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NECESSITY OF CULTURE-ORIENTED STUDIES IN THE TRIBAL EDUCATION: A STUDY OF NARAYAN'S *KOCHARETHI*

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Abstract: India is a diverse nation that comprises n number of ethnic groups; each of them is enriched with their own distinctive custom, faith, language, and worshiping method. Since unity in diversity is supposed to be the strength of India, exercising a common education pattern for the entire nation will dilute the concept of diversity and it, to a certain extent, will fall under a single umbrella of identity. To preserve the strength of India, culture-based education is necessary. Due to the advancement of technology and Western influences, even some Indians also cut themselves off gradually from their root. In this regard, tribal culture and practices are needed to be conserved. When the tribes get introduced to a new environment, culture, practice, and language, they may happen to think that their culture and legacy are lower than that of what they get newly introduced to. It could vividly be witnessed through the act of conversion of tribes into other religions and the change in their living pattern. Along with making tribes aware of the outer world and technology through education, it is also essential to make them stick with their root. Hence, incorporating culture-oriented studies in the tribe's education is mandatory.

Keywords: Preservation of diversity, Ignorance of tribes, Need for education, and Essence of culture-based education.

Introduction:

Narayan was born on 26 September 1940 in a tribal community called Malayarayar in Kerala and also, and he is the first tribal writer from the state of Kerala. Despite having written some short stories and published them in periodicals, they did not earn him the optimistic response that he intended them to bring. Kochareti is his first novel, which addressed him as a novelist to the literary world and it took him to receive the prestigious award of Kerala Sahitya Akademi award in 1999. The novel was translated into English by Catherine Thankamma, it also won the award of Economist Crossword Book award in 2011. This research article primarily focuses on demonstrating the importance of incorporating culture-oriented studies in educating people, especially those from primitive communities.

In this ever-changing culture, cultures need to be preserved to carry forward values to future generations. Due to the impact of industrialization, people from all parts of India migrated to the industrial cities in search of a secured job. Though the people in industrial and developed cities like Chennai, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad are from the same country, they are not from the same community, or religion, and are not speaking the same language. When they run into one another, one may likely look down upon another's culture and practices. It will gradually end up leaving its own identity behind and adapting to another culture which is observed in common in a place like Western culture being followed in most of the cities in India. For instance, a person from anywhere maybe but he/she might have surely come across the statement that this is what American culture and Indian culture, and so on.

Despite being n number of ethnic groups in a country with their own unique culture and practices, they are being addressed in common as thereof and the common culture represents the culture of majority or dominant as the culture of the country. When a person from a rural migrates to an industrial city, he/she is psychologically forced to adapt to the common culture sans realizing that their culture is also as equally great as the one that they adapted to. In the process of marriage also one of the two cultures is being suppressed, especially of women, if the bride and groom belong to two different cultures. It happens because they are unaware of the significance of their cultures.

To resolve the issue, people should be educated but literate people also started looking down upon their culture which is enriched with more significant values for containing the least superstitious beliefs, and abandoned their culture at last. Narayan in his novel *Kocharethi* expressed the concept of adapting to the new culture vividly via a character named Parvati. She is a tribal woman, who got educated and left the place where she was born and raised; at last, she married a man from outside of her society against the wish of her father. Hence, the incorporation of culture-oriented study is necessary while educating people, especially the person from primitive communities, to bolster India with diverse cultures.

1.1 Objective of the Study

This study concentrates on the extinction of culture due to migration, inter-culture marriage, and not incorporating culture-oriented study while educating people. This research paper focuses on the following objectives:

- To highlight the distinctive culture of tribal people in India, especially of the tribes residing in the state of Kerala.
- To explore how rich cultures of many ethnic groups in India get diluted to nothing on account of lack of awareness.
- To reiterate the necessity of preserving culture and incorporating
- Culture-oriented study in teaching.
- To study how education which liberates a man/woman from the clutches of ignorance makes them look down upon their culture to a certain extent.
- To understand that no culture is inferior to another. All are equally great.

1.2 Scope of the Study

India is a nation, which is comprised of diverse people with different cultures, religions, languages, and practices. Each ethnic group is enriched with its own distinctive culture and it is their identity also. But last, for a few decades, it is obvious to witness that people change or change their identity by adapting to a new culture using migration. It happens not only because of migrating to a new territory but also because of marriage with a person who belongs to a different culture and of ineffectiveness in furnishing complete education including culture-oriented studies. In this regard, tribal people are affected a lot because their literacy rate is too low. Most of the graduates from the community are likely to be the first generation to get an education. So, there is a high possibility for them to be obsessed with the new culture that they are introduced to. To preserve the diversity of India, incorporating culture-oriented study is mandatory. If a person is inculcated merely science and technology and other evolutions in the world avoiding the significance of his/her culture, the ramifications of it will be disastrous. Because it is likely to make him/her look down upon their culture to a certain extent as others do. Hence, people in India should be taught their respective cultures at the outset.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Hardik Uteshi and Dr. Paresh Joshi (2018) in their article entitled *Narayan's Kocharethi in the Light of Post-Colonialism* narrate how adivasi tribes are not only colonized by other people but also by their people and made the study on the post-colonial perspective to observe the condition of Adivasi. They add that post-colonialism recognizes the interplay between the local and global. By colonization, the unique culture, language, and practice of tribal people get corrupted (Hardik,2018).

Sneha Ann Mathai (2021) in her writing called *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman- A Tale of Convergence and Dependence of Nature and Culture* states that despite the culture and nature seem to be different, they are deeply nexus with one another. The Malayarayar is one of the tribal factions; they find their identity by being closely associated with nature. For instance, every

individual in the Malayarayar community belongs to an illam (clan). The illam is not just a clan but it is also considered to be their identity. Since tribes are leading their life in association with nature, it is tremendous to know that the word illam is also derived from nature which denotes tree or rock (MATHAI)

Reneeta Anna Robert and Dr. Annie KuriAchan (2018) in their work titled *A Study of the Socio-Cultural Milieu of the Endangered Malayarayar Tribe as Presented in Narayan's Kocharethithe Araya Woman* express that the faster the expected escalation in the technology and strength of capitalism and increasing power of neo-colonialism have paved a conducive ground for the erosion of natural resources from the territories of fragile tribal people. It led the tribal culture to a state of jeopardy due to the advent of invaders with new cultures and practices. Thus, they suffer the sacrifice of collective identity, and historical, and cultural heritage which adds to the magnitude of the tribal displacement. The novel expresses the colonial dominance by the forest officers' advantage over the native people of the land (Robert and Kuriachan, 2018).

The present article is unique and deviates from all other existing research on the chosen work and the author since it primarily focuses on demonstrating the necessity of incorporating culture-oriented studies in educating people, especially a person from primitive communities like tribes. Also, it explores the distinctive culture of tribes, especially of the Malayarayar community in Kerala.

3. DISCUSSION AND FINDINGS

The word culture is highly complicated to define. Various anthropologists and historians have attempted a lot to make a definition for culture, among them Edward Tylor's words are considered to be closely related in all the aspects to define culture. According to him, culture is "a quality possessed by all people in all social groups, who nevertheless could be arrayed on a development continuum from savagery through barbarism to civilization (Spencer-Oatey and Franklin, 2012)." As he states, culture is a set of common practices followed by all men and women of a social group which can be modified under period but can never be changed as it is their identity. Formation of culture is purely based on the geographical region and is connected to the psyche of the people also because practice is an outcome of faith, belief, emotion, and strong feelings. It is quite obvious to sense a kind of reluctance while attempting to violate a traditional practice that ranged centuries back even in the twenty-first century with scientific advancement. Despite having been proven scientifically, violating a cultural practice seems to be so hard at present even to think of violating on account of being connected with the human psyche and emotion.

It became usual to see people migrating to urban areas due to the industrial development and escalation of science and technology. The displacement to the city where people from various parts of the world reside with their own identical cultures and practices drives the newly migrated people to disconnect themselves gradually from the customary practices that they followed. When they run into others, it may happen to look down or to be looked down upon each other's culture. Hence, many people who live in metropolitan cities like Chennai, Mumbai, and Bangalore instead of sticking with their culture; started adapting to the new culture which is popularly known to be followed by elite people and celebrities. For instance, the influence of Western culture among Indians could vividly be sensed, though it is imperceptible in rural areas. It gradually leads to cutting off themselves from their root and to a certain extent the one who adapts new culture starts looking down upon his/her people who still stick to their culture. Despite the existence of some lack such as superstitious beliefs and myths everyone's culture, in general, every culture contains its distinct qualities and values. So, preserving culture is mandatory. But due to lack of vigil, many cultures became completely extinct from existence and some are getting dissolved gradually due to the influence of modernity.

"Unity in Diversity" is the phrase being used to address the multi-faceted quality of India it incorporates a lot of ethnic groups with different cultures, languages, and worshipping methods. Due to the impact of globalization and the also the misconception of civilization, many distinctive customs and cultural practices followed by some ethnic groups in India are waning faster than expected. Amid

the war against the culture by the so-called civilization and science, there are still some tribal-like ethnic groups that associate with nature and abstain from the outer world of modernity and destruction. Tribal people prefer to reside in the forest along with other living species free from any sort of technological advancement which exploits nature and their culture and practices are also in close association with ecology and with eco-consciousness. Tribal people are living in the realm of humans by being away from the materialistic world where the so-called civilized human-like creature lives sans humanity. They lead a life of simplicity with nature in all forms like residence, deity, food, and all. Their customs possess many healthy practices such as celebrating prodigiously when a girl comes of age rather than her marriage and marrying one among them without furnishing anything like dowry, gifts, and whatever like that. As Tribes are in close association with nature, they think that nature is their supreme God and if any kind of natural calamities take place, they would think that it occurs because of God's furiousness.

Tribal language differs not only from the known global languages like Tamil, Sanskrit, and English but also with their tribal languages because though they are addressed in common as tribes, there happen to be many factions within themselves that speak in different communicative languages. Since they have no written form for their language, it becomes impossible to write literature to make their offspring aware of the richness of their culture. Hence, they used the art of folk songs to convey their feelings and emotions and also to transmit their legacy to future generations. It is also one of the major reasons for the extinction of tribal traditions and culture after them on account of not being recorded. As the world witnesses evolution in all disciplines, people's customs, heritages, and cultures also subjected to change. So, the preservation of cultural practices of every ethnic group is essential to perpetuate the diversity of India. For which, recording it as literature is mandatory. Tamil language, for instance, is one of the classic languages in India; it exudes its resplendent culture of Tamil-speaking people through literature like *Tholkaappiyam*, *Silapathikaram*, and *Thirukkural*. A generation that comes after many centuries may struggle and possibly deviate from its track of culture sans knowing its legacy, to whom the literature like thereof will be a great assistance. However, the tribal people use folk songs and stories as tools to convey and transmit their heritage to the forthcoming generation since they have no written language to come up with literature. At last, their rich culture is buried along with them when they die due to some deadly disease as they are not advanced in medicine.

In an attempt to preserve the uniqueness of the tribal culture, the Indian government also had taken many initiatives. In this regard, many non-tribal writers like Ruth Benedict, Frank Waters, Tony Hillerman, Barbara Kingsolver, and Kent Nerburn have penned about tribes and their customs. But something was lacking as there will always be a difference between biography and autobiography. Despite their contributions being immense, there had been a vacuum to be filled by tribes for acquiring preciseness and nuances in details. Making tribal people involved in literature writing is no longer possible without education. Education is the only possible means to make deprived people contribute to political, economic, and social activities. A social transformation is implausible without an individual transformation that can never be accomplished in the absence of education.

However, the major challenge in educating them is that tribal people won't allow any outsider to be a part of them. A number of actions had been taken by both government and non-governmental organizations to educate tribal people but everything fell apart since they abstain from all forms of normal walk of life. After the independence of India in 1947, a firm attempt was made to escalate the literacy rate of tribal people but things did not go as per the plan due to various causes like disparities in the language of teaching because only through the mother tongue, the effective teaching be accomplished (Malyadri, 2012) (Sujatha, 2002). With the notion of identifying the causes and also fixing them, the Indian government constituted the Dhebar Commission in 1960. After the grass-rooted inquiries, the commission submitted a report that lists out multiple factors that cause literary backwardness among tribal people such as lackluster teaching methods adopted by teachers, lack of awareness among the tribal people, poverty, and so forth. Indian government started implementing recommended actions by the commission to improve the literacy rate of tribal people like as providing

mid-day meals, clothes, books, and study materials for free and also adjustments in time, vacations, and holidays about their culture. Subsequently, the Kothari Commission was also constituted; it also endorsed the recommendations made by the Dhebar Commission. Despite not being able to par with the outer world, tangible growth could be witnessed in tribal education with the utmost effort of the Indian government in educating tribal people (Punnaiah,2018) (Upmanyu,2016) (Brahmanandam,2015).

Preserving a tribe's adulteration-free culture is as important as inculcating them because education is likely to transform the perception of tribes about their tradition and culture. Tribes follow a common culture of being in close association with the environment and nature, despite living in many factions and speaking different languages. With the strong effort of the Indian government, there happens to be some tribal communities still away from all sorts of development, a tremendous development in the literacy rate of tribal people was achieved across India. Droupadi Murmu, the incumbent president of India, is a befitting example of the growth of the literacy rate among Tribes. The education that changes their deprived living condition, state of being deceived and exploited by others, and situation of being sidelined by non-tribals at their native is also changing the perception of educated tribes upon their own culture and traditions. Many educated tribes started looking down upon their own culture as uncivilized and barbaric as if looking at a disgusting thing; they cut themselves off from where they were born and raised to the outer world where they get access to almost everything ranging from development to destruction. When a person from a primitive community learns about the outer world and their culture, there is a high possibility of risk of getting obsessed with a new living pattern of life and being after others' culture sans knowing that his/her own is equally great.

The transformation of a literate tribe is picturized in Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman*. The novel deals with the culture, tradition, and troubles of the tribal people who lived in the mountain folds of the Western Ghats in the early twentieth century. There could be seen many groups like Cholanaikkans, Kurumbas, Kattunaikkans, Kadars, Koragas, and so on with primitive literacy rates in the Western Ghats of Kerala on the border of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Since the author belongs to the Malayarayar tribal community, he pays more attention to the community and delineates them in the novel *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman*.

Kocharethi is a tribal woman of the Malayarayar community who narrates the living conditions of the community through the major characters like Kunjipennu, her husband Kochuraman, and their daughter Parvati. Due to the illiteracy of Malayarayar community tribes, they were exploited by money lenders, landlords, businessmen, and even by the Police. The tribes did not even know the basic mathematics like addition and subtraction. Agriculture was the only source of their income and they were completely dependent on it. They cultivated varieties of foods and crops but there was a huge demand for their pepper. Though they encountered various problems in the cultivation, irrigation was the major of all. They used to cultivate expecting seasonal rain. Despite executing various projects in the reserved areas, the regional people (tribes) are not getting much benefit out of it. Naresh Rout in his article entitled *A Study of Tribal vs Non-tribals – Culture and Life of Tribal Population* states that

The invasion of Adivasi territories, which for the most part commenced during the colonial period, intensified in the post-colonial period. Most of the Adivasi territories were claimed by the state. Over 10 million Adivasis have been displaced to make way for development projects such as dams, mining, industries, roads, protected areas, etc. Though most of the dams (over 3000) are located in Adivasi areas, only 19.9% (1980-81) of Adivasi land holdings are irrigated as compared to 45.9% of all holdings of the general population (Rout,2014).

As cited above, Malayarayar community tribes are not exceptional from these problems. They faced a huge problem with irrigating their fields. So, they were dependent on seasonal rain for their cultivation and they should also tackle with animals to protect their yields. Because animals like elephants and wild boars would often enter the fields of the tribes and destroy them entirely. "Well, if the elephant and wild boar come and go, there won't be anything left of the paddy (17Kocharethi)." One of the characters in the Kocharethi, Kochuraman used to protect their field at night from the

elephants; and from the birds and wild fowl in the daytime. It depicts how hard they underwent to survive and to produce the yielding but without going through any of such problems, the traders exploited them on account of their ignorance and illiteracy. The traders cheated by not providing fair prices for the products that they got from the Malayarayar tribal people. Not only that but they were levied heavy taxes.

Tribes belonging to the Malayarayar community encountered such problems only because of being uneducated. Education is a transmission of knowledge to make one realize his/her social and economic situation. It is a powerful tool and the only means to uplift a downtrodden, oppressed, and suppressed people. In pursuit of collective growth, the Indian government has taken various initiatives to promote education across the country including tribal areas. But there had never been tangible growth among tribal people; it keeps them unaware of their situation yet. On account of being uneducated, the Malayarayar tribes went through multiple exploitation like being paid less for more quantity of agricultural products and they were even subjected to pay tax for living and cultivating in their place as it was claimed to be King's place and to be at the ambit of the British administration. Indeed, they led the life of a tenant at their place. After having been exploited a lot the Malayarayar tribal community realized the importance of education to know about the outer world and also to learn calculation predominantly. Krishna Pillai, a protector of the Arayarayar community, instructed Kochuraman and other members of the community about the necessity of furnishing education to their children. He assisted them with also a teacher named Aashan Kochupilla who was sent to Arayarayars' residing place to inculcate them. Kochupilla stayed there to teach the children to read and write. The tribal children from the Arayarayar community started learning about everything along with calculation. There had been many who dropped out from school after primary education due to the apathy of their parents on higher education because tribal parents did not want their girl children who came of age to continue their studies. But Parvati, daughter of Kochuraman and Kunjipennu, was firm on her decision to study further and to leave from the inaccessible hill station to the so-called developed outer world to get a job. "I want to study. To study and study and become a magistrate - 155 Kocharethi (Nārāyan, 2007)."

Education is not only to free a person from the clutches of ignorance but also to enable him/her to identify the significance of their own culture, language, and practice. It is quite common to find some superstitious beliefs in a worshipping method in every culture; it should be expunged instead of adopting a new culture. An action of such kind will drive the extinction of the culture with its unexplored significance. This is the major problem in teaching students who belong to a primitive community because when they get exposed to the outer world and their cultures with the assistance of education, there is a high possible risk of cutting themselves off from the culture that they had been living with so far and resort to a culture what they get introduced to newly in the thought of later is better than that of earlier. Though Kochuramandid not like Parvati's persuasion of studies, she studied against all the hardship. As she expected, she got a job in the city and she was sending money to her parents regularly. Later, she fell in love with a person named Padmanabhan and married him against the wish of her father Kochuraman. Here is where she violated the cultural practice of the community of marrying within their clan. After having gotten an education, she should have served her community and people by recording their significant practices to make them immortal because most occasions there happens to be the extinction of the whole community in a spread of some contagious disease since their medicinal practice is not that advanced and also of not getting access to the modern medicine. Their rich culture, tradition, and practices will be buried along with them without leaving any hint to the people after them to know about them and their culture. Hence, penning a literature of their culture will make it immortal. Instead of making any contribution to her Malayarayar community like assisting to get rid of them being deceived and exploited by traders and to create awareness among them about education, Parvati left the place and married a man from outside. The significant problem of marriage between persons who belong to two different cultures the eradication of one of the cultures because it is rare to consider that both cultures are equally great in all aspects. So, the marriage between people of two different cultures will surely end in renouncing one's culture especially the female's culture on account of male chauvinistic society. In this regard, the culture, customs, and practices followed by the male will be given more importance than that of the

female. Gradually it will lead to the state of losing her identity with which she was born and raised. To prevent all these things, the incorporation of culturally oriented studies in school education is mandatory.

Abhorred of own culture and conversion to another takes place for multiple reasons like when they migrate to a new place after having been educated and in the process of marriage and so on. So, it is mandatory to make everyone realize that other cultures are no longer inferior to theirs and each culture is enriched with its significant practices. India is a hub of a number of ethnic groups; each of them has their rich culture and practice. Making people aware of the significance of their respective cultures will surely put an end to the deed of adapting to other cultures and religions because every culture has its own distinctive set of practices that are no longer inferior to others. For instance, there is no dowry system in tribal culture. During the early 20th century, to develop transport and communication British government in India furnished permission to non-tribal people to enter the reserved places. Many non-tribal people got ownership of the land, and in return the government expected them to cultivate there. After a quite long association with tribal people, many non-tribes also started exercising tribal culture. It indicates the richness of Tribal culture but with the lack of knowledge about their own culture many tribal people happen to be after other's culture and religion. If cultural-oriented studies had been inculcated in Parvati, she would have never paved the way to lose her own identity even after having been educated. Hence, Culturally oriented study is essential to get to know their greatness.

4. CONCLUSION

Tribal culture needs to be preserved as their customs are deeply rooted in nature and their economy is self-reliant. But it is gradually becoming extinct due to globalization and modernization. In the sight of uplifting their standard, they are being educated but the education lacks space to make them realize the importance of their culture. Neither incorporating culture-oriented studies in the process of educating tribal people will lead them to become fascinated by the cultures and it will cause them to cut themselves completely off from their roots. The teacher who is to teach cultural-related things must be impartial and should never compare one culture with another. In culture-oriented studies, cultural practices have to be taught with the scientific reason behind them, because being unknown the reason for exercising a set of practices would lead the practitioner to think of them as a kind of superstitious belief. Cultural-oriented studies will give the learner a better understanding of their own culture and also prevent them from looking down upon the practices that they followed so far. Therefore, cultural-oriented study is mandatory in educating people, especially the people from primitive communities like tribal.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Not Applicable

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