

Tribals: Real Protectors of the Nature

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Tribals have inherited the rich culture and tradition for many years. Most of them are illiterate but the knowledge system has been transferred through generations, they have vast knowledge of natural surroundings and treated their land as mother nature. In the time of development, they are following sustainable living and replacing unsustainable alternatives. Many documentary films which are non-fictional motion picture intended to document reality, i.e. Have you seen the Arana; I cannot give you my forest etc. shows the reality of tribals facing struggles in day-to-day life to protect mother nature.

Human beings are living in a world where everyone is running for the success of their own selves. Where money, power, and facilities are considered the mark of development. In the name of development, the demand for machinery, industries, and technologies is increasing. For all of that, we are dependent on nature and its resources. Knowingly or unknowingly humans are exploiting natural resources indiscriminately. Nature, which nurtures everyone, is deteriorating due to this development, due to which we are facing many natural disasters. Our environment is now at stake. This crisis cannot be solve only through science and technology. It must required ecological awareness through literature. Thus ecology and ecocriticism has its own relevance.

In ecology nature and its organisms like people, plants and animals are interdependent on each other and their environment. Their so much interdependency has the out-turn that disturbance in any of these can affect the other one. These disturbance which leads to changes in their environment are so concerned issue now a days because it can be the cause of the destruction of the civilization. This threatening situation has become the global concern. Ecology has two different shades in

which one shows man's anthropocentric attitude of dominating nature where the other shows the preservation of nature to keep it in its original form. This awareness of no one is the master of anybody and nature can survive on its own can maintain ecosystem balance. Ecocriticism gives importance to raise awareness about eco-consciousness and removes ego-consciousness. The present crisis of ecological disasters and destruction of nature is the cause of human's behavior with mother nature.

"The modern ecological consciousness has a feeling that the balance between human and the natural world must be maintained. A perfect ecology is one in which plants, animals, birds and human beings live in such harmony that none dominates or destroys the other" (Frederick). But what is happening in current time is opposite of this. Nature has been exploited by human beings for their own selfish reasons to become powerful. They give least priority to nature. The beauty of natural surroundings has been destroyed by the excess use of natural resources without following any systematic development approach. "The most common measure to tackle the environmental crisis is sustainable development" (Frederick). This categorically means the required use of natural resources without endangering the whole environment and the well-being of all human beings (Selvamony). During the sustainable development process all organisms survive in their own way. In maintaining the basic life support system of the earth human beings, plants, animals have to play an important role. Ecocriticism advocates the systematic approach towards sustainable development to ensure the safe and secure future.

There are many environmental activists like Greta Thunburg, David Attenborough, Leonardo DiCaprio etc. who are working to improve and protect the quality of the natural environment through changes to environmentally harmful human activities. They are raising attention to the environmental issues with their own knowledge and concern for nature.

Tribal communities are known for conserving and preserving nature through traditional knowledge which has been transferred through

generations .For a very long period of time they were able to maintain the richness of the environment with the help of their effective measures, like observing natural surroundings ,use of natural resources and the transmission of wisdom and culture over the generations. Tribals are the inhabitants of forests and while living there they are preserving and balancing flora and fauna and the whole ecosystem. In their culture they believe that nature and its resources has the superior power in this world. They treat natural resources like land, river, mountains, trees as a God and worship them. Throughout their life they believe that nature is their motherland who nurtures human beings and it has the superior power to construct and deconstruct human lives.

In India many tribal communities are the example of sustainable living. Their knowledge have the practical approach towards the environment which is not similar as the knowledge is transforms in modern days. Their simple living and not consuming too much from nature ,and not following the development process which many leading power is doing so makes them marginalized from the society. The emphasis should be given to raise awareness about their living style towards nature which can be the sustainable example of living life.

Many Indian English writers like *Kamala Markandaya*, *Mahasweta Devi*, *Arun Joshi* etc. have given importance to tribal lives and sensibilities in their literature work. Through Novels, stories, songs and poems Indian English literature writers tries to shows the rich tribal culture which presents their unique identity in the present world. Literature observes the existing situation and depicts the problems of the future. Documentaries are one of the artform of literature which portrays the reality of life. John Grierson's definition of documentary first proposed in the 1930s, as the "creative treatment of actuality". Documentaries present real people and real scenarios which are far more different from the play or movies in which actors play roles. To an extent a documentary tells a story, the story is a plausible representation of what happened rather than an imaginative interpretation of what might have happened (Nicholas).

Documentary films which are non-fictional motion picture intended to document reality, i.e. *Have you seen the Arana; I cannot give you my forest etc.* shows the reality of tribals facing struggles in day-to-day life to protect mother nature.

Have you seen the Arana? is a documentary film by Sunanda Bhatt, a documentary filmmaker who represents people living on the margins of a fascinatingly intricate and stratified Indian society highlights the transformation of the environment and its surroundings in the name of development. It showcases the journey of rich and bio-diverse regions of Wayanad in Kerala is part of the fragile ecosystem. Where the hills are flatten and forests are getting disappear and rich diversity of forest area is replaced by unsustainable alternatives in the name of development. As the title suggested here the question is asked to many people of the district Have you seen the Arana? followed by the answer that Arana was a place which was previously seen as the wider range of forest area has now disappeared because of the poor way of modern agriculture system which includes the excess use of pesticide for big production. So the Arana has no existence and it has not been seen anywhere.

This documentary presents the relationship between people, their knowledge system and the environment. Tribal Literature is saved through short stories, narratives, poems and songs which were sung from generations to generations passing on the traditional beliefs that strengthen their wisdom. In this documentary an old man from *Adiya tribe* sung a folk song which believes that *God has created the humans and they are following the trail of their ancestors Ithi and Achan.* All the lands, mountains, forest, trees, plants, fruits, flowers and the environment is created by God and their ancestors protect this and show them the path to live. One man from tribal communities shared previously they had only forest trees with fruits and flowers but the forest department cut down the trees in the name of systematic development and planted teak trees causing low water levels. Due to these animals coming to the village from the forest. Then they blame animals. It shows that humans attitude towards the systematic construction of the forest is actually causing the deconstruction of the

forests and its surrounding which is harmful not only for the environment but as well for the animals.

Tribal women Jochi, highlights the importance of trees and plants in terms of remedial use. She is a traditional healer and said *when God made us humans he also made medicinal plants to take care of us. But people don't want it .What is popular now is English medicine. We can not give up natural remedies.* She further focuses on two main medical plants *Avalapori* and *Kurunnthoti* which can cure diseases are now disappearing from forests. According to her *after forest dwellers' society was allowed in everything was destroyed as plants were plucked from roots. We are trying to bring it all back.* She was in the forest protection group which not only shows their commitment towards saving forests. Tribal life becomes very difficult because of the tourists and visitors. All the waste from the resorts also flows into the river. The river was polluted because of plastics, trash, and waste of chemical fertilizers. Many tourists came drunk and the resorts have been developed. They felt disheartened because they don't feel free to move around in their own land. Tribals compare human behavior with animals; *It's easy to move around with elephant instead of humans.* Because they have faith in the discipline of animals but not on the humans because of their indisciplinary actions harming the environment and their peace.

Tribal farmer who has the culture and wisdom to save the land and treated it as mother land shows that traditional way of farming has changed into modern farming .Where excess use of pesticides are destroying the quality of land .It can easily be avoided by indigenous way of farming. *We have to know soil and soil have to know us. The belief, confidence and conviction that we have done it the right way makes it good crop.* His children complains that if they follow same traditional approach of agriculture than they can left behind from others. He refused to do so because he knew their ancestors have given them wealth in the form of land and natural surroundings. Tribals have their own values in rice farming they treated rice as their deity. If they pollute the rice it means they polluted their deity. In this generation

everything is ready-made and easy to use. Foods are ready-made, even seeds are ready made. But he follows the same indigenous way of farming that was taught by his ancestors. It will able to maintain the richness of the land and that is how the knowledge system which passed on from generation to generation are now able to protect the nature.

I cannot give you my forest, a documentary filmed by Kavita Bahl and Nandan Saxena, is a window in the lives of *Kondh adivasis* from Rayagada in Orissa. It highlights the relationship between Adivasis and the forest which is the source of rich nutritions for them. The documentary presents the day to day struggle of tribals to preserve nature from commercial exploitation. It is the story of survival of Adivasis in Niyamgiri, a hill range which is home to most of the Kondh indigenous people.

As the title suggested, these adivasis are determined to not let go of their forest. They considered themselves as guardians of the treasure in terms of the wealthy environment passed on by their ancestors. Where the commercialisation is leading towards the exploitation of natural resources. Forest trees called timber are cut down to be sold. Minerals mined in a way that destroys the richness of land converted it into barren lands.

Corporations' city-centric view of development makes them fail to understand the critical importance of the forest for food and other resources. "*Have you ever seen an adivasi begging?*" asks an old woman in a scene, "*That's because we don't need to beg for food, as long as our forests are alive,*" she says. But she showed her concern that in today's time, it does not remain the same for her tribe to say these with the same sense of pride because the dependence of tribals on uncultivated forest food, is fast depleting.

Hemi Konda states that *though a mother gives birth, the child is nurtured and raised by the forest*. He shared this because during drought when they were unable to harvest through farming, the forest provided tubers and roots twice a day. *They live with the cycles of*

nature and understand that is bountiful. They only take what is necessary for their sustenance. (Saxena Nandan,2015) Tribals expressed the acceptance of forest produce and refused packaged food. An adivasi woman sung a song “*Tina dumbro puyu loye*”,in Kui language with English subtitles in the film.The refrain refers to a small forest flower that she sings to, saying ‘*come my friend*’. This means that their lives are intertwined by each and every part of the forest even with the smallest of flowers can not be separated from them. The song reminds the bounteousness of the forest towards the adivasi tribes in sustaining their lives.

The adivasis pity the city people being addicted to computers and mobile phones as a part of their daily lives. They refused the modern way of unsustainable living to do anything to get money. They deny the idea of money minded people and considered this as an urban disease to think that money can buy anything. They find these kinds of people under-nourished and weak. This documentary film presents the forest as a metaphor to the adivasis of their sovereignty. It is a call to the city dwellers and policy makers to respect a way of life which is in consonance with nature (Saxena).

Here in these documentaries the reflection of eco-consciousness in tribal communities advocates to remove ego-centric approach towards nature. These documentaries demand global perspectives towards ecological crisis. The earth is the only place where humans can live and the current scenario of environment destruction requires the awareness of humans to make the better place for them. This ecological insight of tribal people who live sustainable life shares their perspectives to save the environment and leads a happy life in close harmony with nature.

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Note:

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