



Dalit, Tribal – Heard and Unheard Voices

Dr. Rashmi C. Lengade, *Department of BAF & BBI, Assistant Professor, JVM Mehta's Degree College, Airoli, Navi Mumbai, India.*
Page no. 86- 89

Abstract: *The most deprived and ignored strata of society, Dalit and Tribal community are the two faces of the same coin. India has the largest sectors of tribal community. The culture, traditions and the geographical conditions has generated many such communities who are barely seen on screen. The research paper represents the conceptual approach to the tribal community in Karnataka and was given a new dimension to the study of Tribal Literature. The monotonous and recurring concepts of deprivation and downtrodden were overwhelmed with new developments and initiatives of tribes in grandeur to reach the zenith. The focus is made on the culture, status, lifestyle and literacy levels of the tribal community and the upbeat of the same to get fame and recognition in the society. It also points the growth of tribal community and the various government schemes for the overall development in the society.*

Keywords: *Tribal Community, Dalit, Empowerment, Forest, Karnataka*

Introduction

Dalit and the Tribal Literature have gained its own place as any other literature which has marked a very different panorama. The replica of pain and agony are seen in many forms like poetry, novels, plays, biographies and essays. It's a genre that expresses the scream towards equality, status and liberation was echoed and few were heard and many unheard. It's a form of resistance against the human norms and regulations which is persistently a struggle to achieve liberty for a peaceful environment. It focuses on challenging the existing social and political order to bring some revolutionary changes in the society. They address the themes like caste discrimination, identity, and reclamation of cultural heritage.

The term 'Dalit literature' was first used in 1958, at the first ever Dalit conference held in Bombay. They were called as "Untouchables" and somewhere the struggle was as same as the African-American for their rights. Dalit is not a caste but related to the experiences, joys and sorrows and struggles of those in the lowest strata of society. They were treated in a very low layers of caste system which were dominated by the so-called elite caste of Brahmin. The transformation of the slurred identity of these so called 'untouchables' to create self - identity as Dalit is a story of collective struggle waged over centuries. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, two soaring figures in Dalit history, were the first to appropriate the word Dalit as to recognise and identify in the society.

In the recent study, the Tribal study has gained much importance, as many tribal groups has witnessed by creating their own place through their talent and creativity. Tribal literature, also known as Adivasi Sahitya, is a rich body of oral and written narratives that reflects the unique cultures, traditions, and experiences of indigenous communities. We adhere to many folk



songs, dance, narratives, and riddles which preserves our culture and traditions. The tribal people also known as the Adivasi's are the poorest in the country, who are still dependent on hunting, agriculture and fishing. Some of the major tribal groups in India include Gonds, Santhals, Khasis, Angamis, Bhils, Bhutia's and Great Andamanese. All these tribal people have their own culture, tradition, language and lifestyle. Most tribes are from thick forested areas who are deprived of all the facilities and were ignored.

Literature Review

The tribes in Karnataka, the most prominent tribal groups are known in different names Soliga, Siddi, Lambani, Jenu Kuruba, Kadu Kuruba, Koraga, Iruliga, Kodava, Adiyani, Barda, Bavacha/Bamcha, Bhil, and Yerava present in the state and are scattered in different geographical areas with different languages apart from Kannada. These tribes contribute to the rich cultural drapery of Karnataka. In fact, the twentieth century has given importance to them with recognition and identity in society.

Demographic Profile

The total number of tribal people recognized by the Government in Karnataka is about 42,48,978 which is 6.95 per cent of the total population of the State. There has been a 6 per cent increase in the tribal population during the last decade.

Literacy Rate

The literacy rate of Tribal community in Karnataka is a cause for concern, as it has consistently been lower than that of the total population, which was 36.0 per cent in 1991, increased to 48.3 per cent in 2001 and further increased to 53.9 per cent in 2011, while the State average moved up from 66.64 to 75 per cent in last decade. The literacy rate among the tribal population in Karnataka is 51 per cent in urban and 65.7 per cent in rural areas, while the overall figure of the State is 60.4 per cent in rural areas and 76.2 per cent in urban areas. The literacy rate among male population was found to be significantly higher at 57.5 per cent than the female counterparts where it is 42.5 percent.

In the field of education, the government measures to uphold and identify the tribal community is significant. Some of the schemes which has really helped them to reframe their status and to maintain a better livelihood are substantial. Eklavya Model Residential School (EMRS) Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme Post Matric Scholarship Scheme National Scholarship Scheme (Top Class) Multi Sectoral Schemes: Grants to States Grants under Article 275(1) Scheme for Development of PVTGs Pradhan Mantri Adi Adarsh Gram Yojana (PM-AAGY) Research Monitoring & Evaluation Livelihood Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Vikas Mission (PM-JJVM) Venture Capital Fund for STs Logistics and Marketing of tribal products in North East Support to NSTFDC 2 National Overseas Scholarship Scheme and National Fellowship Scheme.

Health Status

The health status is the major concern, where despite of setting up many Primary health centres, by the government, the awareness towards it is very low. Existing literature ranges from studies on tracing the genetic origin and understanding of some of the tribes to the assessment of availability of health care facility and their utilization, and to study of anaemia and hypertension among the tribes, their nutritional status, lifestyle disorders, and oral hygiene. Overall, the challenges faced by them are poverty, lack of health care, low literacy level and loss of traditional livelihood.



Objective

1. To study the Tribal Community as a new dimension.
2. To analyse the social condition and status of Tribal Community in Karnataka.

The government assistance to uplift the community is very wide, but unable to penetrate few tribal areas. The Forest Right Act of (FRA) 2006, aims to distinguish and vest forest rights in forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers who have been residing in and cultivating forest land for generations. It acknowledges in conserving and managing forests recognising the tribal's traditions and culture. The ministry is well aware of the taboos and ethnic culture that enable them to lead a satisfactory solution to their issues. The multi sectoral schemes with grants and financial assistance under the State Developmental Projects are provided to them. Education, Livelihood Skill Development, Health Nutrition, Animal Husbandry (AH) Infrastructure Development Admin, R&D Irrigation and watershed management Road connectivity Sports and Games Drinking Water, Market and Value Chain Development, Eco-Tourism, and Art and Culture are the sectors which were given space for the development.

The community, once deprived of everything, where the voices were disregarded, today with their struggle and hard exertion, has achieved the lost identity. This is one of the milestones towards the development and progressive efforts. The best upshot is Tulsi Gowda, born in Honnali village in Karnataka, known by the environmentalists as "Encyclopaedia of the Forest", and her tribal community recognises as "VanaDevi – Tree Goddess" a member of the Halakki Vokkaliga tribe in Karnataka, is prominent for her deep knowledge of the forest and her dedication to environmental conservation. She was born into the tribal community with a strong connection to nature and traditional ecological knowledge. Growing up in a forested area, she had developed her understanding of plants and their properties from a young age, working alongside her mother at a nursery. She joined the forest department as a volunteer and later as a permanent employee, dedicating her time in planting and nurturing trees. Her traditional knowledge and expertise include identifying different plant species, understanding their medicinal properties, and utilizing sustainable harvesting techniques. She has planted and nurtured over 100,000 trees, contributing to the restoration of ecosystems and the preservation of biodiversity. In this era, she has set a right example to protect our environment with the tag line – Grow Forest, save the land.

Born in an economically background community, she has lost her father when she was two or three, even the date is not known, her mother started working at the nursery she joined hands later. She was married off at the age of 10 or 12 (which too she doesn't quite know), and lost her husband in her 50s. She served another 15 years at the nursery before retiring 12 years ago, at the age of 70. During the time, she made invaluable contributions to the forest department's afforestation and efforts with her traditional knowledge of the land. She is the best example for using her native knowledge to save forest. She was an expert in medicinal properties of various plants, sustainable harvesting techniques, and forest conservation methods that have been developed by indigenous communities over centuries.

Her expertise includes understanding:

- Which seeds will thrive in specific soil conditions
- The optimal seasons for planting different species



- Natural methods of pest control
- Identifying plants with medicinal properties
- Sustainable harvesting techniques

Her focus was not only to grow trees but to cultivate a paradigm in her community to recreate things and stood as a model for the whole nation. Her dedication to environment earned recognition and admiration, and was recognized with the Padma Shri award in 2022. Her legacy is an exemplary for our future generations as the world faces climate change and deforestation. In 1986, she received the Indira Priyadarshini Award, also known as the IPVM award. The IPVM award recognizes pioneering contributions made by individuals or institutions to afforestation and wasteland development. In 1999, Gowda received the Karnataka Rajyotsava Award, the "second highest civilian honour of the Karnataka state of India". It is given yearly to distinguished citizens of Karnataka State aged over sixty.

Conclusion

The legacy of Shrimati Tulsi Gowda is an inspiration to our young generation. She has showcased how community-led initiatives can lead to substantial ecological change. She has also exhibited the importance of developing a culture and connected towards the environment. Born in a poor community, without proper education and guidance, she withstood all the odds and storms which made her community proud. The struggle towards equality and identity was a prominent matter of pride for the community. She is a bare footed incarnation of Devi (Goddess) to all the researchers and environmentalists. Deprivation withstands and lead to a better life where in her case it proved and the whispers were heard.

References

1. Hardik Udeshi, Emergence of Tribal Literature in 20th century, November, 2020.
2. **Bijoy C.R 'Adivasis of India; A history of Discrimination, Essays on the Betrayal of Adivasi Rights in India', Bangalore, 2007.**
3. National Library of Medicine, "Tribes in Karnataka; Status of Health Research". 2015.
4. Ministry of Tribal Affairs - Government of India, "Empowering Tribals, Transforming India – 2014-2023".
5. Yamuna Krishnan, "Tulasi Gowda- India's Barefoot Environmentalists.
<https://scoutripper.com>
6. [https:// en.Wikipedia.org](https://en.Wikipedia.org)
7. Karnataka Forest Department- Home Page <https:// en. Wikipedia.org>