



SOCIO-CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN TRIBAL NOVELS IN ENGLISH

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Abstract:

This article explores the concept of socio-cultural consciousness in tribal novels written in English by Indian Adivasi (indigenous) authors. In its opening lines the article highlights the rich cultural heritage and traditions of India's tribal communities. It then acknowledges the historical marginalization of these communities and their ongoing struggles for recognition and justice. The author argues that tribal novels can be a powerful tool for raising awareness of these issues. Several novels by Adivasi writers are explored, including "Jungle Phool" by Joram Yalam, "When Arrows Were Heated Up" by Hari Ram Mina, "The Black Hill" by Mamang Dai, and "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey" by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar. These novels depict the unique cultures and challenges faced by different tribal groups. The article also reviews relevant academic literature on Indian tribal culture and literature.

Key Words: Adivasi Culture, Literature, Socio-Cultural Consciousness, Geographical Variations, Customs, Tribal History, Tribal Literature, Injustice, Tribal Art

Socio-Cultural Consciousness in Tribal Novels in English:

Tribal Communities are an integral segment of Indian society since the days of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The Adivasi people throughout the country have rich traditions, cultures and heritage with unique life styles and customs. Despite some regional variation, the tribals share many common traits, including living in relative geographical isolation, and being relatively more homogeneous and more self-contained than the non-tribal social groups. The two main regions of tribal settlement are the country's northeastern states bordering China and Burma, and the highlands and plains of its central and southern regions. The latter is home to more than 80 per cent of the tribes, which differ from the northeastern tribes in ethnicity and in having experienced greater intrusion of the Indian mainstream and of the pan-Indian model of the state, society, economy and culture. There are also differences in the extent to which the tribes interact with non-tribal communities. The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, which was appointed by the President of India on 28 April 1960 in accordance with Article 339 of the Constitution of India, stated in its report dated 14 October 1961 that "As these groups are presumed to form the oldest ethnological sector of the population, the term "Adivasi" (where "Adi" means "original" and "Vasi" means "inhabitant") has become prevalent among certain individuals. The culture of tribal people is a valuable heritage of humankind based on a value system which is relevant to the creation of a new national and international order which is sought to be based on the principles of equity, harmony, compassion and A huge percentage of the Indian sub-continent consists of the tribal groups belonging to Dravidian, Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman linguistic classification with a multiplicity of dialects. The Dravidian groups mostly belong in the Southern zone, the Austro-Asiatic in the central zone except some tribes like Orian, the Khond and the Gond, who speak Dravidian language, the Tibeto-Burman language in the North-East zone except the Khasi tribe who speak the Mon-Khamir, Austric speech. Most of these tribal groups have their own dialect and some bilingualism and some have lost their original language. They have a long history of oral tradition and most of them lack scripts for their languages. It was only after independence that the history and folklore of these tribal groups were properly reconstructed by academicians. Because of their long history of oral tradition of culture.

The paradox in the recognition recognition between dominant communities (main stream communities) and non-dominant community (Adivasi) is seen everywhere for example the rules, regulation and rights were framed according to dominant class, privileges and rights are freely recognised in respect of dominant community in India while the same is denied to the tribal (Adivasi) community in India. In the process there were progressively getting dispossessed of their control over land, forest, water minerals and other resources in their own territory and are increasingly subjected to the any human misery injustice and exploitation . They wanted to break all the stereotype image ,imposition of rules, and injustice through their literature, they are trying to make us aware of the fact that they are same human like us, they are more aware of their

Even though our understanding of tribal history and politics has grown, more research is still needed to fully understand the social and cultural awareness of the various tribal communities in remote areas of India. We

also need to learn more about the social and cultural conflicts, the impact of contemporary developmental programs, the relationships between tribes, and the influence of foreign culture on India's tribal communities through selected tribal novels by tribal writers in English. Including Joram Yalam's novel "*Junglee Phool*" offers a candid portrayal of the Nyishi tribal community. It delves into their culture, traditions, struggles. Through Tani's life, the novel highlights the plight of women in tribal society, the atrocities they face, and their subsequent struggles. It offers a realistic depiction of tribal culture, traditions, and challenges. The novel highlights the deep bond between the tribal people and nature, "*Junglee Phool*" is a significant work as it sheds light on the lives and culture of the tribal community, Hari Rama Mina's novel "*When Arrows Were Heated Up*" about Maangarh massacre of 1913, a largely forgotten chapter in Indian history. Set in Rajasthan's Banaswara area, the novel chronicles the struggle of the Adivasi tribes against the oppressive British Raj and the local feudal system.

It highlights the courage and sacrifice of the Adivasis, whose story has remained largely unknown outside Rajasthan. It is a poignant reminder of the struggles of India's marginalized communities and their fight for justice and freedom, Mamang Dai's novel "*The Black Hill*" is set in the mid-19th century in Arunachal Pradesh, a region in Northeast India. The novel delves into the sociocultural landscape of the time, focusing on the lives of the indigenous tribes, particularly the Abor and Mishmi people. It highlights their deep connection to the land, their rich oral traditions, and their intricate social structures, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's debut novel, "*The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey*", is a captivating exploration of life in the Santhal village of Kadamdihi, Jharkhand, Shekhar masterfully weaves together elements of myth, folklore, and social commentary, delving into themes of tradition, superstition, and the complexities of human relationships, portrayal of rural India, capturing the vibrant culture, superstitions, and the intricate dynamics within the village community. The socioeconomic, historical, and cultural characteristics of different tribes have been the primary subjects of research on tribals, but in this particular topic "socio-cultural consciousness", here researcher is going to focus on the the concious features of selected novels, how particular character trying to convey the message, or trying to challenge the mainstream authority. L.P. Vidyarthi and B.K.Rai have made an elaborate study on the tribal culture of India in their book '*The Tribal Culture of India*'¹. In the opening chapters of the book the authors outlines the history of Indian anthropology and provided historical appraisal of the tribes. The book gives a wide description of the economic system, the social organization, the political life, religious life and folklore, art and craft of the tribes.

The descriptions of the tribal villages are also present in it. In the concluding chapter the authors have discussed about the changes in the tribal culture and factors effecting the change in their culture. S.L.Doshi has surveyed and made a careful study upon the Bhils of Western India in his book '*Tribal Ethnicity, Class and Integration*'². He has focused on the ethnic life of the tribal people, the achievements of the development and the social change witnessed among them. He observes that the Bhils feared that in the wake of the process of their integration with the larger Indian society, their ethnic identity might be hampered and they therefore made all efforts to .retain the core of their ethnicity. The author applied secular approach based on politico-economic considerations to interpret tribal stratification as to him, their existed classes among the Bhils. But the element of class antagonism has yet not emerged and the tribal ethnicity-the bundle of primordial attributes retain the identity of the total Bhil stock irrespective of the class formations. Shyamlal's book '*Tribal Leadership*'³, provides a deep insight into the understanding of leadership system in operation in the tribal areas of Rajasthan. He presents a picture of the traditional, transitional and emerging patterns of tribal leadership in Banswara district of Rajasthan which is inhabited by one major and four minor tribes. He also gives description of various tribal rebellions and socio-cultural movements and examines the leadership of tribal leaders and their biographical analyses, the nature, function and organization of tribal leadership as reflected during the general elections from 1952 till 1985. The book '*Tribal Situation in India*'⁵, by K.Suresh Singh is an edited volume which consists of the proceeding of a seminar held at the Indian Institute of Advanced study, Shimla on July 6 to 19, 1969. The objectives of the seminar were information collection based on tribal problems from respective regions of India, suggestion regarding the problems and to provide guidelines for policymakers. Although the seminar was concerned with the tribal situation in all parts of India, particular attention was given to the North East Hill Area [NEHA]. Two major themes appear to have dominated the conference. One is the definition of 'tribe' in the Indian context, and the other is the definition and assessment of the concept of 'integration'. Another important topic scrutinized by the seminar is that of socio-political movements among tribals. The book '*Tribal Situation in India*' edited by K.Suresh Singh is an edited volume which consists of the proceeding of a seminar held at the Indian Institute of Advanced study, Shimla on July 6 to 19, 1969. The objectives of the seminar were information collection based on tribal problems from respective regions of India, suggestion regarding the problems and to provide guidelines for policymakers.

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articles on tribal perspectives in India, assesses critically the tribal art, culture and literature. It also endeavours to bring into surface issues and challenges faced by Indian tribes in reference to their life and hardships, policies adopted by government for their development and problems in their implementation. The book as a whole tries to meet all crucial aspects of Indian tribes. Hopefully the book would serve to larger section of humanity laying bare many hidden facts related to tribal life and culture. This book also analyzes the culture, art, and literature of tribal communities in India. It also examines the challenges faced by tribal communities, including their access to basic amenities and health care, and the policies adopted by the government for their development. The book is based on data from the National Family Health Survey 4 (NFHS 4). Another study on the tribe of northeast done by 'Batem Pertin' in his collaborative work "*Compendium of Indigenous Culture of Arunachal Pradesh*"⁹, opens with an incisive introduction by Batem Pertin, which talks about the phenomena of the evolution of administrative development of Arunachal Pradesh since 1826. The book is divided into three broad sections, the first, 'Cultural Heritage', has 19 articles. It is a detailed account of ritual, kinship system, matrimonial system, religion and important archaeological sites. In this section, the article, 'Dr Verrier Elwin's Philosophic Vision on the Tribes of North-East Frontier Agency' by Oshong Ering is an enlightening read. It is a critical assessment of the legacy of Dr Verrier Elwin's actions and ideas on Arunachal Pradesh, the then NEFA.

Conclusion:

Tribal novels written in English by Adivasi authors in India offer a valuable perspective on the social and cultural consciousness of these communities. Despite facing historical marginalization and ongoing struggles, tribal communities possess rich traditions, unique customs, and a deep connection to their land. Novels like "Junglee Phool" by Joram Yalam, "When Arrows Were Heated Up" by Hari Ram Mina, "The Black Hill" by Mamang Dai, and "The Mysterious Ailment of Rupi Baskey" by Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar depict the realities of tribal life, the challenges they face, and their fight for recognition and justice. These novels raise awareness about the importance of preserving tribal cultures and traditions, while also highlighting the need for social justice and equity.

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