



RICH ORAL TRADITION IN ADIVASI LITERATURE

Saumya Singh

Research Scholar of English in Rana Pratap Pg College, Sultanpur
(DR. RMLAU AYODHYA)

Abstract

Adivasi Literature refers to the literature in which the life and society of the tribals has been expressed as per their worldview. India is known for its diversity and multiplicity of languages. There are more than 1600 Languages belonging to seven different language families spoken in the country and a large number of them are preserved and sustained in oral forms. The oral tradition of the country is as old as 3500 years, and is still thriving. The paper sets out to bring into light the Rich and Prosperous Oral Tradition in Adivasi Literature

Keywords: Adivasi literature, Indigenous communities, culture and preservation, oral tradition.

Introduction:

Diversity and the existence of distinct societies are an essential part of the Indian civilization. The tribes of India are an inseparable part of this diverse fabric of India. The tribal culture, its traditions and practices interpenetrate almost all the aspects of Indian culture and civilization.

The development of literature and of different art forms in tribal communities predated the emergence of written records. Passed through generations, these oral traditions capture the very essence of the uniqueness of tribal culture. The Adivasi or tribal literature encompasses written and oral works created by indigenous communities, reflecting their cultural heritage, social structures and experiences.

Categorization of Adivasi Literature:

The Literary and academic tradition of non-tribal world divides Adivasi Literature into two categories-Oral (folk) literature and Written (Modern) Adivasi literature. But the Adivasi literate do not accept this division. They believe that since their worldviews are not in favour of any division, there is symmetry and equality in their society, so their literature is also not divided. They call their literature 'ORATURE', meaning literature of oral tradition. Orature refers to oral literature or verbal art, that is passed down through spoken traditions rather than being written down. It relies heavily on the oral transmission of knowledge and cultural heritage, with stories and narratives being passed down through generations by word of mouth.

Nature of Oral Tradition:

The Adivasi oral Tradition is memory based and the stories are remembered and retold not written and documented. Also storytelling is a communal act often performed during gathering festivals, and rituals. These stories have eco-centric worldview where there is a deep connection with nature portraying animals, rivers, trees and mountains as living beings. The stories are flexible-each narrator may slightly modify the tale, keeping the tradition alive and evolving. These stories teach moral values, social norms, survival skills, and community responsibilities.

Key Features of Adivasi Literature:

Tribal communities like the Gonds, Santhals, Bhils, Todas and Nagas are among many others who have vibrant oral traditions. The storytellers narrate stories about the origin of the universe, origin of their people and the natural world. The songs mark every important event from planting and harvesting, marriages, war victories, to death. Short, wise saying (proverbs) are used to teach lessons about life, respect and behaviour. Riddles sharpen the mind and entertain during gatherings. Oral traditions come alive during festivals, where people tell stories, sing songs and perform dances in colourful traditional attire. Hence we can see that storytelling is often accompanied by dance, masks, music and dramatization with use of musical instruments like drums, flutes and elaborate performances making it a communal experience. Every village had elders known for their memory and story telling skills.

Conclusion:

Today efforts are being made to document and translate these oral traditions into written form but many scholars stress that their original flavour, community spirit and performative magic are hard to capture fully in text. The Adivasi Literature provides alternative histories and worldviews often ignored by mainstream narratives. These offer insights into eco-centric philosophies, where humans are not separate from nature. They are also important in understanding the diverse linguistic and cultural richness of India by preserving tribal Identity and cultural memory. They play key role in preserving the indigenous and traditional knowledge of the society, environment and history. It is a mix of contemporary and current. It is these oral traditions that has helped us save information on civilization and human coexistence

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