

Tribal Literature in India**Dr Ravindra Gomaji Vaidya**Head, Department of English,
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Shevgaon**Abstract**

Tribal literature and culture have always been a matter of amusement for the non-tribal populace. The oral lore of tribal communities constitutes large part of tribal literature. Many of us view it as a treasure to be preserved and protected. The growing urbanization, inception of print culture and recent development in trade and commerce have resulted in the marginalization of tribal communities as well as their languages and literatures. The oral traditions constituted and transmitted as a word of mouth are under the threat of extinction. Besides, in academia literature produced in spoken languages is not seen as a literature. It is so because the tribal languages do not have script of their own. Hence, the present research work attempts to explore literariness of tribal oral lore. Through discussion of various types of tribal literature either oral or written the paper attempts to comment on the existing definition of tribal literature. It also focuses on how tribal literature is not a new literature but a primary one. Finally, the paper explores philosophical and historical undertones of tribal literature.

Key Words: tribal literature, oral lore, translated tribal literature, literariness, tribal philosophy of life

1. Introduction:

Tribes and tribal culture have been subject of interrogation in academia. Tribe's distinctive cultural traditions have always been a matter of speculations and amusement. It is viewed as the mysterious world of people occupying hardly accessible areas. Until recently tribals had minimal contact with the people of plains. Their social structure, cultural practices and simple lifestyle is juxtaposed against that of civilized people. They are often viewed as 'sweet people but without light' to use Arnold's phrase. It implies that their harmonious relationship with nature and liberal socio-cultural traditions are imitable. But they, if mapped on the scale of civilized modernity, are a way behind in their intellectual development. Hence, sympathetic bureaucrats and scholars usually assert need to protect and civilize them. Even government views them as heirs of prehistoric human and have been designing various welfare schemes for their betterment. The attempts made for preservation and protection of tribal culture and literature however, seem to neglect the strong foundation of these cultural practices grounded in the oral traditions. These oral traditions constituted and transmitted as a word of mouth are under threat of extinction.

The tribal population of India is about one-sixth of the total population of the country. India belonged to these tribals long before the incursion of the Aryan speaking peoples. Two of India's epics The *Ramayana* and The *Mahabharata* are testimonies to the tribal contribution in various spheres of life in contemporary time. They also record the evidences

of how these tribals were oppressed and evicted from their land and were forced to occupy the lower reaches of the mainstream culture. India's Tribes are divided into many groups across regions. This division is particularly based on cultivating and non-cultivating tribes. Tribal communities like *Santhal*, *Oraon*, *Munda* were cultivating tribes whereas *Lodhas* and *Kherias* to name a few were hunting tribe. During British regime in India their forest rights were withdrawn. British wanted entire width and depth of the country to be opened up so as threats of rebellion will minimize. They feared that revolt may come up from the forest. Forest which was home to such tribal communities was destroyed for wood and industry usage. Naturally, tribals who were independent had to succumb to the government's whims. Tribals who were either skilled farmers or independent hunters became unskilled farm laborers. On the pretext of natural calamities, they went into debt that in turn resulted in bond slavery from which they never recovered. Even the regions occupied by tribal communities are minerally rich. As a result, both before and after Independence encroachment in tribal land and life have been the consistent phenomena. The encroachment was particularly in the form of development projects. Such development projects so far have displaced millions of *adivasis* from their homeland. These development projects in tribal land did not arrive alone, but rather brought with them the modules of modernity such as education, languages of the state, motorized vehicles, and above all culture of outsiders. It led to pollution not only of the surrounding environment and land but also of culture and tribal languages.

We still can glimpse tribal culture in various practices even today. In Hindu caste society which is generally known as 'Indian' society, in the nineteenth century, contemporary social reformers had to struggle to pass a Widow Remarriage Act. Surprisingly, among Austric and Dravidian tribes viz. *Oraons*, *Mundas*, *Santals*, *Lodhas*, *Kherias*, *Mahalis* widow remarriage has always been the custom. Tribal society does not have dowery system. Therefore, it is difficult to determine who borrowed from whom. We still find tribes in India having resemblances with the legendary figures in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. Draupadi of Mahabharata, for instance was a black woman. She must have been tribal. In the state of Himachal Pradesh there are tribal women who practice fraternal polyandry that Draupadi had practiced. These polyandrous tribal women belong to Draupadi Gotra. Even, Sita the queen of the King Rama in tribal stories is presented not as human being but rather represents natural phenomena such as the wind, the grass, the flowing river, the fruit yielding tree and the harvest to be gathered. In tribal literature Sita represents the nature. (Devi IX).

Glimpses of tribal history and cultural traditions are to be found in their songs and chanting. These oral narratives are mediums to express their concerns for the surrounding environment. They are also the record of historical experiences either of joyous moments or incidents of oppressions. Oral literature of tribal has been inevitably influenced by their specific historical, cultural and geographical locations. However, in the era of growing urbanization that represents itself through inception of print technology and unprecedented growth of trade and commerce, oral literature of tribal is being marginalized. In this age of science and technology, tribal imagination characterized by hallucinatory images has been relegated to periphery. Mostly, tribal narratives represent an enchanting world of supernatural where oceans fly like birds, mountains swim in the water, animal speaks as humans and star glow like plants are looked down upon as mere folklore. It is not considered to be a literature. As Ganesh Devy puts it "literary compositions in only spoken languages are not considered literature. They are feast for folklorist, anthropologists and linguists but to a critic, they generally mean nothing (Devy 164). Mere recognition as folklore undermines the socio-

political and ethical significance of the tribal literature. Though not written, it possesses the literariness required for a text to be considered as literature.

2. Literariness of Tribal Ritual:

Major part of tribal literature is composed of songs and chanting performed on special occasions such as birth, death or ritual performances. If analysed, it appears that some tribal rituals have Epical structure. By way of example, I would like to refer to a ritual performed by *Dhangar* (one of the nomadic tribes in India, particularly living in Maharashtra) community. This ritual is known as *Vaik or Khel* (play). It is performed as homage to their god *Biroba*. It is a combination of song, dance, narratives, hallucination, and prophecy. The ritual starts with coronation of the god as a King. Devotee's bring tall decorated stick, as a symbol of God's palace, to the temple where ritual takes place. A group of singers accompanied by chorus sings a *vowi* (song) that describes the marriage ceremony of God beginning with turmeric ceremony to the marriage and coronate the newly married god as the King who should rule the world. It also includes dance sequence of performers. These dance sequences are preludes that consecrates the atmosphere. Among *Khutekars*- one of the sub tribes, only two people dance at a time, while among *Hatkars*- another sub tribe (there are more than twenty-two sub tribes of the *Dhangar*) a group of 20-25 men dance together. Both type of dances, known as *Gajanritya* (*Gaja* means Elephant, dance resembling to the movements of Elephant) are accompanied by the drum beating. A group dance of *Hatkars* is also accompanied by the women's song. Then the performers, usually two people, between the dance sequence, narrate anecdotes that describe bravery, valour, wisdom and virtues of either legendary figure or God specially undertaken to protect the livestock, community and sometimes an entire human race.

It is followed by the central event in which priest invokes the spirit of God and enters in a trance to establish communication. Priest in a trance attaches his soul to that of God's totem (usually a snake) and in hallucinatory state dances to the rhythm of drumbeats. A group of singers help the priest to enter the trance by singing a *vowi* (long narrative song) that invokes God by calling him 'O Mother, O my mother, please come and assist me in the task to tell your message to the masses'. God's spirit also proves himself to be supernatural by undergoing a test. Test involves beating a bamboo stick or a sword in the stomach, neck and back. Despite hitting hard, the priest is not injured. And finally, utter prophecies for the upcoming year. These are particularly advices concerned with upcoming rainy season, health of livestock, yielding of crops, market of livestock, incidents of natural calamities, health of humans and sometimes the major political transformations.

The very structure of this ritual is similar to that of a literary epic. Like epical invocation the priest along with a group of elder performers invoke the Godly spirit to appear and assist the folks. The song of invocation refers to God as mother. The song goes: 'O Mother, Mother O My Mother, do not despise me, I am your child, you are saviour, you should appear and protect the ancient occupation of bread earning. The ritual includes magic, trance, hallucination and journey of legendary figure. The journey of God's spirit from heavenly abode to the earth symbolizes the epical journey of hero in cosmos or under the ground. It ends like epic by assisting the human race in the form of prophecies that provide solutions to the worldly problems of entire human race. These prophecies have been the guiding principles to farmers and commoners alike.

3. Defining Tribal Literature in India:

Tribal literature is a complex phenomenon in India. It is thought on the idea of Dalit literature. As Dalit literature reflect lives and historical experiences of Dalit communities

(untouchables) the tribal literature reflects tribal life. Yet, all literature that represents tribal life cannot be considered as pure tribal literature. A distinction can be made between traditional tribal literature and tribal creative literature. Traditional tribal literature refers mainly to oral literature comprising of songs, tales, myths and legends that are composed and transmitted orally. The oral literature of tribal is the original tribal literature. Tribal creative literature at general refers to the literary pieces such as poems, novels and autobiographies. It can be further distinguished as tribal creative literature written by tribal themselves and the creative literature about tribals written by non-tribal writers. At this moment the question, whether creative literature written by non-tribal writer be considered as tribal literature? is the most significant point of discussion. It is stated that non-tribal writer writing about tribals in any one of the recognized state languages or a foreign language like English does not produce tribal creative literature. One of the reasons for this is that the particular literary work is not a direct outcome of tribal creative imagination. Secondly, such creative writing tends to take a distinctive stance, usually informed by the class, caste, education and political commitment, in respect to the object of representation i.e. tribal life. And, finally it accommodates tribal life as one of the themes in a mainstream literary tradition.

Tribal creative literature originally written in any one of the recognized languages of the states or English by tribal writer can be termed as tribal literature. The formation of a body of writing known as Indian English Literature during the colonial period serves as the basis for this argument. Though Anglo-Indian Literature and Indo-English Literature accommodate issues and concerns of the people of India but they are not termed as original Indian Literature. It is so because the former includes writings by non-Indians about India and the latter comprises of translations from the regional languages into English. Indian English literature on the other hand is a distinctive category of Indian literature. It refers to the body of creative literature that is originally written in India, about India by an Indian (Naik 2). If projected on the grounds of Indian English Literature, the tribal creative literature originally written in India about Indian tribals by tribal writer can be termed as Indian Tribal Literature. In this view, the existing definitions of tribal literature by both Ganaga Shahy Meena and M. Maisuangdibou are problematic. Meena defines tribal literature as:

“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 very first problem of this definition is that it is not inclusive. It seems to neglect entire body of tribal oral literature which have been constituted and transmitted down the line from generation to generation. Secondly, it only refers to the literature that is produced after 1991 at the national level. There are very few tribal writers like Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar from Jharkhand, Narayana from Kerla and Rejina Merandi from Aasam who have produced literature either in regional language or in English which have been recognized at National level. As far as the issue of tribal identity is concerned, the tribal writers are at privileged position to eke out the true tribal identity. They constitute the tribal world in their writing on the basis of lived experience, whereas the non-tribal writer being alien to the tribal traditions and cultures tend to constitute it on the basis of surveys or research conducted during periodic visits to the tribal region. Certainly, there are exceptions. The non-tribal writer like Mahasweta Devi has been raising voice against displacement, exploitation and cultural pollution of tribals in both her literary and journalistic writings. She is known to represent tribal issues organically. Organicity is the outcome of her association with tribal organic intellectual and consistency of over forty years. Her writing either literary or journalistic

complements to the supplementing political struggle of tribals for the rights to live as human beings. Hence, the published texts about the tribals written post 1991 do not form the core of tribal literature. It needs to include entire body of tribal literature either written or spoken as tribal literature in India.

Another definition of tribal literature by M. Maisuangdibou as “the fictional, imaginative, creative, factual and other literary works produced in tribal world” (1) to some extent is inclusive. It seems to accommodate tribal oral lore produced in the tribal world as literature but ignores the question of insider and outsider contributions. It is possible to transcend the positioning involved in tribal representation by defining modules of authentic portrayal. Unilateral modules however, may not be applicable universally. Rather it will vary as per the socio-political and economic conditioning and geographical locations of the tribal communities under question. This will also involve examining the organicity of representation characterized by the appointment of omnipresent and omniscient organic intellectuals as informers of an intellectual.

Both Dalit literature and Tribal literature in India as a formal body of literary works by virtue of its appearance on the Indian literary scene lately in the last decade of the twentieth century are termed as new literatures. Literature of tribals in India however, is not a new movement or a fresh trend in the field of literature. Rather its newness lies in the attempt to identify the imaginative expressions in the tribal language not as folklore but as a legitimate literature. The oral songs and narratives have been the oldest of tribal literature since time immemorable. Anuj Lugun, the poet and writer from Munda tribe in his book ‘Baagh aur Sugna Munda ki Beti’ (2017) argues that “the Adivasi songs and stories are their histories, but only written narratives of the rulers have found legitimacy and are considered ‘civilized’”. (<https://caravanmagazine.in/books/reading-list-ten-voices-advias-literature>). By reasserting the Mundari oral mythology Lugun projects *adviasis* as propagators of civilization.

4. Tribal Literature

As stated earlier tribal literature includes marriage songs, funeral pyres, songs for dancing and merrymaking, as well as myths, tales and legends. These oral narratives have been the guiding forces as a source of both education and entertainment. Besides oral narrative, until recently some writers from different tribal groups have used modern forms of literature viz. poetry, drama, novel and autobiography to express issues and concerns related to tribal life and culture. These writings have been instrumental in raising subaltern consciousness of the marginalized tribal communities. These forms have emerged as mediums to represent the real state of tribal existence. Some of the most acclaimed writings are available in translation.

4.1. Traditional Tribal Literature: Oral Lore

Literatures produced in spoken languages and transmitted as a word of mouth are not considered literature. Ignoring the literary value of oral traditions leads to huge cultural loss. In a multilingual and multicultural country like India witnessing death of a culture is a crime. Ganesh Devy states that we have been committing this crime without any hesitation. To make his point clear he further states that “the wealth and variety of these literary compositions is so enriching that the ignorance of such literary feast gives us a sense of shame” (2002 XII). It is imperative to understand the literary value of tribal oral traditions simply because it is not produced merely for entertainment but serves as a pedagogic device of the community. Tribal oral lore is comprised of songs, myths, epics and legends. In recent times, these oral literatures are complemented by written literatures produced by tribal writers. Oral traditions

are the primary means by which oral literature is transmitted. Unlike the written literature, there is no set of formal regulations and predetermined poetics that govern the composition of oral literatures. The style and techniques of oral literature varies as per the performer. Oral lore validates culture and justify the rituals of the particular tribal group.

4.1.1. Folk Music and Songs:

Songs and dance are the essence of tribal oral lore. They are vehicles to establish communication with mythic ancestors. Lyrical songs are either sung on special occasions such as marriage and death or performed for entertainment in village dormitories. These songs are usually accompanied by Drum and flute. They are not merely the mediums of entertainment. But are vehicles to record tribals' historical experiences and convey tribal philosophy of life. The life cycle songs are performed on the special occasions such as marriage, birth and death to inculcate the moral and ethical values among the tribal lineages. In a way the songs of tribal communities are the constitutions that govern the tribal society. *Binti* the Santhal marriage songs for example, narrates the episodes that explain how humans existed on the earth, whereas the creative songs describe the "the growth of tribe's population, their migration through different places such as *Hihidi* and *Pipidi*, the wars they had to wage with local inhabitants and finally came to the land where they live now" (Devy 7). In short, the songs are historical noirs that trace the origin and development of the tribal groups. Since, these songs are transferred as a word of mouth, the full versions of many songs are missing. If not cherished and preserved the incomplete versions will also perish with the death of aged performers and singers.

4.1.2. Myths

Myths are an integral part of the tribal oral lore. The tribal myths are about: "periodic and seasonal changes, natural objects and extraordinary natural phenomenon, origin of the universe and gods, origin of animals and of mankind, heroes, families, village and tribe and belief in existence after death and places of dead" (Vidyarthi, L.P., et.al. 317). They form the basis of Animistic religious system. Among tribals animism is the foundation that articulates the very existence of every object either animate or inanimate in the universe. Animism according to Sigmund Freud is the doctrine of souls and in its wider sense, the doctrine of spiritual beings. It is believed that primitive tribal races must have constructed the idea of soul by observing the phenomenon such as sleep and death (Freud 89). Both being similar to each other constitutes an idea of animate and inanimate. Speculation that there is an unseen energy that animates the objects in the nature has led to extension of the idea of soul to be applied to other objects in the nature. Therefore, the tribal myths are full of magic, sorcery and attribution of animistic characteristics to the inanimate objects. Over the course of time, the human beings have formed three different systems of thought that said to govern the entire universe till date: Animistic, Religious and Scientific. Though animism is not termed as religion, it serves as the foundation on which religions in the world are established. As far as scientific systems in modern time are concerned, they have not yet collectively gone to the extent to know the mystery of the existence of the universe. Hence, it is argued that myths still occupy larger part of human existence.

4.1.3. Legends:

Legends are free to be narrated at any place. Mostly they are told in the fashion of '*Rat Kahani* (story told in night or a fireside story). Legends are primarily the source of inspiration for the tribal lineages. They help to inculcate the sense of ancestral wisdom and in turn articulate the importance of nature in human lives. Many legends are mythical and enchanting in nature. The legend of Tejan Bal and the tale of *Takalong* Cucumber for

instance, illustrates the tribal traditions of assigning totems to the clans. It shows how a priest of a particular tribal group enters a trance and attaches himself or herself to the soul of totem. Totems according to Frazer is

“a class of material objects which a savage regards with superstitious respect, believing that there exists between him and every member of the class an intimate and altogether special relation... the connection between a man and his totem is mutually beneficent; the totem protects the man, and the man shows his respect for the totem in various ways, by not killing it if it be an animal, and not cutting or gathering it if it be a plant” (Qtd. In Freud 117).

Totems either animal or plants, among the tribal clans are revered as Gods. There is mutual respect and care for each other. Specifically, the priest or chief of the clan after entering a trance attaches his soul to that of a totem and guides the members. Totems are said to protect and give power to the legendary hero in their journey through different mystic places in search of a very rare species may be of plant, flower or an animal. The legends would usually involve a very beautiful and engaging heroine, to whom the legendary hero marries in the end. The course of action for the hero is not smooth, he has to undergo many difficulties however, overcomes them all in the end to be reunited and live happily ever after. In some legends the foolishness of the legendary hero contributes to his success. The revenge, fights, community welfare are the recurrent motifs found in tribal legends. The legend of Yelhu Bal (Child of Yelhu-the goddess) is famous among the *Dhangars* and aptly fulfils the criteria to be called a legend. Yelhu Bal undertakes a journey of different places in search of a precious stone which is supposed to protect him from the demons, as well as avoid his untimely death.

4.1.4. Epics:

Epic usually deals with legendary deeds of great warriors. Epics have its origin in the oral traditions. Among tribal communities these epics are transferred from one generation to the next as a word of mouth. Tribal epics revolve around the spiritual powers of the legendary heroes. We find the traces of tribal existence even in the most acclaimed epics of India the ‘*Mahabharata*’ and ‘*Ramayana*’. The tribal versions of both the epics are available. Tribal *Mahabharat* it seems, has its origin in the several oral traditions whereas the *Ramayana* is the story of conflict between the city and forest dwellers. Epics in tribal communities are performed as part of the sacred rituals. Tribal *Mahabharat* for example, articulates the mythical story of the King Shantanu and his conditional marriage with Ganga the river. Their union culminates in the birth of *Kauravas* and *Pandavas*. The myth about the story of the birth of Karna however, differs than that in the mainstream *Mahabharata*. *Ramayana* is no exception to this. Sita in tribal *Ramayana* is the most powerful lady. Representing Sita as equal to the mighty warriors symbolizes the gender equality within the tribal groups.

5. Written Literature:

Tribal life and culture have been one of the subjects of academic exploration. Non-tribal writers like Arun Joshi, Kamala Markendaya, Manohar Malgaonkar, Gita Mehta, Mahasweta Devi and many others have treated tribal life and culture as one of the themes of their creative writing. These writings about tribal however cannot be termed as original tribal literature. On the other hand, the literary writings in English and other regional languages of writers like Narayana, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, Rejina Merandi, Bhujang Meshram, Vaharu Sonavane and Sanghaja Meshram and many other qualifies to be termed as creative tribal literature.

5.1. Poetry and Novel:

The written tribal literature is not only an expression of cultural traditions but also a means to support supplementing political struggle initiated for the equal rights of tribal people. It asserts distinctive tribal identity. Most often the stories are the record of pathetic subhuman conditions tribals living on the fringes of the civilized world, have been undergoing. These writings however are not mere representations of the sufferings but rather supplement the Adivasi movement initiated for the equal rights of marginalized tribal communities. The literary writings are the means to revive true tribal identity. The tribal poetry in Maharashtra for example articulates issues as varied as tribal culture, their love for nature, the tribal philosophy of life and tribal movement for social change. It includes poetry collections 'Godhad' (1987) A collection of Gondi poems by social activist Vaharu Sonawane, 'Adivasi Kavita' (Tribal Poems) (1975) and 'Olgulan' (Revolt in all front) (1995) by Bhujang Meshram. The poems in these collections are finest examples of tribal ethnography. They advocate the ideal of healthy and balanced community based on equality. Being deeply rooted in the oral traditions tribal poems are very close to tribal life and nature. Mesharam's poems entitled 'Asgramshaletil Kavita' (Poems of Ashramshala) records in minute details the experiences of tribal children in residential schools. The poem 'Pandvani' based on the life of Tijnanabai (a well-known tribal artist) takes a corrective mode by criticizing Tijnanabai for not advocating the revolt against the exploitation of tribal folk. He says: "Not even a word of criticism in your song... which Bharat is the subject of your song" (2000, 192). Bhujang Meshram uses poetry as a vehicle of tribal resistance.

The poem 'Grandfather' discusses the issue of religious conversion and its impact traditional tribal culture. It is a great piece of intense feelings and emotions. Apart from these major tribal Marathi poets Mr. Krushnakumar Chandekar's (Patusa 1999) and, Sunil Kumre's (*Tirakmatha*, (Bow and Arrow) (1999) are also the expressions of tribal consciousness and revolt. In short tribal poetry is a means of asserting the tribal identity by resisting assimilation and exploitation.

Along with poetry few tribal writers have successfully tried their hands at writing novels in Marathi. The novels not only record the tribal ways of life, but also depict the subhuman conditions of their existence. 'Trushna' (thirst) by Najubai Gavit depicts the life of Bhil and *Mavachi* tribes located in the deep forest of *Bodhripada*. It also showcases the poverty of tribal community. 'Wada' (Mansion) by Madhav Surkunde and 'Taho' (Cry) by Babarao Madavi are other important novels representing the exploitation of *Andh* and Gond tribe in feudal period. The common thread in these novels is the depiction of tribal consciousness and resistance of the exploitation and hope for the better life.

5.2. Autobiography:

Tribal written literature ascribed to an individual authorship is in the form of Autobiography. As members of DE notified and nomadic communities the writers depicted the plight of their respective communities through individual example. The four autobiographies *Koletyache Por* by Kishor Shantabai Kale, *Upra* (The Outsider) by Laxman Mane, *Tanda* by Atmaram Rathod, and *Uchlya* (The Branded) by Laxman Gaikawad throws light on the social, political, psychological and economic plight of the DE notified criminal tribes. Kishor Shantabai Kale had a deprived childhood, because his mother being a kept woman from *Kolhati* (the community known to make girls and women the dancers and thereby available to any male) community could not keep him with her. She has to live with another man as a kept woman. The autobiography records the minute details of the culture of *Kolhati* community ranging from the plight of dancer women and consequent problems in bringing up the fatherless children born out of illegal union.

Laxman Mane in *Upara* (The Outsider) undertakes a comparative study of both tribal and non-tribal world. Prior is more liberal and provides freedom even to women. As Laxman Mane's Mother explains

“In our community, women did marry twice, even thrice. If a woman was abandoned by her first husband, she could take a second one. If she wanted to leave her second husband, she could even go back to her first husband if she so desired... We are low-caste nomads. These things are a way of life for us but not for them” (Quoted in Ganesh Devy, 2002, 194).

The tribals are more liberal in marriages and remarriages. Unlike orthodox civilians the honour of women among tribal communities is not like glassware which once broken can never be repaired. The non-tribal world is rigidly orthodox, entangled in false assumption of honour and prestige. It takes lives of women from respectable orthodox families. Ratna a daughter of Barge Patil in the autobiography becomes victim of false pride and prestige. A trivial thing like clicking a photograph with would be bride just few hours before the marriage ruins her life. Denial to click a photograph with bride angers the bridegroom and his family. That in turn culminates in cancellation of marriage. This male game of power and prestige however victimizes the woman Ratna for no fault of hers.

Atmaram Rathod in his famous autobiography *Tanda* comments on the socio-political organization of the tribals. He particularly throws light on how tribals are being used for financial and political benefits by the self-proclaimed saviours like Sanawatji and have hindered their progress.

Laxman Gaikawad in *Uchlya* (The Branded) represents the plight of DE notified criminal tribe called *Pathrut*. They suffer even after 70 years of Indian independence. Assuming *Pathruts* to be born criminals, village Patils and other folks hated them and consciously kept them outside the orbit of mainstream society. These assumptions however have relegated *Pathruts* to the lowest of the positions in the society. Consequently, nomads had to turn to thieving as a source of earning. The present autobiography treats hunger as the major theme.

The *Panchayat* is another important aspect of their culture discussed in the Branded. *Jat Panchayat* (Council of Juries of a particular caste) are designed to look after the administration and impart social justice. Most often these *Jat Panchayat*'s have turned into exploiters. They are known to declare inhuman punishments to common folks. Many educated members of the communities have been trying to abolish the existence of *Jat Panchayat*. Besides these negative connotations, *Jat Panchayat*'s have been means of fostering moral values. The *panchayat* in case of complicated issues would have different sessions, parallel to Session, District, and High Court respectively at Salgara, Dhanegaon, Bhadgaon and Kavatha. The decision taken at Kavatha like High Court, by Master Kaka would be considered as the final decision.

6. Conclusion:

To conclude it can be said that tribal literature in India serves as a vital repository of the diverse cultural heritage and unique worldviews of indigenous communities. Through tribal oral lore- songs, myths, legends epics and written narratives, it reflects the rich tapestry of tribal life, struggles, and aspirations. This literature not only preserves ancient customs and languages but also offers critical insights into contemporary socio-political issues affecting tribal populations. Recognizing and promoting tribal literature is essential for fostering greater understanding and appreciation of India's multifaceted identity, while

also advocating for the preservation of these invaluable cultural expressions in the face of modern challenges.

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