He says that it is Santhals who play a significant role in preserving the culture of Jharkhand but the fruits of the same are eaten by others.

Moreover, the lack of representation in decision-making processes has further hindered for the establishment of their identity. The Indian government has often overlooked the needs and concerns of the tribal communities, leading to policies that do not cater to their specific needs. Certainly, there are tribal leaders in state legislatures and in the lower house of Parliament, but all and sundry are affiliated to one or other ideological parties. And the fact doesn't allow them to voice the issues fearlessly acutely faced by their fellow community members. This has resulted in a lack of right kind of political empowerment and proper representation of tribal in India.

Another contributing factor to the search for identity among tribal is the loss of their land and resources. With rapid industrialization and urbanization, the land, water and forest which had been the source of their livelihood from the time immemorial had been snatched away from them by deceit and fraud by the immigrants and outsiders. Besides, in most of the cases, their resources were taken over by the government and private companies for various development projects. This has not only displaced many tribal communities but also disrupted their way of life making their cultural practices, belief- systems, rituals and traditions deteriorate in a great scale. As a result, they have lost their connection to their ancestral lands and traditional way of living, further fueling their search for identity. The policies and the legislations

made by the government don't seem to be beneficial for the tribal.

"The right to property of one has meant the right to the dispossession of property of another. However, the reality is that this dispossession has invariably been that of tribes. The enjoyment of civil rights on the part of some sections of society has been the root cause of the loss of both civil and social rights by other sections". (45 States, Society and Tribe)

The government allures the Adivasis for their better lives by setting various projects and dams by snatching their lands and dwelling places making them displaced without even taking the concrete steps for their resettlements. Jharkhand is a state with rich minerals deposits beneath its earth. And a bunch of shrewd and greedy leaders, officers and businessman and the state controlled its land, resources and people. Once the inauguration of Electricity Power Plant was supposed to occur in Santhal dominated area where the president of India was supposed to come for the inauguration ceremony. The ministers, businessmen, top officials were very happy. The people were saying-

"Now the Snathal Paragana would fly to the moon" (185) The patriotic songs were being played there as 'Mera Bharat Mahaan' to which Mangal Murmu soliloquies as follows-

"What mahaan? I wondered. Which great nation displaces thousands of its people from their homes and livelihood to produce electricity for cities and factories? And jobs? What jobs? An Adivasi farmer's job is to farm. Which other job should he be made to do? Become a servant in some billionaire's factory built on land that used to belong to that very Adivasi just a week earlier?" (185)

Thus, the character in the story expresses his displeasure over the policy of the government which is completely negligible when it comes to the issue of Adivasi.

Thus, the deplorable conditions of the tribe continued to remain intact. As a result, they struggled very hard to come into the main stream of the society. Therefore, their struggle to prove themselves is still persistently going on. Another significant reason behind their loss of traditional possessions and belongingness is their honesty. Adivasi never tend to be dishonest when it comes to grab something by cheating other fellows. In the story, 'Sons' by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, one of the characters called 'Baba' while trying to resolve the domestic affairs that occur in his niece's house says-

"look, jawai, don't forget. We Adivasi are bad at stealing. Corruption isn't in our blood. And even if we do commit a crime, we are pathetic to covering our tracks. Don't you see what happened to Madhu Kora? He was used by Dikkus and left alone to suffer a jail term. This should be a lesson for all of us" (32)

Here the author accentuates the way of life of the tribal people and honesty and integrity ingrained in them. Furthermore, Baba seems to convince his jawai which is generally a word used for a son-in-law. Here, it has been used for the husband of his niece. He assures how once the Dikkus deceived Madhu Kora and made him suffer the term of jail with no faults of his own.

Mangal Murmu, an Adivasi Santhal of Jharkhand who is a traditional singer, a character in the story 'Adivasi Will not Dance' speaks out thus-

"I only said, 'Adivasi will not dance anymore'-what is wrong with that? We are like toys-someone presses 'ON' button, or turns a key in our backsides, and we Santhals start blowing tunes on our tiriyo while someone snatches away our very dancing grounds. Tell me, am I wrong?" (170)

This shows the vulnerability of the Adivasis.

Despite these challenges, the tribal communities in India continue to hold on to their unique cultural identity. Their customs, rituals, and traditions are deeply ingrained in their daily lives and are a source of pride and strength for them. However, as they try to navigate through the modern world and adapt to changing times according to the requirement of time, they also face the risk of losing their cultural

practices and beliefs. In the story ‘They Eat Meat’ Panmuniji and Biram Kumang, who lived in Bhubneshwar, had to move to Vadodara, one of the cities of Gujarat, had to face pathetically many obstacles to settle down in the new city. The author says-

“And while it was now well known that the Sorens were of Adivasi origin, they conformed to the norm – they went to mandirs, celebrated Hindu festivals fasted on certain days, lit dhoop-batti in their house and were accepted.” (15)

Here, the family, left with no choice, had to tend towards Hindu culture. When the family goes to some other place, have to adapt to the existing conditions prevailing there. That clearly results into the loss of their true identity.

Preserving Their Identity

The need for recognition and preservation of tribal identity has led to the emergence of many social movements and organizations among the tribal communities in India. These groups aim to raise awareness about the issues faced by tribal and advocate for their rights and recognition. They also work towards preserving and promoting tribal culture, language, and heritage.

One such organization is the All India Adivasi Mahasabha, which has been fighting for the rights of tribal since 1935. The organization has played a crucial role in mobilizing tribal communities and raising their voices against injustices. They have also been instrumental in promoting tribal culture and traditions through various cultural events and initiatives. The Indian government has also taken steps towards recognizing the contributions of tribal to Indian society. In 1992, the government established a Ministry of Tribal Affairs to address the specific needs and concerns of tribal communities. The government has also implemented various schemes and policies aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions of tribal in India.

However, despite these efforts, there is still a long way to go in ensuring the recognition and preservation of tribal identity in India. It is essential that the Indian government takes more concrete steps towards addressing the root causes of marginalization and discrimination faced by tribal. This includes providing better access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities, and security for tribal communities. Moreover, it is crucial for society to recognize and appreciate the unique cultural identity of tribal in India. This can be done by promoting intercultural understanding and respect for tribal traditions and practices. Additionally, efforts must be made to preserve and promote tribal languages and heritage, which are integral parts of their identity.

Conclusion:

Thus, the tribal communities in India have significant role in preserving and sustaining the Indianness in their all walks of life. As India is land of diverse group of people, the communities bear all historical and geographical diversity which they reflect through their culture. In view of this, the constitution of India has given due respect to preserve their land, water and forest. But, in the name of industrialization, globalization and privatization, the issues of their displacements, suppression, and deprivation of their ancestral lands have come to the fore but deliberately ignored by the government. The tribal contribute to the sustenance of ecological balances. They have their own traditions, culture, value system and belief which need to be cherished. The continuous struggle of the community seems to be unending. Unless they are brought in main stream of the society.

It is crucial for society and the government to recognize and appreciate the contributions of tribal to Indian

culture and their contributions towards sustaining environmental ecology ensuring their identity

References

1. Tandale Sharad, Ravana, The King of Rakshas, translated by Prathmesh Patil, New Era Publishing House, 2019
2. Xaxa Virginius, State, Society and Tribes, Issues in Post-Colonial India, Pearson India Education Services Pvt. Ltd. 2014
3. Shekhar Hansda Sowvendra, The Adivasi Will not Dance' Speaking Tiger Books, 2017
4. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/All_India_Adivasi_Mahasabha#:~:text=All%20India%20Adivasi%20Mahasabha%20is,current%20president%20of%20the%20organization.
5. https://www.google.com/search?q=the+population+of+tribal+in+india+as+per+2011&oq=the+population+of+tribal+in+india+as+per+2011&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIICAEQABgWGB4yCAgCEAAyFhgeMg0IAxAAGIYDGIAGIoFMg0IBBAAGIYDGIAGIoFMgcIBRAAGO8FMgoIBhAAGIAEGKIEMgcIBxAAGO8F0gEJMjMwMTRqMGo3qAIIsAIB&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8
6. <https://tribal.nic.in/>