

# ***REPORT***

***ICSSR-sponsored Two-Day National Conference on***

***“TRIBES IN TRANSITION-II:  
REAFFIRMING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY THROUGH NARRATIVE”***



***Organised by***

***The Department of English & Outreach Programme***

***Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi***

***On 27-28 February 2017***

***Convener: Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak***

***[ivyihansdak@gail.com](mailto:ivyihansdak@gail.com)***

## ***CALL FOR PAPERS***

### **Concept Note:**

The term “tribe” - used synonymously today with other terms like “indigenous”, “aboriginal”, “Adivasi” and “First Nations people” - has a long history that connects diverse communities across the world on the basis of their common worldview. Beginning as part of the colonial vocabulary of administration, the term “tribe” had constructed such communities in terms of the western dichotomy between the civilized and the primitive, and had viewed them either as primitive savages hostile to civilization or as peripheral beings who lived in a primeval world that becomes an idealized site for an alternative culture. In later years, many creative representations of them in literature, art and narrative cinema had perpetrated these stereotypes, though the motivations behind them may have been different. In more recent times, some writers have invoked the existence of the Fourth World, composed of the world’s indigenous people, whose history and ecology have been appropriated by the other two Worlds.

In post-Independence India, there has been a great deal of what the anthropologists call “culture contact”, resulting in acculturation, displacement and other related changes among the tribal peoples. These changes have triggered aggressive political movements among some tribal groups, sometimes closely aligned with non-tribal ideological elements, which have led to new and experimental narrative forms.

In the wake of globalization and heavy industrialization, the tribal people of India have been struggling with a growing sense of *Angst*, at various levels. A direct result of migration and acculturation is seen in the rapid erosion faced by many tribal languages today – an erosion that could lead to the loss of unique knowledge systems and oral traditions transmitted through these languages for centuries. The Centre for Oral & Tribal Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi, is working towards the preservation of India’s tribal cultural heritage by collecting, documenting and translating the different genres of tribal folklore, particularly their creation myths. By bringing together tribal storytellers, writers and cultural artistes to a common platform with research scholars from Literature, Linguistics, History, Sociology and Anthropology (among others), the proposed Conference will contribute to this monumental task being undertaken by Sahitya Akademi.

### **Objectives:**

While grappling with the issues of tribal and indigenous identity, culture, history and narrative, the Conference will address relevant questions such as: What is the outcome of the interface between oral tradition and modernity? What is ‘tribal imagination’? What is the tribal sense of history? How can tribal oral traditions be preserved in the digital age? How does contemporary tribal literature compare/ contrast with the traditional genres? Why do tribal and indigenous narratives suffer from low visibility within mainstream academia? What is the significance of tribal and indigenous characters in mainstream narratives? How does the perspective of the ‘outsider’ differ from that of the ‘insider’? Finally, the Conference will try to connect with grassroots workers and activists working on problems of healthcare, education, employment and human trafficking among the tribal and indigenous communities of India.

## **Important Sub-themes of the Conference:**

Oral tradition and modernity  
Tribal memory and imagination  
Tribal art forms and aesthetics  
Tribal versions of the Indian epics  
Script movements among tribal groups  
Endangered oral languages  
Tribal resistance narratives  
Approaches to tribal healthcare  
Tribal education and employability  
Human trafficking in tribal areas

## **Contribution to Existing Research:**

The Conference will add a multidisciplinary approach to the existing research on tribal/indigenous communities in India. While the conventional areas within the disciplines of Literature, Linguistics, History, Sociology and Anthropology will dominate the discourse, new areas from Cultural Studies, Folklore Studies, Film Studies, Art and Aesthetics etc, will also be introduced. Finally, it is hoped that by critiquing existing approaches to tribal healthcare and education in India, the Conference will lay the groundwork for some much-needed changes in government policy towards the Scheduled Tribes.

## **Call for Papers:**

Abstracts of 250-300 words in Microsoft word document should be sent to the Convener at this email: [ivyihansdak@gmail.com](mailto:ivyihansdak@gmail.com). It should contain the applicant's full name, institutional details and contact information.

**Last date for submission of abstracts** : **15 December 2016**  
**Last date for intimation of selection** : **30 December 2016**  
**Last date for submission of final paper** : **25 February 2017**

The selected out-station participants will be provided with food and accommodation during the duration of the Conference. TA will be provided only to invited speakers.

**Convener:** Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak, Assistant Professor, Dept of English, JMI, New Delhi: [ivyihansdak@gmail.com](mailto:ivyihansdak@gmail.com)

**Organizing Committee:** Prof. Mukesh Ranjan, Dr. Saroj Kumar Mahananda, Mr. Roomy Naqvy, Ms. Shimi Moni Doley & Mr. A.C. Kharingpam

**Dept Office Ph. No:** 011-26981717 (ext. 2952)

# ***PROGRAMME SCHEDULE***

## **DAY ONE (27-02-2017)**

**Registration begins: 9.30 AM**

**INAUGURAL SESSION: 10.00 - 11.30 AM**

**Venue: MIR ANEES HALL**

**Mir Taqi Mir Building, JMI**

**Guest of Honour: Prof. T.K. Oommen, Emeritus Professor, JNU, New Delhi, India  
& recipient of *Padma Bhushan***

**Keynote Speaker: Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Professor of Eminence, Tezpur University,  
Assam & Chairman of Xaxa Committee, India**

**PLENARY SESSION 1: 11.30 – 1.00 PM**

**Venue: TAGORE HALL**

**Chaired by: Prof. M. Asaduddin, JMI, New Delhi**

**Theme: Tribal Memory, Folklore and Hindu Epic Narratives**

1. Athiko Kaisii (JMI, New Delhi): “Oral Literature and Memory: A Study of Tribal Folklore”
2. Pravin Kumar (IGNTU, Amarkantak), “Depiction of Life Values in Tribal Literature”
3. Ananya Barua (Hindu College, New Delhi): “The *Karbi Ramayana* in Assam and its Modern Re-telling in Documentary Film”
4. Saroj Kumar Mahananda & Abhishek Pundir (JMI, New Delhi): ““The Familiar Case of the Nishad in the *Mahabharata*: An Alternate Reading”
5. Norkey Wangmu Yolmo (Sikkim University, Gangtok): “Yolmo Funeral at Homeland and Abroad”

### **LUNCH BREAK**

**PLENARY SESSION 2: 2.00 – 3.30 PM**

**Venue: TAGORE HALL**

**Chaired by: Padmashri Prof Anvita Abbi, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi**

**Theme: Tribal Identity and Resistance Narratives – I**

1. Bipasha Rosy Lakra (JNU, New Delhi): “Perspectives from the Margins: Examining Adivasi Narratives of the Naxalbari Movement in West Bengal, 1967-72”
2. Ved Prakash (Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer): “Rhythms of Resistance: A Study of the Kondh Tribe of Orissa through ‘Blood Earth’ Project”
3. Sudipto Mukhopadhyaya (Kalyani University, Kolkata): “Revisiting *Aranyer Adhikar*: in Theory and Practice”
4. Nupur Chawla (JMI, New Delhi): “Representing/ Re-presenting Conflict: A Study of Temsula Ao’s Short Fiction”
5. Mridula Rashmi Kindo (IGNOU, New Delhi): “Tribal Poems of Protest of Jharkhand as Powerful Expressions”

6. Saheb Ram Tudu (Artist, Cognizant Technology Solutions, Kolkata): “Illustrating the Santal Rebellion of 1855-56 in *Disaeabon Hul*”

### **TEA BREAK**

#### **PLENARY SESSION 3: 3.45 PM to 6.00 PM**

**Venue: TAGORE HALL**

#### **PANEL DISCUSSION on “The Future of Tribal Oral Culture in the Age of Globalization/ Digitalization”**

**Panelists:** Prof. Joseph Bara (IGNTU, Amarkantak, MP), Prof. Bipin Jojo (TISS, Mumbai), Prof. Shreya Bhattacharji (CUJ, Ranchi), Prof. Anand Mahanand (EFL University, Hyderabad), Dr. Ganga Sahay Meena (JNU, New Delhi)

**Chaired by: Prof. Virginus Xaxa, Professor of Eminence, Tezpur University, Assam & Chairman of Xaxa Committee**

#### **CULTURAL PROGRAMME: 6.00 – 8.00 PM**

**Venue: OPEN AIR THEATRE**

**“Rhythms of Life and Love” (Folk Dances from Uttarakhand and Jharkhand)**

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## **DAY TWO (28-02-2017)**

#### **PARALLEL SESSION 1: 10.00 – 11.30 AM**

**Venue: TAGORE HALL**

**Chaired by: Prof. Shreya Bhattacharji, CUJ, Ranchi**

**Theme: Tribal Identity and Resistance Narratives – II**

1. Violina Borah (JNU, New Delhi): “R/establishing Identity: Reading Violence through Mahasweta Devi’s *The Hunt*”
2. Moumita Roy (Delhi University, New Delhi): “A Comparative Study of Mahasweta Devi’s *Aranyer Adhikar*(1979) and African-American Texts”
3. Juhi R.V. Minz (JNU, New Delhi): “Reaffirming the Identity of the Tribal Woman: An Exploration of Mahasweta Devi’s *Imaginary Maps*”
4. Shabeena Kuttay (Govt. Degree College, Bemina-Srinagar): “Existence and Identity: The Intellectual Discourse of Arundhati Roy on Tribal Resistance”

#### **PARALLEL SESSION 2: 10.00 – 11.15 AM**

**Venue: MIR ANEES HALL**

**Chaired by: Dr. Sandesha Rayappa-Garbiyal (JNU, New Delhi)**

**Theme: Land, Identity and Tribal Autobiographical Narratives**

1. P. Rajitha Venugopal (JMI, New Delhi): “Grappling with Modernity: Narayan’s *Kocharethi* as a Metaphor of Adivasi Lives in Kerala”
2. Mahi S. Thavarathu (JNU, New Delhi): “Diminishing the Stereotypes: Re-presenting the Tribals of Kerala in *Kocherethi* and *Odiyan*”
3. Vasundhara Gautam (BML Manjul University, Gurgaon): “*Apne Ghar Ki Talash Mein*: Identity, Subjectivity and Home in Nirmala Putul’s Works”
4. Rakesh Soni (IGNTU, Amarkantak), “The Concept of Indigenous Knowledge”

**PLENARY SESSION 4: 11.30 AM – 1.00 PM**

**TRIBAL WRITERS’ MEET**

**Panelists:** Neetisha Xalxo (Oraon poet and literary critic, Gargi College, New Delhi) & Sunder Manoj Hembrom (Santal fiction writer, West Bengal)

**Chaired by:** Prof. Anand Mahanand (EFL, Hyderabad) & Dr. Ganga Sahay Meena (SLLCS, JNU, Delhi)

**LUNCH BREAK**

**PLENARY SESSION 5: 2.00 – 2.45 PM**

**Venue:** TAGORE HALL

**TALK on “Human Trafficking in Tribal India: A Focus on Jharkhand”**

**Delivered by:** Sister Jemma Toppo, founder-member of *Asha Kiran*, Ranchi & recipient of *Jharkhand Samaan 2015*

**Chaired by:** Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak (JMI, New Delhi)

**PARALLEL SESSION 3: 2.45 – 4.00 PM**

**Venue:** TAGORE HALL

**Chaired by:** Prof. Bipin Jojo (TISS, Mumbai)

**Theme:** The ‘Tribe’ defined in Social Sciences

1. Shreya Jessica Dhan (JNU, New Delhi): “Defining the ‘Tribe’ in State Discourse: From Adivasi and Schedule Tribe to Indigenous Peoples”
2. Anu Krishna (TISS, Mumbai): “Plantation Development and Tribes: Experiences of Expropriation of Land, History and Identity - A Case of the Mannans
3. Pradyumna Bag (JMI, New Delhi): “Denial of Differences: Examining the Marginalization of Tribal Cultures and Languages”
4. Evy Mehzabeen (JNU, New Delhi): “The Tribe Against Itself: Narratives of Ethnicity and Othering of the Bodos and the Adivasis in Bodoland”

**PARALLEL SESSION 4: 2.45 - 4.00 PM**

**Venue:** MIR ANEES HALL

**Chaired by:** Prof. Mukesh Ranjan (JMI, New Delhi)

**Theme:** Global Perspectives on Indigenous Communities

1. Rishav Chatterjee (Jadavpur University, Kolkata):“Folk Adaptations of Tagore and Shakespeare: Reconceptualizing Canons as a Transition from the Periphery to the Centre”
2. Ekta Khandway (JMI, New Delhi): “Inversion of the Locus of Enunciation of knowledge in *Time Commences in Xibalba* by Luis de Lion”

### **TEA BREAK**

#### **PARALLEL SESSION 5: 4.15 – 6.00 PM**

**Venue: TAGORE HALL**

**Chaired by: Prof. Sonajharia Minz (JNU, New Delhi)**

**Theme: Indigenous Communities Negotiating with Modernity**

1. Vijay Baraik (IGNOU, New Delhi): “Tribal Education and Employment Situation in Jharkhand”
2. Dhaneshwar Bhoi & Neelima Rashmi Lakra (TISS, Mumbai): “Scheduled Tribes, Access to Higher Education and Employability Question”
3. Bidyut Suman Ekka (TISS, Mumbai): “Education as a means of Entrepreneurial Exploration: A Multiple Case Study Approach among the Tribes of Odisha”
4. Gomati Bodra Hembrom (JMI, New Delhi):“Adivasi Script Movement: Identity, Education and Cultural Revitalization”

#### **PARALLEL SESSION 6: 4.15 – 6.00 PM**

**Venue: MIR ANEES HALL**

**Chair: Dr. Mridula Rashmi Kindo (IGNOU, New Delhi)**

**Theme: Tribal Knowledge Systems, Values and Traditions**

1. Arun Kumar Oraon (JNU, New Delhi), “Contribution of Tribal Society to Modern Medicine”
2. Sandesha Rayapa-Garbiyal (JNU, New Delhi), “Runglwo: Undergoing a much-awaited Paradigm Shift”
3. Teresa Tudu (BHU, Varanasi): “Tribal Literature: Santhals and their Cultural Anxiety”
4. Shimi Moni Doley (JMI, New Delhi): “Text, Context and Reader: An Ideological Reading of *Miri Jiyori*”

#### **VALEDICTORY SESSION: 6.15 – 7.30 PM**

**Venue: TAGORE HALL**

**Valedictory Speech: Prof. Joseph Bara, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh, India**

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## ***REPORT***

### **DAY ONE (27<sup>th</sup> February 2017)**

#### **INAUGURAL SESSION**

The Inaugural Session began with the *Tilaawat* (Recitation from the Holy Quran). Prof. Ameena Kazi Ansari, Head of the Dept of English, JMI, was requested to deliver the Welcome Speech.

The dignitaries are then invited to the dais. The student volunteers felicitated them with bouquets and a tribal flute as they came to the dais. They were:

- Prof. Talat Ahmad, Vice-Chancellor of Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, who presided over the Session
- Prof. T.K. Oommen, Emeritus Professor, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and recipient of Padma Bhushan, who was the Guest of Honour
- Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Professor of Eminence, Tezpur University, Assam and Chairman of Xaxa Committee, who was the Keynote Speaker

The Convener of the Conference, Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak, then introduced the theme of the Conference in a short speech. This was followed by the formal inauguration of the Conference with the beating of a tribal drum by the three dignitaries.

The three dignitaries then delivered their speeches. After the VC had left the event, Prof. M. Asaduddin, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities & Languages, JMI, presided over by the session.

The Inaugural session ended with the Vote of Thanks by Ms. Shimi Moni Doley.







### **My Inaugural Speech at the Conference**

Dear and respected Vice-Chancellor of Jamia, Prof Talat Ahmad, respected Guest of Honour, Prof. T.K. Oommen, respected Keynote Speaker, Prof. Virginius Xaxa, respected Prof. M. Asaduddin, Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Languages, JMI, respected Prof. Ameena Kazi Ansari, Head of the Department of English, JMI, my dear colleagues, friends and research scholars, a very good morning to all of you !

Three years ago, in March 2014, the first ‘Tribes in Transition’ Conference was held at Shantiniketan amidst the undulating greenery of West Bengal and in collaboration with a tribal NGO, the Ghosaldanga-Bishnubati Adibasi Trust (GBAT). The Conference being held today is a continuation of that because both are meant to celebrate tribal identity and to spread awareness of the *Angst* being felt among the tribal people of India in recent times, an *Angst* caused by their exclusion from traditional rights over resources and aggravated by extreme deprivation and exploitation at various levels.

Tribal identity has been foregrounded in this Conference because I believe this issue has been shrouded in polite silence for too long. While benefiting from affirmative action in some

cases, Adivasis or indigenous people in India also feel the claustrophobic confines of their identity which has been imposed on them by others, be it the colonial administrator, the colonial anthropologist, the missionary or the neo-liberal, neo-imperialist forces that rule global economy today. This Conference will strive to change our ways of looking at the Adivasi so that identity becomes a source of strength and celebration, instead of shame and silence.

Let me begin by asking a very simple and somewhat naïve question: Is tribal identity relevant in today's world? This question holds many answers and every answer brings us to many more questions. As a beginning, let me quote from GN Devy's seminal anthology of tribal literature, *Painted Words*:

“In contemporary practice, the tribal memory is greatly undermined. There is general insistence that tribal children attend schools where non-tribal children attend schools, that they use medicines manufactured for others and that they adopt common agricultural practices. All because the world has very little time to listen patiently to the tribals, with their immense knowledge and creativity. We have decided that what is good for us is good enough for them. In the process we are destroying a rich vein of our cultural heritage. Tribal communities are distinguished by the absence of the caste system or any other form of discrimination, and respect for every member of the community can be seen in every aspect of their lives. Among tribals, widows are not ignored, raped women are not stigmatized and orphans are not left to beg. Tribals do not exploit other people's labour for the sake of their own avarice, nor do they destroy nature to build monuments to the human ego.”

With these few words, I welcome all of you to the ICSSR-sponsored National Conference on “Tribes in Transition” Part II and wish you a memorable stay at Jamia Millia Islamia Central University. Johar !



## **Plenary Session 1: Tribal Memory, Folklore and Hindu Epic Narratives**

**PLENARY SESSION 1: 11.30 – 1.00 PM**

**Venue: TAGORE HALL**

**Chaired by:** Prof. M. Asaduddin, Dean, Faculty of Humanities & Languages, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**Paper Presenters:** Dr. Athikho Kaisii (JMI, Delhi), Dr. Pravin Kumar (IGNTU, Amarkantak), Dr Ananya Barua (Hindu College, Delhi). Dr. Saroj Kumar Mahananda (JMI, Delhi) and Norkey Wangmu Yolmo (Sikkim University, Gangtok).

The session began with Prof. M. Asaduddin welcoming everyone in the conference Hall. He is the award-winning translator of Saadat Hasan Manto and Ismat Chughtai, and also the Dean of the School of Humanities and Languages, JMI. He is the recipient of Katha Translation Award 1991 & 1992, the Dr. AK Ramanujan Award 1993, the Sahitya Akademi Award 2004 and the Crossword Book Award 2013. He reminded the participants to look at things in continuity from the Inaugural session so as to provide a comprehensive and in-depth perspective. He further briefly summarised Prof. Virginius Xaxa's speech and added how there has been a constant tussle between the people from the hills and the plains, and that the narrative of victimhood needs to be looked at from various critical perspective. He then reiterated how such a Conference becomes an excellent forum to discuss things in different perspectives and provide a balanced view. Lastly, he formally invited the first speaker Athikho Kaisii to begin with the session.

**Athikho Kaisii**, began his paper "Oral Literature and Memory: A Study of Tribal Folklore", by posing pertinent questions on the idea of Literature, Orature and Text. He focused on the issue of narrative and debates, asking whether orature is contrary to literature, and whether literature pre-existed text. He highlighted how oral literature does not depend upon authorship but on interpretation and oral translation. Kaisii further stressed on the role of memory in tribal literature due to the non-availability of printed text. This memory is preserved in the form of songs, dances, riddles, adages, yells and cries etc. shared and transferred by a number of people providing a kaleidoscopic view of shared knowledge. Kaisii further delved into the history and various definitions of the term Folklore. He particularly discussed two tribes of Manipur – the Maos and the Poumais; further giving

insights into their rites and rituals. He concluded his paper by discussing how these folksongs and dances became the medium of cultural transmission.

**Pravin Kumar** started his presentation on “Depiction of Life Values in Tribal Literature” by highlighting how Adivasi Sahitya is oral and that for them the terms *chalna* and *bolna* in Hindi is equivalent to ‘dance’ and ‘song’ respectively. He further defined the term Adivasi as *Manusya* or human beings and stressed how one should be looked at as human beings first and then other identities can be attached later. Kumar recited various poems and established how Adivasi Sahitya talks primarily of humanity. Social identity is enforced upon us automatically, he said. He further discussed the idea of *Jal*, *Jungle* and *Jameen*, and emphasised how when these three are destroyed in the name of globalisation, the core construction of Adivasi culture and language is also destroyed. He ended his presentation by focussing on the need to include tribal literature and language in the school curriculum, especially in higher education.

**Ananya Barua** spoke about the various forms of the Hindu epic, *Ramayana*, in her paper “The *Karbi Ramayana* in Assam and its Modern Re-telling in Documentary Film”. According to her, the *Ramayana* exists in various cultures and in different languages in Assam, Manipur, Mizoram and other various parts of the North-East. Rama and Lakshman exist as Rawa and Khena in Mizo folk songs, thus reminding us of the deep impact of the *Ramayana* in North-East culture. She further gave a detailed account of the tribal group Karbis and how they migrated to Assam. She mentioned how the Karbi film, *Sabin Alun*, is a living oral tradition of the animalistic tribal society of the Karbis of Assam and examined their oral singing traditions in its multi-layers. She ended the presentation by concluding that Karbi women have taken up the Sita myth and appropriated it as their own to give women a voice.

**Saroj Kumar Mahananda** began the presentation on “The Familiar Case of the Nishad in the *Mahabharata*: An Alternate Reading” by reminding everyone that to make sense of the present, one must revisit the past. And this could be done by revisiting the narratives through different times - mythology, colonial and post-colonial. He questioned the term identity and asked how is it made, for whom and for what purpose? He stated that there is a need of an alternate reading of the past. **Abhishek Pundir**, his co-presenter, then continued to throw light on the case of the Nishads who figure in the Hindu epic, *Mahabharata*. He started with the dictionary definitions of the term “tribe” and how the Nishads were variously known as

Savar/ Shabar/Sahara or Bhil. He recounted various incidents and scenes from the epics and the issue of Brahmanical appropriation and sanskritization of various Nishad icons. He provided enlightening insights into the politics of representation and its ramifications in modern India by quoting the Census Reports in different years. He ended the presentation by asking pertinent questions such as: “Was Eklavya liable for *guru-dakshina* even though he was rejected as a student?”

**Norkey Wangmu Yolmo** began her presentation on “Yolmo Funeral at Homeland and Abroad” by asking the question: Who are the Yolmos? She stated that Yolmo is a place in the North-Eastern part of Nepal and presents the history of the Yolmo community briefly. She described the distinct Yolmo cultural practices and traditions, distinguishing them from other Tibeto-Buddhist communities. Particular focus was given to the funeral procession of the Yolmos which follows the rules and rituals of the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. She further discussed the importance of the chant “Mani Chhepa”, a mantra-dance ritual chanted in the funeral, which ironically also served as entertainment. Due to lack of education and opportunities, the Yolmo tribe has slowly started migrating to India. As a result of this, there have been ruptures in the sacred cultural traditions. New altered customs were brought in, replacing or adjusting the old ones. She ended by saying that every individual must move forward by moving a little backward, to preserve the rich traditions of the past, which would otherwise be lost forever with the passing of the older generation.

After the reading of the papers, the house was opened for questions and comments. A number of perspectives emerged in the general discussion. A participant questioned Athikho Kaisii whether scientific knowledge can be imparted with the help of folklore. He raised the question of the local versus universal knowledge. Another participant asked Ananya Barua whether the need of the hour is to look at these myths from counter-discursive points of view. One participant disagreed with Pravin Kumar and said Adivasis should focus on their native rights rather than human rights, as argued by Pravin Kumar in his presentation. Another participant asked Athikho Kaisii whether the tribal songs and dances are available in a documented format and Athikho replied in the affirmative.

In the concluding remarks, the Chair, Prof. M. Asaduddin summarised the session and gave his brief but expert insight into each paper presented. He agreed how the possibilities of alternate readings to these myths revitalises the discipline and opens the discussions even further. Lastly, he thanked all presenters and participants and invited them for lunch outside.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Sarika Chhetry)



### **Plenary session 2: Tribal Identity and Resistance Narratives**

**Chaired by:** Padmashri Prof. Anvita Abbi, Formerly Professor in Linguistics, JNU, New Delhi, currently Hon. Director, Centre for Oral and Tribal Literature, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi & President, Linguistic Society of India.

**Paper Presenters:** Bipasha Rosy Lakra (JNU, Delhi), Dr. Ved Prakash (Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer), Sudipto Mukhopadhyay (Kalyani University, West Bengal), Mridula Rashmi Kindo (IGNOU, Delhi), Nupur Chawla (JMI, Delhi) and Saheb Ram Tudu (Artist, Cognizant Tech Solutions, Kolkata).

Prof. Anvita Abbi introduced the six speakers who presented some interesting papers on tribal identity and resistance narratives, narratives in the form of interviews, music, poems, short fiction and paintings. Each paper talked about the struggles of the tribal people to save their land from exploitation in the garb of a flawed development model.

**Bipasha Rosy Lakra**, through her paper “Perspectives from the Margins: Examining Adivasi Narrative of the Naxalbari movement in West Bengal, 1967-72”, investigated the role of Adivasis in the Naxalbari movement. She used the transcripts of interviews of Adivasis who were a part of the movement during 1967-72. She concluded that in popular historiography

the role of Adivasis was undermined, especially that of women. The whole movement is gender-blinded and the role of female comrades is diminished.

**Ved Prakash's** paper "Rhythms of Resistance: A Study of the Kondh Tribe of Orissa through 'Blood Earth Project'" looked at music as a site of resistance. He referred to Taru Dalmia's Blood Earth Project which focussed on the exploitation of the tribes of Orissa whose lands were taken away from them in order to build huge factories. The songs also deal with the theme of homelessness and the failure of state machinery to provide help to these tribal areas. They are sung in the unwritten Kui language and use many idioms from Kui which carry the rich heritage of the people. The resistance music is inspired by the Jamaican Reggae music and the paper tries to problematize the notion of voice in the protest songs.

**Sudipto Mukhopadhyay's** paper "Revisiting *Aranyer Adhikar*: in Theory and Practice" analyzed Mahasweta Devi's text on tribal war for their traditional right to forest resources. The paper problematized the notion of theory versus practice and tried to formulate a methodology of study of the tribes in transition, specifically focusing on the Santal (Santhal) community. The 'right to forest' is one such paradigm of identity formation that has been appropriated by the Adivasis which bears its evidence in the oral narratives/performances contingent to each community. This concept, theoretically speaking, provides one with the 'right' to the resources of the forest and the Adivasi lands. But in practical reality, the 'rights' are often transferred and substituted to a larger bourgeois world. At this juncture, do we need to revise the definition of the concept of the 'right to forest'. Yet the question remains, how do we reconcile the two?

**Nupur Chawla,** in her paper "Representing/ Re-presenting Conflict: A Study of Temsula Ao's Short Fiction", examined Temsula Ao's writings that represent Naga society and the ongoing conflict between its people and the government. The way Ao depicted the conflict in her short stories such as "The Last Song", "The Jungle Major" and "Letter" in her book, *These Hills Called Home*, is distinct in its objectivity and humanistic concerns. She also discussed Ao's concerns through her short fiction where the author urges the youngsters to be in touch with their painful past and culture by giving importance to memory.

**Mridula Rashmi Kindo,** in her paper "Tribal Poems of Protest of Jharkhand as Powerful Expressions", translated a tribal poem written in the Oraon/ Kurukh language to English and talked about the displacement of people because of the Netarhat firing range in the



Chhotanagpur area. Tribals in the poem are determined to save their land and are willing to lay down their lives. For the tribals, land gives them identity, and existence is directly related to land. The picturesque narrative of the poem contains repetitions which bring out the urgency to oppose the governmental authorities. This poem, originally in Kurukh, had an important place in the agitation and motivated the tribal by giving them a voice.

**Saheb Ram Tudu** in his paper “Illustrating the Santhal Rebellion of 1855-56 in *Disaeabon Hul*” talked about his work on the Santhal *Hul* (Rebellion) of 1855-56 through paintings made by him for the children’s story book, *Disaeabon Hul*, published by Adivaani Publishing House, Kolkata. The idea of recreating the forgotten history of the Santhal *Hul* (Rebellion) and its two leaders, Sido and Kanhu Murmu, provided the inspiration for his work. His paper is from the perspective of an artist who found inspiration in the terrifying world of state control.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Mansi Grover)



### **Plenary Session 3: Panel Discussion on “The Future of Tribal Oral Culture in the Age of Globalization/ Digitalization”**

**Chaired by:** Prof. Virginius Xaxa, Professor of Eminence, Tezpur University, Assam & Chairman of Xaxa Planning Committee



**Panellists:** Prof. Joseph Bara (IGNTU, Amarkantak), Prof. Bipin Jojo (TISS, Mumbai), Prof. Anand Mahanand (EFL University, Hyderabad), Dr. Shreya Bhattacharji (CUJ, Ranchi) and Dr. Ganga Sahay Meena (JNU, Delhi).

**Joseph Bara** began by indicating how the twentieth century had been a landmark period in the history of tribal literature. He gave reference of several colonial writers, historians and anthropologists who compiled data about the various tribes of India. Such colonial documentation included Encyclopaedia Britannica of Tribes in general, several volumes on Santhal folklore, and other writings that were inspired by: i) a strong wave of humanitarianism; ii) the spurt in anthropological and ethnological work. Before colonial and administrative documentation, there had been writings by missionaries, who even took the effort of learning the language of the tribes. But all these writings saw the tribes as the ‘others’ who needed ‘reform’. In some cases, the tribals themselves were closely involved in providing details to the compilers of these works, as in the case of Verrier Elwin and G.S. Ghurye. The whole body of writings on the tribes has been marked by i) Orientalist stereotyping ii) nationalism, because of which they were largely misrepresentations. The speaker concluded by emphasizing on the need to critique the existing narratives and knowledge systems about the tribals in India.

**Bipin Jojo’s** talk focused on the Tribal/ Adivasi epistemology with a perspective from within. European epistemology was based on ‘othering’ and the binaries of superior/ inferior and core/periphery. To counter the European epistemologies, indigenous epistemologies have arisen from different non-European regions of the world. In the Indian context, the tribal epistemology should take care of four aspects: i) the paradigm of analysis, i.e., there is no postcolonial in the context of Adivasis in India, as they are still experiencing internal colonization; ii) the notion of protection; iii) the notion of modernity; iv) the degree of authenticity, as tribal narratives and forms of knowledge cannot be generalized owing to their located-ness and relativity. They are not universal and absolute, but dynamic, temporal, and based on time, space and person. Further, Western epistemology has considered oral societies as being devoid of histories, while they do appropriate these histories in different ways. The binaries on which these studies are premised are unfair – such as those of oral/written, civilized/ uncivilized, subjective/ objective. They consider documentation as authentic and deride the authenticity of oral cultures. They are unmindful of the fact that the documentation is also not free from subjective ideological interventions. They ignore the fact that oral

tradition has the possibility of dialogue which is absent in written. Therefore, it is necessary for tribal studies to counter the epistemologies from outside and develop an epistemology with a perspective from within.

**Anand Mahanand** spoke about orality and writing, and issues of translation when oral culture is transcribed into written narratives (with reference to Oriya folk tales). Folktales are orally narrated and performed with the speaker's gestures, voice modulations, imitation of characters, and improvisations. They are also participated by the audience. When oral tales take the form of written narratives, they undergo several changes at the level of language, culture, genre and audience; from tribal language to standardized Oriya language, which in turn involves appropriation of cultures. In terms of genre, they change from oral performances of songs and stories to written narratives. The audience changes from participant performers - both literate or illiterate - to passive readers of a text, often from another community. Tribal folktales reflect the culture, rituals and practices of a people, which get uprooted, alienated and frozen in written narratives in an alien language. From public performances, they become reduced to a private activity. Gestures such as jumping and dancing are lost in the written form. The paper concluded by posing some pertinent questions such as the following: If there are these many losses and issues in translating oral cultures to written ones, then should such endeavours be taken up? If yes, what are the aspects of translation to be taken care of, so that the vivacity of a living culture is not lost in translation?

**Shreya Bhattacharji** presented on the "Unique Cultural Mosaic of the Lepcha Community of Kalingpong". This community has been reduced from being a rich and vibrant culture to a dying tribe. Across history they have been prone to attacks and invasions such as the Tibetan influx of the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Bhutanese invasion in the 1700s, religious invasions and conversions. Today, they are spread across three countries – India, Nepal and Bhutan. They are thrice marginalized, and today their culture is almost extinct or deeply threatened. They have displayed a tremendous history of tolerance, despite the several forms of onslaughts on them. Their governance pattern was remarkable by virtue of being casteless, creedless, and having a communal ownership of land. They were a community that gave immense respect to women. They had traditional judicial system by which conflicts were easily resolved. Because of the politics of exclusion and distortion, there is a threat of erosion of this indigenous, socio-cultural, gender-friendly tradition and its institutions.

**Ganga Sahay Meena** expressed the concern whether Adivasi philosophy can be preserved in the age of globalization and free market economy. To preserve the Adivasi philosophy, the language should be preserved. This is borne out by the survey conducted by G. N. Devy, while compiling details about most of the extinct and endangered languages of the Adivasis in his voluminous work, *People's Linguistic Survey of India*.

(Student Rapporteur: Mr. Niyas Ahamad)



## **DAY TWO (28<sup>th</sup> February 2017)**

### **Parallel session 1: Tribal Identity and Resistance Narratives**

**Chaired by:** Prof. Shreya Bhattacharji, CUJ, Ranchi

**Paper Presenters:** Violina Borah (JNU, New Delhi), Moumita Roy (Delhi University, New Delhi), Juhi R.V. Minz (JNU, New Delhi), Shabeena Kuttay (Govt. Degree College, Bemina-Srinagar).

**Violina Borah** presented a paper titled “R/establishing Identity: Reading Violence through Mahasweta Devi’s *The Hunt*.” The paper explored the endemic nature of violence as depicted in the story and how colonial repressive structures come to be replicated by the colonized. Through the character of Mary, Borah’s paper sought to expose the multiple layers of marginalization that can operate even in a tribal community.

**Moumita Roy** presented a paper titled “A Comparative Study of Mahasweta Devi’s *Aranyer Adhikar* and African American Texts.” She sought to highlight the resonances between the narratives of tribes in India and African American narratives. The primary point of reference was the location of bodies, tribal and black at the site of incarceration.

**Juhi R V Minz** presented a paper titled “Reaffirming the Identity of the Tribal Woman: An Exploration of Mahasweta Devi’s *Imaginary Maps*” which highlighted how the author exposed the nuances of oppression that tribal women are subject to. The presentation also sought to recover tribal culture from the misrepresentation of mainstream media.

**Shabeena Kuttay** presented a paper titled “Existence and Identity: The Intellectual Discourse of Arundhati Roy on Tribal Resistance.” The paper pointed to the irony of an independent India which supposedly granted constitutional rights to all its subjects alike, yet threatened the existence of tribal communities in the pursuit of flawed model of growth. It stressed the importance of intellectual interventions to curb the Indian State’s replication of the imperial model of development, leading to the rampant denial of tribal resources which, in turn, translated into a denial of their identity and their very existence.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Aateka Khan)



## Parallel Session 2: Land, Identity and Tribal Autobiographical Narratives

**Chaired by:** Sandesha Rayappa, JNU, New Delhi

**Paper Presenters:** Mahi S. Thavarathu (JNU, New Delhi), P. Rajitha Venugopal (JMI, New Delhi), Vasundhara Gautam (BML Manjul University, Gurgaon), Rakesh Soni (IGNTU, Amarkantak).

**Mahi S. Thavarathu**, through her paper: “Diminishing the Stereotypes: Re-presenting the Tribals of Kerala in *Kocharethi* and *Odiyan*”, questioned the dominant notions governing ‘purity’ and ‘morality’ in a civilised society, and also highlighted the process of ‘othering’ of the tribal people. The paper specifically looked at the mis/representations of Malaaraya tribe which is rapidly facing the perils of Hinduisation and Sanskritisation. To correct the image of the tribe, the presenter relied on the semi-autobiographical novel by Narayan, and read the novel as an act of resistance against the misrepresentation of the community by the academic and the literary world. The paper also engaged with the changing contours of identity, displacement and crisis, set in motion by modernity.

**P. Rajitha Venugopal** presented a paper titled “Grappling with Modernity: Narayan’s *Kocharethi* as a Metaphor of Adivasi Lives in Kerala.” This paper was an attempt to look at how modernity served as a “double-edged phenomenon” as far as the Malaaraya community depicted in Narayan’s *Kocharethi* are concerned. This paper also studied how Narayan’s act of narration and tracing the transition of the community serves both as a counter-representation as well as an act of self-assessment. It was argued in the context of the innate limitation of history that the dominant narrative inevitably overlooks different strands of culture, beliefs and traditions, with a vicious inclination to homogenise and standardise. Narayan’s *Kocharethi* was read as a text posing threat to the dominant representations of the tribe (Malaaraya). By analysing the depiction of three generations of a tribal family, she

reflected on the changing trajectories in the socio-cultural life of the community and unveiled the complexities generated by modernity. The identity-negotiations occurring in the face of rapid modernity exhibit the transformations in the internal structures of the community, as modernity manifests itself as a liberating force that inevitable results in the erasure or appropriation of tribal ethics.

**Vasundhara Gautam**, in her paper “*Apne Ghar Ki Talash Mein: Identity, Subjectivity and Home in Nirmala Putul’s Works*”, argued that tribals have been misrepresented in colonial and pre-colonial historiography and emerge as the most marginal of the social groups. The biases that informed the colonial and pre-colonial historiographers exist today in form of certain stereotypes which need to be dismantled. With a view to making the required corrections, she engaged with the poetic world of Nirmala Putul and read her works in their appropriate socio-cultural milieu. She observed that Adivasi women in post-independence era have suffered because tribes have assimilated within the dominant patriarchal model. The idea of ‘identity’ and ‘home’ appear to be more problematic in case of an Adivasi woman, and here, she posits that we need to rescue tribal narratives from a certain homogenising tendency.

**Rakesh Soni**, through his paper “The Concept of Indigenous Knowledge” enunciated the characteristics of three kinds of knowledge namely - universal knowledge, community knowledge and individual knowledge. The two types of knowledge, universal and individual, can help us to understand reality from its own views. Self-realization of reality has both individual and universal character and knowledge happening simultaneously. At this stage, individual acts are universal but also bound with the individual’s physical body that is governed and regulated by *Prarabddha karma*. In this context, he laid importance on the community knowledge. Community knowledge means such knowledge whose validity and

verification is made by a particular community or ethnic group that resides in a particular land or territory and has a particular cultural identity. In some cases, it is also known as indigenous or tribal knowledge

(Student Rapporteur: Mr. Abhishek Pundir)



#### **Plenary Session 4: TRIBAL WRITERS' MEET**

**Chaired by:** Prof. Anand Mahanand (Dept of English, EFL, Hyderabad) & Dr. Ganga Sahay Meena (Dept of Hindi, SLLCS, JNU, New Delhi)

**Nitisha Khalkho**, a poet from the Oraon community has written the poetry collection titled *Kalam Ko Teer Hone Do*. As she read out some of her poems, her versatility was evident. She spoke about her poems in which she has written about the Adivasi society, the ways in which an Adivasi girl is approached in university politics and various other contemporary issues. She expressed the concern as to why is it expected of the Adivasi writers to write only about a particular theme. She writes most of her poems in Hindi because she has to reach a larger number of people.

**Sunder Manoj Hembrom**, a prolific short story writer in Santhali language, spoke about the impact of globalization on Adivasi literature. He read out some excerpts from his short story



collection, *Sengel Buru*, which were on themes such as personal turmoil, social transformation of Santhals and their resultant *angst*. He writes with an aim to document memories, to celebrate his identity and tradition. This Tribal Writers' Meet brought forward the struggles, the anxieties, and the process of writing of the Adivasi writers.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Rajitha Venugopal)



### **Plenary Session 5: Human Trafficking in Tribal India: A Focus on Jharkhand**

**Presented by:** Sister Gemma Toppo, Ursuline Convent, Ranchi, Jharkhand

**Chaired by:** Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**Sister Gemma Toppo**, founder-member of the Ranchi-based NGO, Asha Kiran, Ranchi, and recipient of the *Jharkhand Samaan* 2015, began the session by reflecting upon her NGO that rescues young girls from the network of human trafficking. The enriching presentation enlightened the audience regarding the varied nuances, purposes and effects of human trafficking. The victims of this human trade suffer life-long impact of marginalization and they require proper counselling and rehabilitation. The talk provided insights into the difference between migration and trafficking, and the way human trafficking is modern-day slavery. Sister Gemma Toppo has been instrumental in the rescue of these girls and their



rehabilitation in her NGO. Through her work, she has been able to provide new hope to the survivors of human trade by teaching them various skills so that they could live their lives independently.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Rajitha Venugopal)



### **Parallel Session 3: The ‘Tribe’ defined in Social Sciences**

**Chaired by:** Prof. Bipin Jojo, TISS, Mumbai

**Paper Presenters:** Shreya Jessica Dhan (JNU, New Delhi), Anu Krishnan (TISS, Mumbai), Pradyumna Bag (JMI, New Delhi), Evy Mehzabeen (JNU, New Delhi).

**Shreya Jessica Dhan**, in her paper “Defining the ‘Tribe’ in State Discourse: From Adivasi and Schedule Tribe to Indigenous Peoples”, pointed out the problematic construction of ‘tribe’ in sociological discourse that has worked to the disadvantage of its members. The nation-state’s changing definition of the ‘tribal’ is informed by certain stereotypes or prejudices, by preserving the tribal identity, in an implicit manner, as being ‘barbaric’ and ‘uncivilised’. The tribal worldview has never been taken cognizance of, while working out

the definition of 'tribe' and, instead, there is imposition of certain state-sanctioned identity whereby the tribal's identity-crisis is magnified.

**Anu Krishnan**, in her paper "Plantation Development and Tribes: Experiences of Expropriation of Land, History and Identity-A Case of Mannans", argued that owing to old colonial practices of 'plantation', the indigenous Mannan people lost their land and were rendered dependents on the activities pertaining to cultivation of cardamom. The 'development' of their land as cardamom plantation continued even after Independence; the colonial model of plantation development was in totality adopted by the nation-state, and it marked a cultural onslaught on the tribal people. The development model alienated tribals from their land, their culture and diluted their worldview. In the second part of her presentation, she focussed on the resistance offered by the Mannan tribe through their oral literature. The retaliation to the 'development' model was highlighted as exhibited in the folk traditions.

**Pradyumna Bag**, in his paper "Denial of Differences: Examining the Marginalisation of Tribal Cultures and Languages", highlighted the process of homogenisation and assimilation that has neglected the differences in the identity of various tribes. He also pointed out that the dominant structures have appropriated certain identities which are best suited, and other identities are excluded from the gambit of their discourse; the structures thus imposed to understand tribal identities marginalise a large section of the populace that do not fit in the identity matrix. He also argued the approach to understand 'tribe/tribal' within the social structure of Hinduism is doomed to fail because the religion is itself a conglomeration of various schools of thought, often contradictory to each other.

**Evy Mehzabeen**, in her paper, "The Tribe against Itself: Narratives of Ethnicity and Othering of the Bodos and Adivasis in Bodoland", examined the dominant narratives of/on Bodos and

pointed that Bodos are taken to be the indigenous people of the land and thus allowed free access to forest and natural resources, and other ‘Adivasis’ are constructed as ‘outsiders’ who do not belong to the land and are not allowed the same access. The narrative ties one tribe to the land and disenfranchises the other from its natural resources. The politics of hegemony thus manifested is centred on the belongingness to a piece of territory where tribal identity is constructed and defined to negotiate the access to forest and land of every tribal community. She also examined the problematic of belonging to a territory which also gives a cue about the politic of disowning and marginalising people.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Kanu Priya)



#### **Parallel Session 4: Global Perspectives on Indigenous Communities**

**Chaired by:** Dr. Mukesh Ranjan, Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi & Coordinator, Outreach Programme, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi.

**Paper Presenters:** Rishav Chatterjee (Jadavpur University, Kolkata), Ekta Khandway (JMI, New Delhi).

**Rishav Chatterjee** presented a paper titled “Folk Adaptations of Tagore and Shakespeare: Reconceptualising Canons as a Transition from Periphery to the Centre.” This paper focused on tribal adaptations of canonical texts such as those of Shakespeare and Tagore into the genre of folk in rural West Bengal, and the roles these adaptations play in cultural negotiation, in exposing tribal culture and in helping to redefine the notion of the tribe. In West Bengal, the genre of folk performances are increasingly stepping out of ritualistic narratives and embracing popular texts. An example of the same can be gleaned from the tribal performance of Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Raktakarabi’ which has been showcased at EZCC, Santiniketan. Similarly, of late the stages of Kolkata have witnessed the reaffirmation of tribal performance in the narration of Shakespeare’s *Midsummer Nights’ Dream*, which has been adapted as *Fagun Ratter Goppo* by the Rabindra Bharati Repertoire. Both these groups have synthesized the presentation of Shakespeare and Tagore’s classical narrative with tribal performance elements.

**Ekta Khandway** presented a paper titled “Inversion of the Locus of Enunciation of Knowledge in *Time Commences in Xibalba* by Louis de Lion.” This paper focused on the subversion of eurocentrism in the geopolitics of knowledge, the outright rejection and disruption of the status quo of colonial decolonization of Guatemala, the process of inversion of the ‘knowledge/power relation’ and creation of an alternative locus of enunciation of knowledge away from the western epistemology. These ideas were explored in the context of de Lion’s novel, which epitomizes a new project of epistemological and political decolonization of indigenous community.



### **Parallel Session 5: Indigenous Communities Negotiating with Modernity**

**Chaired by:** Prof. Sonajharia Minz, School of Computer & Systems Sciences, JNU, New Delhi, India.

**Paper Presenters:** Vijay Baraik (IGNOU, New Delhi), Dhaneshwar Bhoi & Neelima Rashmi Lakra (TISS, Mumbai), Bidyut Suman Ekka (TISS, Mumbai), Gomati Bodra Hembrom (JMI, New Delhi).

**Vijay Baraik** presented a paper titled “Tribal Education and Employment Situation in Jharkhand.” In the context of the glaring contradiction of rich resourcefulness on the one hand and dire poverty and backwardness on the other hand, which is the reality of Jharkhand, this paper analysed the situation of tribal education and employment in the State, based on secondary data from government and non-government sources.

**Dhaneshwar Bhoi** and **Neelima Rashmi Lakra** presented a paper titled “Scheduled Tribes Access to Higher Education and Employability Question.” This paper analysed the accessibility of tribal students to higher education and its impact on their employability at a national level. This paper also studied the socio-economic and educational background of the

tribal students, the environmental condition in their families and neighbourhoods, and the facilities and support system available to them to continue education in comparison to non-tribal students and the corresponding ratio of their employability.

**Bidyut Suman Ekka** presented a paper titled “Education as a means of Entrepreneurial Exploration: A Multiple Case Study Approach among the tribes of Odisha.” This paper delved into the rural tribal people’s advantage of the formal and informal education in exploring entrepreneurial ventures. The study focused on detailed analysis of four tribal individuals engaged in entrepreneurial activities, and discussed the knowledge acquired through formal and informal education, its usability in accessing credit under Government programmes, and applying that knowledge in technical and managerial aspects of their business practices.

**Gomati Bodra Hembrom** presented a paper titled “Adivasi Script Movement: Identity, Education and Cultural Revitalisation.” This paper was a sociological analysis of the script movement among the Adivasis in Orissa and Jharkhand. It also examined how the script movement has been vital to the institutions of education, identity question and cultural revitalization.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Kanu Priya)



## **Parallel session 6: Tribal Knowledge Systems, Values and Traditions**

**Chaired by:** Mridula Rashmi Kindo, Dept of English, IGNOU, New Delhi

**Paper Presenters:** Arun Kumar Oraon (JNU, New Delhi), Sandesha Rayapa-Garbiyal (JNU, New Delhi), Teresa Tudu (BHU, Varanasi), Shimi Moni Doley (JMI, New Delhi).

**Arun Kumar Oraon** presented a paper titled “Contribution of Tribal Society to Modern Medicine”. This paper focussed on the role of the upcoming foreign markets in research on indigenous medicine and unfortunate destruction of forest by mining companies. The indigenous knowledge has which mostly been in oral form is also being destroyed. The paper concluded with the idea of preserving forest, which is the abode of medicinal plants and tribal people and hence to make use of indigenous knowledge of medicine.

**Sandesha Rayapa-Garbiyal** presented a paper titled “Runglwo: Undergoing a much-awaited Paradigmatic Shift.” Runglwo is one the most endangered languages in India. There are only 8000 people who speak this language in three valleys: Chaudas, Darma and Byans. People migrate according to seasonal changes. The language faces acute problems of survival due to the influence of Hindi language and modern education system. The young now use new technology to preserve the language. The state government has recognized the language to teach in schools. This type of attempts is much awaited as the paradigm shift in preservation of the language.

**Teresa Tudu** presented a paper titled “Tribal Literature: Santhals and their Cultural Anxiety.” As tribal life has become a popular discourse in academia, the alien and fascinating indigeneity of Santhals has been always appealing to the non-tribal and attracted researchers and writers. These tribal have been portrayed as object of analysis, as hunger-stricken and uncivilized. Consequently, the socio-political mainstream that is unaccustomed to accept them as civilized human being, tries to subjugate them. They agree to accept non-tribal

intellectuals at the cost of betrayal to their self-identity. The paper analysed the literary works with Santhals and Hindu religion and their despair on the segregation from their community and culture.

**Shimi Moni Doley** presented a paper titled “Text, Context and Reader: An Ideological Reading of *Miri Jyori*.” *Miri Jyori* is an Assamese novel written by Rajnikant Bordoloi, published in 1894. The story is based on a folktale of the ‘Mishing’ tribe involving the tragic love of Jonki and Panoi. The paper analyses ideological self-evidences that the narratorial voice expresses overtly and camouflages covertly in the novel. The interpretation of the text demonstrates a privileging of the dominant discourse and exoticization of the other. The frame of values articulated in the narrative installs the hierarchical distance between the narrator and tribal folktale retold.

(Student Rapporteur: Ms. Kanu Priya)



## **VALEDICTORY SESSION**

The Conference ended with the Valedictory session. This began with a short presentation of the Conference Report by a student rapporteur, followed by the Valedictory Speech by Prof.



Joseph Bara of IGNTU, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh. It concluded with the Vote of Thanks by the Convener.



***BOOK OF ABSTRACTS***

***Of***

***ICSSR-sponsored Two-Day National Conference on***

***“TRIBES IN TRANSITION-II:  
REAFFIRMING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY  
THROUGH NARRATIVE”***

***Organised by***

***The Department of English & Outreach Programme***

***Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi***

***On 27-28 February 2017***

***Convener: Dr. Ivy Imogene Hansdak***

***[ivyihansdak@gail.com](mailto:ivyihansdak@gail.com)***

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At Cultural Programme, Open Air Theatre, JMI, Delhi

**“Rhythm of Life and Love”**

(Folk Dances of Uttarakhand and Jharkhand)

*Karbi Ramayana* in Assam and its **Modern Re-telling in Documentary Film**

ANANYA BARUA

Department of Philosophy

Hindu College, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: RAMAYANA, DOCUMENTARY, INDONESIA, SABIL-ALUN, KARBI

While *Ramayana: The Epic* is a 2010 computer-animated film from India's Maya Digil Media, the film is a retelling of the story of Lord Rama, from his birth until his battle with Ravana at Sri Lanka. Altaf Mazid Rija's 52 minute Karbi film, *Sabin Alun* (The Broken Song) has been selected at the 47th edition of the International Film Festival of India. The documentary introduces the audience to the Karbi tradition and includes interviews with the community members. *Sabin Alun* examines the oral singing traditions of the Karbi tribe from Assam. Ravana is depicted as a gangster who is surrounded by photographs of himself (a clever way of referring to his many heads), while Rama wears glasses and looks clueless when Sinta (Sita) is kidnapped.

Garin Nugroho's *Opera Jawa*, a 2007 musical inspired by the Indonesian version of the Ramayana, sought to address gender discrimination and environmental degradation. Mazid's film draws inspiration from some such sources though he adds his creative and innovative touch in its final product. In the Karbi version, Sita emerges out of a peahen's egg unlike in other versions where she is born of mother earth. Mazid is playful in his treatment when Sita drives off into the fields on a tractor at one point. Adapting his work according to the taste of the common folk, in order to make it more popular, characters are portrayed as human characters.

*Sabin Alun* is a living oral tradition of the animistic tribal society of the Karbis of Assam. The film is an attempt to recreate the tale in a contemporary context where the animistic point of view gets prominence. According to the jury members of the festival, the potential of the film lies in its multi-layered deconstruction of an old tribal myth through a uniquely contemporary and irreverent treatment.

BIONOTE: **Dr. Ananya Barua** is currently employed as Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy, Hindu College, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [barua.ananya@gail.com](mailto:barua.ananya@gail.com)

2

**Plantation Development and Tribes: Experiences of Expropriation of Land, History and Identity - A Case of the Mannans**

ANU KRISHNA

School of Development Studies

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

KEYWORDS: MANNANS, PLANTATION, CARDAMOM HILLS, CULTURAL IMPERIALISM, SETTLERS

Plantation is a colonial product, an importation into the land of the indigenous people that has acted as a geographical violence over their territoriality and cultural imperialism over their identities. Cardamom Hills falls into the Western Ghat region in the Idukki district of Kerala, India. The uplands are known since time immemorial as the abode of various indigenous communities such as Mannans and as the natural niche of wild herbs and spices like cardamom. With the colonial conquest over the region, this evergreen forest got transformed into plantation zones of cardamom, pepper, tea etc; a process which got further accentuated with the migration of the settlers in the post-Independence period. Plantation development has not only alienated Mannans from their ancestral land but also webbed them into implacable dependency over the plantations as labourers. The migrant settlers further marginalized them through a complete economic, social, political and demographic domination. The settler colonialism in the Cardamom Hills not only rejects the history and existence of the Mannans but also manufactures new history of the hills. While the dominant narratives portray Cardamom Hills as ‘no man’s land discovered by the settlers’, it distorts and disqualifies the Mannan sense of self and history. Therefore, the Mannans gets condensed as the ‘Other’ or as ‘people without history’ in their own territories.

This paper is an attempt to understand the ways in which the Mannans use their oral tradition and language to resurrect their history and reclaim association to their land. The paper would

also elicit how the community uses narratives as a cultural resistance against the superimposition of the Malayalam language and Malayali culture of the dominant settlers. The arguments in the paper are based on detailed ethnographic field work conducted in various Mannan settlements in the Cardamom Hills.

BIONOTE: **Anu Krishanan** is currently pursuing her PhD at the School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She may be contacted at the email ID: [anu61krishna@gmail.com](mailto:anu61krishna@gmail.com)

### 3

## **The Shared *Ramayana* Tradition in Assam Across Man-made Boundaries of Tribe, Caste and Community**

ARCHANA BARUA

Department of Humanities & Social Sciences

Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati

KEYWORDS: TRIBE, CASTE, RAMA-KATHA, SANKARADEVA, MADHAVA KANDALI

*Rama-katha* is very popular among all sections of the people including the tribes of North East India and Assam, in particular the Rabhas, Bodo-kacharis, Khasis and Karbis, among others who weave their own plots and sub-plots into the texts. Among the Tai-phake community in the North-East, Rama is a Boddhisattva while Sita in Bodo-Rabha versions has expertise in weaving. In *Sabin Alun*, an oral singing tradition of the Karbi–Ramayana in Assam, Sinta (Sita) emerges out of a peahen’s egg rather than the earth. Sabin is the other name for Shurpanakha, whose nose is cut off by Laxman, forcing Ravana into taking revenge for her humiliation by abducting Sita.

Sankaradeva sings the glory of the of pious Bhakti thus :”That outcaste (untouchable) is glorious who has the name of God in the tip of his tongue. He alone is pure and is versed in the Vedas from whose mouth God’s name pours forth.” In Sankaradeva’s translation of the *Bhagavata* into Assamese verse, we find the additional names of tribes and communities from the region thus: *Kirāta Kachāri Khāsi Gāro Miri Yavana Kanka Gowāla*



The greatest of Ramayana narrators, Valmiki, was a Kirat tribal but due to his wisdom and saintly personality he became a Brahmana and was called “Adi kavi” in Sanskrit. Sankaradeva, the great Neo-Vaishnavite Bhakta reformer of Assam, became the historical embodiment of this principle that *samskārat dvija ucyate*.

Simplification of rituals and use of vernacular for translating the religious texts have played their roles in popularizing Bhakti. One can witness a number of *Ramayana* versions depicted in various mediums such as in oral traditions of singing and dancing, puppetry shows, mask dances, *Bhaonas*, the dramatic performances introduced by Neo-Vaishnavite Bhakta saint, Mahapurush Sankaradeva.

*Saptakanda Ramayana*, the first translation from the [Sanskrit](#) to a modern regional [Indo-Aryan language](#), is the 14th century Assamese version of the [Ramayana](#) attributed to the poet [Madhava Kandali](#). The *Ramayana* was written upon the request of the [Kachari](#) king [Mahamanikya](#) (Mahamanikpha, 1330-1370). Sankardeva writes of Kandali as *purvakavi apramādi* ! Kandali’s work has cast a strong influence on Sankardeva, and also in later Assamese works.

BIONOTE: **Dr. Archana Barua** is currently working as Professor at the Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, Assam. She may be contacted at the email ID: [archana@iitg.ernet.in](mailto:archana@iitg.ernet.in)

4

### **Contribution of Tribal Society to Modern Medicine**

ARUN KUMAR ORAON

Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: TRIBE, INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE, AYURVEDA, FOREIGN MARKETS, MINING

Tribal society still lives in the villages and large sections of this society have still not been exposed to allopathic medicines. Even today, while the government is growing and developing in areas where mineral extraction is limited to tribal areas, it is seen that diseases are still healed by the use of herbal medicine in these areas. Through these herbs it has been able to treat some of the *Asagy* diseases. Besides eating fruits and flowers, it is also used for the treatment of minor ailments. For example, the Adhul fruit-flowers provide great relief during abdominal pain. Despite the importance of these herbs, most of the flowers and trees are not considered suitable for scientific research. Yet, they continue to be used by tribal society. If scientific studies were made regarding these fruit-flowers, plants and trees, it could be very helpful in fighting diseases and drugs could be available at low cost to the public.

This paper will examine the role of the upcoming foreign markets in their research on indigenous medicine. It is unfortunate that forests containing these herbal plants are being destroyed by mining companies, hence indigenous knowledge, which is usually preserved in oral form, is also being destroyed and most people do not get to know the medicinal plants which are quite beneficial. Deviprasad Chattopadhyay in his book, *Science and Society in Ancient India*, rightly acknowledges that Ayurveda itself mentions that primitive tribes scattered in all corners of the world have knowledge of herbs as drugs for medical treatment. Hence, tribal knowledge of medicine which is found in a considerable amount of material availability in fauna is useful for therapy and healing.

BIONOTE: **Arun Kumar Oraon** is pursuing his PhD at the Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He may be contacted at the email ID: [arunoraon.iimc@gmail.com](mailto:arunoraon.iimc@gmail.com)

## 5

### **Oral Literature and Memory: A Study of Tribal Folklore**

ATHIKO KAISII

Centre for Culture, Media & Governance

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: FOLKLORE, INTERPRETATION, MEMORY, TRADITION, IDENTITY

Oral literature does not stress authorship but the focus is on interpretation. It is collectively owned by the community and every member has the right and authority to interpret and translate as per one's ability and genius to the best to make it accurate and appropriate. Since the literature is not preserved/stored in the form of text and print, interpreting and translating from memory that has been handed down from generation to another is the only way to obtain accuracy. The interpretation is essentially based on memory as there is no written text to depend. Memory plays a significant role in unfolding and revealing the tribal literature. Looking back the memory is the source to resolve the differences while interpreting.

Folklore in the form of adages, sayings, riddles, dances, songs, festivals and feasts, agricultural practices, handicrafts, woodcrafts, carpentry works, yells, steps and cries, knowledge and skill of constructing house, terrace field, bridge, caring and nursing of sickness and diseases, beliefs, worldviews and cosmos or anything that one can name of constitute oral literature, which is passing and communicating through oral mode. So, folklore is anything that includes traditional art, literature, knowledge and practice, which are disseminated through oral and behavioural mode of everyday life. Every community and group possessed a shared tradition and culture, which is central to its identity that differentiates from those does not belonged to it, is the folklore of the community. The folklorist work's merely reflects everyday life of the tribal community. The paper while intending to focus the understanding of literature from the broader perspective, will tries to investigate how memory unveiled and unfolded the body of tribal literature through folklore.

**BIONOTE: Dr. Athikho Kaisii** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at the Centre for Culture, Media & Governance, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He may be contacted at the email ID: [akasmao@gmail.com](mailto:akasmao@gmail.com)

## 6

### **Education as a means of Entrepreneurial Exploration: A Multiple Case Study Approach among the Tribes of Odisha**

BIDYUT SUMAN EKKA

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

KEYWORDS: FORMAL EDUCATION, VOCATIONAL TRAINING, TRIBES, GLOBALIZATION, CREDIT ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Education has been debated as a tool to achieve holistic sustainable development of a society. When it comes to marginalised sections of the society its implication becomes more essential. Indian tribes are also the marginalised section of the Indian society. Traditionally they had been living in a sustainable ecosystem with their own socio-economic and cultural set up. The tribal lifestyle and ecosystem have been thoroughly disturbed since the time of the impingement of outsiders during the colonial period and mainly after independence. In the name of development and globalisation the exploitation has increased. A lot of programmes and policies have been implemented for the development of the tribals. Education being an essential means of development has also been promoted among the tribes. Various studies show high school dropout cases among the tribals, but there are tribals who have been able to have secondary, higher secondary and higher education paving way for many employment and livelihood opportunities. Many tribals have even been able to access vocational training programme. Education has also helped them in gaining access to various credit facilities to start with various employment opportunities.

This paper is intending to explore the rural tribals usability of the formal and informal education in exploring entrepreneurial ventures. The study has been done in north-western part of India. A multiple case study approach has been used to understand in depth about the journey of the selected rural tribal entrepreneurs. In this 4 in-depth cases have been explored of tribal individuals having entrepreneurial activities. The study discusses about the formal and informal education and its knowledge that has been used in accessing credit under the Government programmes and applying the knowledge in technical and managerial aspect of their business practices.

BIONOTE: Bidyut Suman Ekka is currently pursuing her PhD at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She may be contacted at the email ID: [paulinasuman@gmail.com](mailto:paulinasuman@gmail.com)

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**Perspectives from the Margins: Examining Adivasi Narratives of the Naxalbari  
Movement in West Bengal, 1967-72**

BIPASHA ROSY LAKRA

KEYWORDS: NAXALBARI, RESISTANCE, ZAMINDARS, HISTORY, NARRATIVE

Naxalbari gets its recognition in history and restores the revolutionary essence of Marxism in the Indian soil which had been distorted, corrupted and destroyed by the revisionist semantics of the CPI (Communist Party of India) and the-then nascent CPI (M)-(Communist Party of India-Marxist). Naxalbari, ideologically and practically, provided an essential popular base for revolutionary armed struggle in India. The mass base of the Naxalbari movement comprised of *adivasi* settlers from the Central Indian tribal belt, namely the Santal, Oraon and Munda tribes. The study reflects their aspirations for the deliverance of active resistance from the exploitation of the *zamindars* and *jotedars* in the earlier phase of history, directing towards the Naxalbari movement, which serves as the landmark for the study. It takes into account and draws major similarities with the norms and consciousness evolved within the tribal communities during the Tebhaga movement 1946-1947, and those prior to the Kol Insurrection of 1833, the Santal Insurrection of 1855-56 and the Rebellion led by Birsa Munda against the British in 1889-1901.

The period 1967-72 has been taken as a landmark for the study, as the interplay of the volatile situation created by the Naxalbari movement, and the role played by tribal peasants or the *adhiars*, in the wake of growing discernments against the *jotedars* post Tebhaga movement in North Bengal. However, Edward Duyker's anthropological study, *Tribal Guerrillas: The Santals of West Bengal and the Naxalite Movement*, gives a sense of how the Naxalite vanguard created an interface with the tribal group (the Santals, Oraon, Munda) that, according to contemporary reports constituted the main base of the non-urban side of the Naxalbari movement. Therefore, the study seeks to fill up the vacuum of scholarship by analyzing existing corpus of popular literature and breaks the silence of the *adivasi*/tribal narratives and memory on the Naxalbari movement. The study aims to analyze the historiography of tribal resistance from a subaltern perspective and ushering renewed ideas in the academic field. The normative and theoretical gap in the subject is analyzed on the basis of existing literature, both primary and secondary.

BIONOTE: **Bipasha Rosy Lakra** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Centre for Political Science, School of Social Sciences, JNU, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [bipashalakra08@gmail.com](mailto:bipashalakra08@gmail.com)

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### **Scheduled Tribes, Access to Higher Education and Employability Question**

DHANESHWAR BHOI & NEELIMA RASHMI LAKRA

Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

KEYWORDS: EDUCATION, ACCESSIBILITY, EMPLOYABILITY, VULNERABLE GROUPS

Education in India has not been widely attained by all communities even after 68 years of independence. The accessibility of the Indian education system has been limited to some few selected social groups. Some of these groups are vulnerable and are still far behind the mainstream society and development. Among those groups, the Scheduled Tribes are one of the most vulnerable groups. In education, the term ‘access’ typically refers to the ways in which educational institutions and policies ensure - or at least strive to ensure - that students have equal and equitable opportunities to take full advantage of their education. Increasing *access* generally requires schools to provide additional services or remove any actual or potential barriers that might prevent some students from equitable participation in certain courses or academic programs. Factors such as ethnicity, religion, gender, disability, perceived intellectual ability, past academic performance, special-education status, language ability, and family income or educational-attainment levels - in addition to factors such as relative community affluence, geographical location, or school facilities - may contribute to certain students having less “access” to educational opportunities (opportunity gap) than other students. This would lead to achievement gap in their academic as well as co-curricular growth. Chitnis' (1981) study on educational status of vulnerable groups [Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST)] had concluded that it was a “long way to go... to attain education for disadvantages groups”. Even after six decades of Independence, tribal education is far from expectation and with low employability in national and state level services.

This paper would like to explore the accessibility of higher education, be it at the higher secondary level, which is the entry point for any technical education and/or at university education level, which directly impacts the employability of Scheduled Tribes at the national level. It also aims to analyse the socio-economic and educational background of the tribal students, the environmental condition in the family and neighbourhood, and the facilities and support system available to continue education in comparison to non-tribal students and the ratio of employability, for the same comparison. The conclusion follows that access to higher education and employability in the present education system, over the past 40 years is highly unsatisfactory in terms of job representation and still has A long way to go.

**BIONOTES: Dhaneshwar Bhoi** has completed his PhD at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai and is currently working at the National University of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi He may be contacted at the email ID: [dhaneshwar.bhoi@gmail.com](mailto:dhaneshwar.bhoi@gmail.com)

**Neelima Rashmi Lakra** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. She may be contacted at the email ID: [neelimalakra@gmail.com](mailto:neelimalakra@gmail.com)

## 9

### **Inversion of the Locus of Enunciation of knowledge in *Time Commences in Xibalba* by Luis de Lion**

EKTA KANDHWAY

Centre for European & Latin American Studies

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**KEYWORDS:** CULTURE, EUROCENTRISM, NARRATIVES, NOVEL, FOURTH WORLD

This paper studies the subversion of eurocentrism in the geopolitics of knowledge in the novel *El tiempo principia enXibalbá (Time Commences in Xibalba)* published in 1985, considered the masterpiece of the Guatemalan indigenous writer Luis de Lion. The novel stands apart from earlier indigenous writings in that it is the first novel written by an indigenous writer on the topic of indigeneity.

Written in 1970s, in the backdrop of the Guatemalan Civil war (1960-1996) during which THE government forces massacred more than 200,000 Maya indigenous people (De Li3n was also abducted by a death squad on May 15, 1984 and later a military diary found in 1999 confirmed his assassination), the novel symbolizes the outright rejection and disruption of the *status quo* of colonial domination in Guatemala. This path-breaking work initiated a whole new project of epistemological as well as political decolonization of the indigenous community, and is considered a milestone in the emerging New Maya literature of Central America.

The novel is structured around the concept of *Xibalba*, the underworld of the Maya creation narrative taken from the *Populvuh*. My paper will examine how Luis de Lion, in this novel, inverts the ‘knowledge/power relation’ and creates an alternative locus of enunciation of knowledge away from the western epistemology. This rejection is evident in the content as well as the structure of the novel. The importance of presenting such a study in this conference is to bring out awareness about such literary projects taking place in other parts of the world and a sense of solidarity among the members of global indigenous communities, the so-called “Fourth World”.

BIONOTE: **Ekta Kandhway** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Centre for European & Latin American Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [ektakandhway@gmail.com](mailto:ektakandhway@gmail.com)

## 10

### **The Tribe against Itself: Narratives of Ethnicity and Othering of the Bodos and the Adivasis in Bodoland**

EVY MEHZABEEN

Centre for the Study of Regional Development, School of Social Sciences

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: IDENTITY, BODOLAND, CULTURE, TERRITORY, VIOLENCE



Tribal narratives of alienation of forest, land and water form one of the core subaltern chapters of Tribal Studies in India. The Bodo movement for grant of autonomy is woven around such demands of safeguard from the exploitation of land and forest resources; it has been an entourage of ideals like autochthony, cultural superiority, ethnic distinction, alienated identity and the contested right to self-determination. However, identity assertion, resource conflict and the demand for grant of autonomy is seldom so modestly unidirectional, as it incorporates questions of power, hegemony and control in a society having multiple tribal communities.

This paper explores indigenous identity in Bodoland, Assam by studying two tribal groups- Bodos and Adivasis; one considered the autochthon for which a Sixth Schedule safeguarding autonomy is granted and the other, considered an ‘outsider’ is continuously subjected to justify their access to the forests and lands of Bodoland and is not even recognised as a ‘Scheduled Tribe’. Such politics of hegemony is centered around the belongingness to a piece of territory where tribal identity is constructed and defined to negotiate the access to forest and land of every tribal community.

The paper focuses on these issues:

- a) How have the Adivasis been selectively excluded from the mainstream tribal politics historically to construct them as the ‘other’ in Bodoland?
- b) The internalisation of violence with respect to identity- ethnicity- territory to create hegemony within the otherwise exploited tribal communities of Assam.
- c) The meaning of territory for tribal communities and the role of territory in ethnic identity assertions assigning the tribes their identity.

The paper is based on an ethnographic survey, with primary data collecting narratives from more than 150 households and 10 focus group discussions from all the four districts of Bodoland- Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri.

**BIONOTE: Evy Mehzabeen** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Centre for the Study of Regional Development, SSS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [evymehzabeen@gmail.com](mailto:evymehzabeen@gmail.com)

**Adivasi Script Movement: Identity, Education and Cultural Revitalization**

GOMATI BODRA HEMBROM

Department of Sociology

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: ADIVASIS, PRE-LITERATE, SCRIPT, CULTURE, IDENTITY

Writing came to India much earlier than other civilizations - from the days of the Indus Valley Civilization, by over four thousand years ago and the space has also witnessed emergence of some of the great writing systems. On the other hand, Adivasi languages of India represent valuable relics of the country's past cultural heritage in the form of oral traditions and folklore. These are indigenous societies without any writing system, hence also considered as pre-literate societies. Even without a writing system they have survived and also have a rich culture and traditions regarding every aspects of life. But in the past few decades there has been a significant change in the lives of tribal communities. One of it is related to tribal languages, that is creation of a script by the Adivasis themselves. This script movement among Adivasis has been considered as a mark of social and cultural mobility. As most of these tribal communities, since the colonial period, came under direct contact with the majoritarian dominant groups which led to constant subjugation and exploitation of the former.

This paper intends to do a sociological analysis of the script movement among the AdivasiS in the state of Orissa and Jharkhand. It will also examine how THE script movement is also related to the institution of education, identity question and cultural revitalization. This paper is based on secondary data, case studies and personal observation.

**BIONOTE:** **Dr. Gomati Bodra Hembrom** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [gomatibodra@yahoo.co.in](mailto:gomatibodra@yahoo.co.in)

**Reaffirming the Identity of the Tribal Woman: An Exploration of Mahasweta Devi's  
*Imaginary Maps***

JUHI R. V. MINZ

Centre for English Studies, SLLCS

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: DECOLONIZATION, SUBALTERN, DIKU, TRIBAL WOMAN, PATRIARCHY

The subaltern subject is a much discussed entity in the postcolonial context. There are debates and discussions around the representations of the subalterns and the voice and agency accorded to them to exert their selfhood. But does the term postcolonial convey the notion of freedom and independence of the subalterns? And within this question of freedom lies another question as to what is the predicament of the tribal women who are doubly marginalized among the subaltern faction? Mahasweta Devi, writer, teacher, journalist, social worker and the recipient of several literary awards, has been instrumental in attempting to answer these questions about the violence of colonialism which is still present in postcolonial India when it comes to the tribal people and, more specifically, the tribal women. The figure of the tribal woman is absent from the social discourse. She is an entity without a history. The narratives of the short stories in Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Maps* give a certain space to the tribal women to assert their individuality and stand up against the oppression of patriarchy within the tribal world and outside it. In "The Hunt", the protagonist Mary Oraon kills her sexual exploiter on the ceremonial hunting day of the tribals and the short story "Douloti the Bountiful" is about a woman forced into bonded prostitution. The lives of these protagonists not only serve as a canvas that portrays tribal life but it also serves as a battleground where the tribals lock horns with their oppressors.

Keeping the stories as the focal point, the paper seeks to explore whether or not the decolonization of India has assisted the tribal woman to travel from the margins towards the center, touching upon the notions of social, political and economic liberation. The paper would further seek to deconstruct the negative idea of tribe which is portrayed through the mainstream discourse. The paper would also explore the equation of the tribals with the *dikus*

or the non-tribals. Lastly, an attempt would be made to explore the tribal culture and consciousness as presented through the short stories.

BIONOTE: **Juhi Minz** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [juhiminz@gmail.com](mailto:juhiminz@gmail.com)

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**How ‘Queer’ is the Indigenous? : An Attempt to Read ‘Two-Spirit’ Creations in the Canadian Context**

KRISHNENDU PAL

Department of Comparative Literature  
Jadavpur University, Kolkata

KEYWORDS: TWO-SPIRIT, IDENTITY, SEXUALITY, MARGINALIZATION, RESISTANCE

The native creative process, needless to say, has undergone the pillages of the colonial onslaught and the native creative paradigm has reacted, resisted and domesticated it in different ways which has led to the production of certain texts which contain an innovative yet ardent articulacy of indigeneity.

Different constituents of a conglomerate identity are definitely operative in the creative process. In this paper, in addition to the indigenous aspect to the creator’s identity, I want to work on the ‘queer’ (non-normative gender and sexuality) aspect of the identity as well, in order to understand the contribution of both in the creation of literature and art. My paper will be an enquiry into ‘Two-spirit’ (term used to refer to native ‘queer’ people in North America who supposedly possess the masculine as well as the feminine spirit) Literature and Art in the Canadian context. Reading and close analysis of the creations of individuals who identify themselves as ‘Two-Spirit’ would also help me understand the nuances and nexuses of their creative process as impacted by coupled marginalization (firstly for being First Nations and secondly for expressing non-normative gender and sexuality) and the emanating resistance to such marginalization.

I will primarily concentrate on the writings of ‘Mohawk’ lesbian author Beth Brant, ‘Cree’ playwright Tomson Highway and the paintings and other artworks of Cree artist Kent Monkman who identify themselves as Two-spirited from the wide gamut of Two-spirit creations. The paper will try to present a critical understanding of the creative process as well as the disseminating process of the works of these two people by looking into their identities as native and ‘queer’, interrogating and elaborating on ploys of strategic subversion or assimilation of the colonial discourse and tracing the trajectory towards newer indigenous aesthetics and resistance.

BIONOTE; **Krishnendu Pal** is currently studying for the Masters Degree at the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. S/he may be contacted at the email ID: [krishnendupopop@gmail.com](mailto:krishnendupopop@gmail.com)

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**Diminishing the Stereotypes: Re-presenting the Tribals of Kerala in *Kocherethi* and *Odiyan***

MAHI S. THAVARATHU

Centre for English Studies, SLLCS

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: IDENTITY, NARRATIVE, RESISTANCE, REPRESENTATION, READERSHIP

This paper intends to study the politics of re-presentation of tribal customs and myths in the narratives of Narayan’s *Kocherethi*(1998) and P. Kannankutty’s *Odiyan* (2002). Narayan’s *Kocherethi*, is marketed as ‘the first novel by the first tribal novelist of South India’. *Kocherethi* is a graphic representation of the lives of the *Malaaraya* tribe, one among the thirty-two different groups of *adivasis* of Kerala, whose myths, rituals, social customs and belief systems are slowly fading into history. According to Narayan the deliberate semi-autobiographical approach to the writing of *Kocharethi* was an act of resistance against the misrepresentation of his community by the academic and the literary world.

Kannankutty's *Odiyan* retells the myth of the last odiyan, a member of the tribe that practices shape-shifting through black magic. The novella is experimental both in its form as well as the themes it deals with. For instance the portrayal of Goddess Kali as a sexual seductress enslaving Vellamayan, the odiyan, sarcastically questions the mainstream notion of the 'sacred'. Though his novel bagged him the prestigious D.C Books Award, it became a commercial failure since the mainstream readership failed to acknowledge it, making P Kannankutty a lesser-known figure in the mainstream literary domain. Thus, a comparative analysis of both the texts that unveils the unknown layers of the indigenous tribal lives of Kerala add immense scope to my work where I can study the class, caste and gender politics of the mainstream representation and readership.

The paper will also address various themes that are pertinent to the dominant tribal discourses such as the theme of displacement and identity crisis due to modernity, the retelling of folktales and myths, the impact of brahmanification or *sanskritisation* of religious ethos, etc.

BIONOTE: Mahi S. Thavarathu is currently pursuing her PhD at the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. S/he may be contacted at the email ID: [mahi.kichu3@gmail.com](mailto:mahi.kichu3@gmail.com)

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**Adivasi Land Struggles and the Print Media: An analysis of Muthanga Land Struggle in Wayanad, Kerala**

MOCHISH K. S.

School of Media and Cultural Studies  
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai

KEYWORDS: DISCRIMINATION, PROTEST, MEDIA, READERSHIP, MATHUNGA LAND STRUGGLES

Kerala is the largest newspaper consuming State in India. As an influential factor in moulding public opinion, the media has a significant role in such mass-literate societies. The press is an important institution not just in the public sphere, but also in the process of democratisation itself. The history of newspapers in Kerala represents a model of politicization spreading to

large sections of the population and creating a newspaper-reading culture. Studies have documented the growing participation of media in social movements, collective action and protest movements. Movements and media share a complex relationship that generates many fundamental questions like: how does a movement get attention; what determines the way the movement is pictured and whether the attention serves the movement's goals. The societal contradictions rather than diversity and peaceful coexistence are making India distinctive from the rest of the world. The society is distinctly stratified along the lines of caste, gender, class, ethnicity, language etc., to name a few. Specifically, the discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, caste and gender has been marked and inexorable.

This paper will examine the response of Malayalam newspapers towards the struggles of C.K. Janu, who led the historic struggles for land by the Adivasis/ tribals of Kerala. The analysis will be based on the Malayalam newspaper reports, articles and editorials on the Muthanga land struggles of 2003. These are *Deepika* (1887), *Malayala Manorama* (1888), *Mathrubhumi* (1923) *Deshabhimani* (1942), and *Kerala Kaumudi* (1911). Their wide circulation and consumption among the public shows the significance of these dailies in the public sphere of Kerala society. The initial analysis of the media archives shows that, on the whole, the strength of newspapers has historically contributed to the vitality of Kerala's political society. Yet, on key agendas, such as tribal land struggles and gender, a section of newspapers played a complex, and sometimes regressive, role. With respect to these critical agendas, newspaper reporting reflected the sharp contestations that marked the political arena. As a result, progressive movements in Kerala, most notably the tribal movement, had to fight not just the lobbies of the landlords, elite and the state, but also the powerful media groups aligned with them.

BIONOTE: **Mochish K.S.** is currently pursuing his PhD at the School of Media and Culture Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. He may be contacted at the email ID: [mochishks@gmail.com](mailto:mochishks@gmail.com)

**A Comparative Study of Mahasweta Devi's *Aranyer Adhikar*(1979) and African-American Texts**

MOUMITA ROY

Department of English

Delhi University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: BIRSA MUNDA, BLACK FEMINISM, PRISON, SUBALTERN, COLONIAL AUTHORITY

The paper makes an inquiry into the incarceration of the female black body and its struggle for freedom. The selected works include Assata Shakur's *Autobiography (1987)*, Angela Davis's *Are Prisons Obsolete?* (2003) and *The Meaning of Freedom And Other Difficult Dialogues*(2012). The recent loss of eminent litterateur and activist Mahasweta Devi has demanded a re-reading of her work *Aranyer Adhikar*(1979), that recalls the conflict of tribals in the Chotanagpur plateau against colonial authority. An imprudent, resolute Birsa Munda initiated a series of struggle, called 'Ulgulan' in the latter half of the nineteenth century. However, the nucleus of my research in this historical narrative involves the imprisonment of Birsa Munda in Ranchi jail and his mysterious death, and a geopolitical comparison with the African-American writers. The study will try to find out resonances among these texts, the marginality of the subaltern and the black female under white hegemony.

My paper also invites in the school of black feminism that works towards the emancipation of black female convicts. A complex global capitalism manipulates the augmentation of prison establishment in the Federal system of United States, which in turn risks the exclusion of a large number of black females from mainstream society into isolation, restriction and severe psychological disorders. Just like the death of Munda did not terminate the upsurge and revolution, the death of imminent members of the Black Panther Party like George Jackson did not cease consistent struggle. It continued in works of Davis and Shakur. The methodology includes in-depth, empirical survey of the statistical rise in the rate of imprisonment in United States and makes a close connection with Devi's depiction of Munda's trials and errors from a woman's point of view. Although Mahasweta Devi's text is



geographically, contextually and culturally discreet from the black discourse, an interesting interconnection is drawn in my paper.

BIONOTE: **Moumita Roy** is currently studying for her Masters Degree at the Department of English, Delhi University, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [cmoumitad@gmail.com](mailto:cmoumitad@gmail.com)

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### **Tribal Poems of Protest of Jharkhand as Powerful Expressions**

MRIDULA RASHMI KINDO

Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: DISPLACEMENT, MIGRATION, IDENTITY, NARRATIVES, SUBALTERN

More than 40% of the Indians have been displaced since independence. The people of mineral-rich states of Jharkhand and Orissa have not got any benefit from industrialization with more than a third of these two states living in poverty. The government has not made concrete plans to reduce displacement of the farming and forest dependent tribal communities.

The Adivasis have resisted the encroachment on their land threatened by industrialization. The industrialization not only takes away their forests and natural resources but also displaces them. Their dignified and independent life gets disrupted and they are forced to migrate in search of livelihood or lead miserable lives in the villages. They share their pain and woes in their songs and poems and sometimes the songs and poems take a powerful form of protest.

In this paper I will attempt to take up some of these poems and songs composed by tribals of Jharkhand that express their miseries and concern. The paper tries to find out the impact that some of these powerful statements in the form of poems and songs were able to make on the mainstream. Were the voices of the victims heard by the authorities?

BIONOTE: **Mridula Rashmi Kindo** is currently employed as Assistant Professor in English at the Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi, and also pursuing her PhD from

the Centre for English Studies, SLLCS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [mridularkindo@yahoo.in](mailto:mridularkindo@yahoo.in)

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***Les Visages de Tahiti: Reimagining Tahitian Tribes in Modernist paintings and Travelogues***

MUKULIKA CHOUDHURY

Department of English

University of Hyderabad, Hyderabad

KEYWORDS: ANTHROPOLOGY, GAZE, NOBLE SAVAGE, TAHITI, PRIMITIVISM

Anthropological histories over time have largely been charted on the basis of circumstantial evidence which arrests all cultural encounters within ethnological boundaries. Central to all encounters is a ‘gaze’ - an initial view at the source of concurrence which forms the paradigm of associative similarities and dissimilarities. More often than not, in any cultural interaction the ‘gaze’ directed at the ‘other’ is misinformed, leading to slanted interpretations just as the burgeoning of 19<sup>th</sup> century American imperialism outmoded early romanticism and the “hegemony of the euro-centric” gaze came into play.

Alexander H. Bolyanatz, drawing from the notion of “Noble Savage” addresses how the European imagination misconstrued the overtly promiscuous behaviour of Tahitian women towards French sailors in 1769 (recorded from Samuel Willis and Louis Bougainville’s accounts of visits to Tahiti in 1767 and 1768 respectively) which culminated in a particular romanticist strand of thought fitting into enlightenment ideas concerning the “Natural Man”. Bolyanatz states “...the conviction that there are very different sorts of humans out there in other parts of the world was bolstered by behaviour that the French took to be pacific hospitality.”

On negotiating an analysis of Tahiti as Impressionist painter Gauguin’s creative paradise - his engagement with Primitivism and rejection of the European art world in favour of raw sensuality and ingenuity - the people in his paintings reflect a philosophical meditation on the ultimate meaning of human existence, as well as the possibility of religious fulfillment and answers on how to live closer to Nature. Such a view, however, contrasts with

Bougainville's *Voyage autour du monde* and Diderot's renowned *Supplément* to his travelogues. In them, the depiction of tribal customs as servile against erudite Christian morality or screening women and sexuality under the European mores of femininity somewhat reaffirms what, in Rod Edmond's words, is "Europe's displaced fears of its own cultural extinction".

My paper would therefore seek to interrogate the representation of Tahitian tribes in modernist paintings and travelogues as it warrants an inquiry into how artistic and idyllic sensibilities fed on the zeitgeist of profound difference between European and Non-European gentility - in other words, an attempt to question the spawning of tribal aesthetics as a "theatre of adventure".

BIONOTE: Moumita Roy is currently studying for her Masters Degree at the Department of English, Delhi University. She may be contacted at the email ID: [cmoumitad@gmail.com](mailto:cmoumitad@gmail.com)

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### **Yolmo Funeral at Homeland and Abroad**

NORKEY WANGMU YOLMO

Department of English

Sikkim University, Gangtok

KEYWORDS: FUNERAL, HOME, MIGRATION, ABROAD, DIFFERENCES

Yolmo is an ethnic tribe in the Nepal Himalayas. In the remote past, their existence is not recorded; however, in the last three to four millennia the Yolmos' existence is accounted by the various researchers. The Yolmos are primarily monks who, with changing time and circumstance, migrated from their place of origin to nearby lands, married women from other communities like the Tamangs and the Sherpas, and began their livelihood by settling in places like Helambu in Nepal. Although the Yolmos practice the Tibetan Buddhism, they have distinct cultural practices and traditions distinguishing them from the other Tibetan Buddhist communities. As a matter of fact, it is this very distinctiveness of their rituals that lend uniqueness to their identity.

The Yolmo community is basically an agrarian community with a very low record of education. In the contemporary times, the Yolmos have begun to migrate from their ancestral homeland to India and abroad in search of dignified life. As a consequence, there are discontinuities and ruptures in the cultural traditions of the Yolmos outside their homeland which has redefined not only their livelihood, but also their belief system, cultural practices, rituals, language, among many others.

Based on a comparative study of the funeral ritual both in their homeland and abroad, this paper argues that how the emerging social, religious, ecological conditions have led to the emergence of newer practices among the Yolmos.

**BIONOTE:** **Norkey Wangmu Yolmo** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at Ghoom Jorebunglow College, Darjeeling, and also pursuing her PhD at the Department of English, Sikkim University, Gangtok. She may be contacted at the email ID: [nwangmu9@gmail.com](mailto:nwangmu9@gmail.com)

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### **Representing/ Re-Presenting Conflict: A Study of Temsula Ao's Short Fiction**

NUPUR CHAWLA

Department of English

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

**KEYWORDS:** CONFLICT, POLITICS, FORM, REPRESENTATION, SHORT FICTION

Temsula Ao's writings represent Naga society and the ongoing conflict between its people and the government. Ao's treatment of this socio-political subject is distinct. Her narratives appeal to senses even as they are a means of assertion, raising pertinent questions about the on-going struggle in the region. A lot of literary expressions from Northeast India comprise the kind of assertion that veers into propaganda; but Temsula Ao's approach is different. One can locate two aspects that distinguish Temsula Ao's short fiction. Firstly, her narratives comprise an objective depiction of the situation, focusing on humanist concerns during conflict. Secondly, her stories are works of art that provide a 'psycho-sensuous' pleasure to the reader as much as they offer an insight into conflict.

Is there a sense of beauty expressed in literature of conflict? What is its nature? Does it in any way attenuate the narrative's power of offering insights on the ongoing struggle or does it help broaden the scope of the literary work's engagement with conflict? The paper aims to explore and seek answers to these questions in Temsula Ao's short story collections "These Hills Called Home" and "Laburnum for my Head".

BIONOTE: **Nupur Chawla** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [nupurchawla04@gmail.com](mailto:nupurchawla04@gmail.com)

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**Denial of Differences: Examining the Marginalization of Tribal Cultures and Languages**

PRADYUMNA BAG

Department of Sociology

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: IDENTITY, HIERARCHY, ASSIMILATION, SOCIAL PRACTICES, CULTURE

Cultural identity and dignity is fundamental to human existence. In socio-cultural settings, groups are defined, identified and located in the relative positions of the social hierarchy. The identity and status of social groups are constantly contested by different competing groups. Culture has proved to be the greatest apparatus in the ideological struggle for social gradation. The underdeveloped economy has encouraged the dominant group to question the entire socio-economic practices of the tribals. This has resulted in the radical declining of tribal culture, language and food habits. Cultural traits and complex traditions have become the prime target of symbolic subordination. Why are tribals forced to read, write and understand their world in the language of the dominant communities? Lived experience of the subalterns matters little without the sanction of the 'intellectual ruling class' who construct and popularize these indigenous communities in their own ways. The process of assimilation has done considerable damage to the relatively egalitarian tribal society. Numerous obsolete

Hindu social practices, such as dowry, prohibition of widow remarriage and sex selective abortion have entered the tribal world.

The paper attempts to highlight the processes of assimilation which has led to the tribal subordination. It also inquires how tribal culture is grounded in unequal and differential relations with other social groups?

BIONOTE: **Dr. Pradyumna Bag** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at the Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He may be contacted at the email ID: [pradyumnabag@yahoo.co.in](mailto:pradyumnabag@yahoo.co.in)

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### **Depiction of Life Values in Tribal Literature**

PRAVIN KUMAR

Department of Hindi

Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak

KEYWORDS: NARRATIVE, DISCOURSE, NATURAL RESOURCES, TRIBAL WAY OF LIFE, FORMS OF EXPRESSION

The relationship between literature and discourse has remained constant in history. Both conceptual relationship and nature are complementary. Tribal literature and discourse is basically the same. It is also essentially tribal literature and discourse based on methodology of life values and its literary expression. This 'method' and 'expression' is associated with the life struggles of tribal society for their rights in terms of development, processes of development, questions of protection of their 'civilization-culture', displacement and creation of their consciousness. In this regard, there is growing need to understand tribal writing.

Tribal discourse is essentially Social Studies discourse. The tribal's co-existence and interaction with other life-forms is the subject of Social Studies; tribal values raise questions appertaining to his water, his forest and his land (*Jal, Jangal, Jameen*), questions of cultural preservation and cultural transition. The tribal asks about his participation in state power and

his rights over natural resource. This research paper is an attempt to understand these questions: What kind of tribal values are expressed in literature? What is the tribal way of life and how is it different from the mainstream? What is depicted in the literature of the tribal society? An attempt will be made to understand both the concept of tribal literature and the many forms of tribal expression. The study of how society expresses itself in literature is connected with the development of that society.

BIONOTE: **Dr. Pravin Kumar** is currently working as Assistant Professor at the Department of Hindi, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh. He may be contacted at the email ID: [pravinkmr05@gmail.com](mailto:pravinkmr05@gmail.com)

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**Grappling with Modernity: Narayan's *Kocharethi* as a Metaphor of Adivasi Lives in Kerala**

P. RAJITHA VENUGOPAL

Department of English

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: HISTORIOGRAPHY, TRADITION, MODERNITY, NARRATIVE, READERSHIP

The dominant metanarrative of history always takes for granted the multiple strands and layers of histories of a region and its people. Voices from the margins question such historiography, thereby seeking spaces for their identities, histories and representations of their lived realities. Narayan published his novel *Kocharethi* (1998) and became the first Adivasi writer in Malayalam. *Kocharethi* documents the transition of three generations of an Adivasi family and their community into modernity, stretching from the pre-independence state of Travancore to a post-independence, 'progressive' Kerala. In the course of the narrative, Narayan delves some crucial aspects of Adivasi realities and dilemmas such as those related to tradition, belief systems, education, employment, and other issues that get impacted as a result of the changing times and social conditions.

The proposed paper intends to study Narayan's *Kocharethi* as a representative text that deals with issues of Adivasis' transition into modernity. Just as the text problematises Adivasi dilemmas and predicament in the wake of modernity, so also the writer himself encounters various challenges as he steps into the Malayalam literary scenario. This paper would also look into: What are the aspects of tradition and modernity that the writer negotiates in the text and in reality? How are Adivasi narratives received by the mainstream reading public, *Kocharethi* being a case in point? How do they negotiate with language so as to represent themselves? What is the role of intelligentsia with respect to these subaltern voices in terms of their in/visibility? What are the dynamics between these works, the publishing industry, and the consumers of culture?

BIONOTE: **P. Rajitha Venugopal** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [rajitha0907@gmail.com](mailto:rajitha0907@gmail.com)

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### **The Concept of Indigenous Knowledge**

RAKESH SONI

Department of Philosophy

Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak

KEYWORDS: EPISTEMOLOGY, KNOWLEDGE, COMMON SENSE, VALIDITY, VERIFICATION

It is generally accepted that three type of knowledge exist - universal knowledge, community knowledge and individual knowledge. Universal knowledge is known as scientific knowledge which has objectivity, logical and factual characteristics. Unlike this, individual knowledge is known as enlightenment of the ultimate truth or reality. Though this knowledge is at the individual level, its impact or implication must be universal. Actually, the process of universalization commences from the individual. Self-realization of reality has both individual and universal character and knowledge happening simultaneously. At this stage, individual acts are universal but also bound with the individual's physical body that is governed and regulated by *Prarabddha karma*. Apart from this, any attempt at the



measurement of individual experiences like scientific universal knowledge is virtually impossible. But, two types of knowledge can help us to understand reality from its own views. In logic, universal and particular proposition denote logical perception of reality. Thus, nature of scientific or universal knowledge and enlightenment of individual is obvious.

In this context, the nature of community knowledge becomes important. Here, community knowledge means such knowledge whose validity and verification is made by a particular community or ethnic group that resides in a particular land or territory and has a particular cultural identity. In some cases, it is also known as indigenous or tribal knowledge. The word 'indigenous' is appropriate because it is defined by the United Nation Organization and accepted by scholars and institutes. According to this definition, an ethnic group residing for the longest period in a particular land or territory of the globe or in a particular country and having a particular cultural identity is called 'indigenous' people. The word 'tribe' is disputed because it has been used by the colonialist in the sense of uncivilized people which was inspired by Darwin's theory of Evolution and followed by anthropologists like Tylor, Morgan Frazer etc.

BIONOTE: **Dr. Rakesh Soni** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at the Department of Philosophy, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University, Amarkantak, Madhya Pradesh. He may be contacted at the email ID: [rakesh.philosophy@gmail.com](mailto:rakesh.philosophy@gmail.com)

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### **The Dismantling of Tribal Narratives by the Impositions of Mainstream Story-making**

RINI PRATIK KUJUR  
Department of English  
Jadavpur University, Kolkata

KEYWORDS: INDOLOGICAL STUDIES, ARYAN, TRIBAL, ACCULTURATION, MYTH

Pierre Bordieu talks about how cultural capital in the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalized state systematically alienates certain people, groups, communities, etc. This is evidenced in Indological Studies of the 19th century by the colonial

administration to better their understanding of Indian society, which paved the way for the ‘Theory of the Aryan race’. The description of the Aryan was understood in terms of racial connotations and superimposed against the description of the indigenous person. This paper will focus on indigenous communities, particularly the Santhals and attempt to explore the function of myths and folktales derived mostly from oral traditions in the context of the tribal community. This paper will also look into the hierarchical structure of narratives and focus on alternate histories and narratives paying close attention to the multiple versions of epics which exist in numerous tribal communities.

Claude Lévi-Strauss said that for societies without writing and without archives the aim of mythology is to ensure that as closely as possible- complete closeness is obviously impossible – the future will remain faithful to the present and in the past. This paper will delve into the cultural contact between indigenous communities and a part of the Aryan race as well as with the Christian Missionaries and how oral tradition proved itself to be particularly vulnerable to acculturation and integration of any kind. This phenomenon then manifested itself in myths and religious practices. This paper will also attempt to examine if the future in the context of cultural practice has managed to remain faithful to the past.

BIONOTE: **Rini Pratik Kujur** is currently studying for her Masters Degree at the Department of English, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. She may be contacted at the email ID: [rinipkujur@gmail.com](mailto:rinipkujur@gmail.com)

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**Folk Adaptations of Tagore and Shakespeare: Reconceptualizing Canons as a  
Transition from the Periphery to the Centre**

RISHAV CHATTERJEE

Department of Comparative Literature

Jadavpur University, Kolkata

KEYWORDS: PERFORMANCE, ART, TEXT, CULTURE, CONTACT

According to the Constitution of India indigenous people are identified as “tribes”. Our notion of tribal is often shaped by the intimation we experience with their cultural practices

primarily through the oral-visual experience of folk drama and community songs. These practices are of immense importance for ensuring the existence of a diversified socio-cultural system which negotiates the rural and urban dichotomy. The level of 'contact' that we experience with tribal culture determines not only our awareness of the social compositions of tribes but also the degree of exposure which tribal performance art experiences in order to sustain and evolve.

In West Bengal, the genre of folk performances are increasingly stepping out of ritualistic narratives and embracing popular texts. An example of the same can be gleaned from the tribal performance of Rabindranath Tagore's 'Raktakarabi' which has been showcased at EZCC, Santiniketan. Similarly, of late the stages of Kolkata have witnessed the reaffirmation of tribal performance in the narration of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Nights' Dream*, which has been adapted as *Fagun Ratter Goppo* by the Rabindra Bharati Repertoire. Both these groups have synthesized the presentation of Shakespeare and Tagore's classical narrative with tribal performance elements.

Through a greater inspection into the levels of conceptualization, narration and formats of presentation the paper would concentrate on analysing the development of such performances in the context of cultural contact. The primary focus would be on: Tribal formats of adaptation, role the genre of the texts play in cultural negotiations, how such performances play a crucial role in the exposure of tribal cultures, the spaces of such performances negotiating the rural urban dichotomy and such performances reshaping the notion of tribal contact influencing the general definition of tribal.

**BIONOTE: Rishav Chatterjee** is currently studying for his Masters Degree at the Department of Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University, Kolkata. Theatre has always been a special area of interest and he has been writing and directing plays in a professional capacity for the past 5 years. In 2014, *Portia* which he wrote as a part of the One Billion Rising program influenced by 'The Vagina Monologues', was endorsed by Eve Ensler, who witnessed the premiere. He may be contacted at the email ID: [rishav.chatterjee@gmail.com](mailto:rishav.chatterjee@gmail.com)

## **Illustrating the Santal Rebellion of 1855-56 in *Disaeabon Hul***

SAHEB RAM TUDU

Artist and Winner of ASIFA Award 2010, 2011 & 2012

KEYWORDS: ART, NATURE, HISTORY, SANTAL HUL, CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

According to Santal myth, during the festival of Sohrae, *Marang Buru Bonga* and *Jaher Era* would descend on earth from heaven to pay a visit to their people. To commemorate this, Santals celebrate their harvest festival. In preparation, Santal women of each house begin to clean their homes and decorate the walls with murals of Sohrae art. This Sohrae art form is usually either monochromatic or extremely colourful. Women coat the wall with a layer of white mud and they apply colour on it.

Tribal art forms are mostly women-centric art, related to household decorations and beautification. Some motifs are ritual based and some are purely for decorative purposes. They create all these mural art forms to enhance the environment of the house and its surroundings. Living in close proximity to forest flora and fauna, and having a symbiotic relationship with nature, their artwork is drawn from and inspired by the natural environ. They observe each element, pattern, colour, form and motif consciously and unconsciously; these are reflected in their art work. Male artisans mainly contribute to the architectural facets of the household, from the construction and repair of the houses, the making of furniture to other forms of practical craftwork centred on utility for domestic life.

The life of tribals is intrinsically intertwined with nature, so their art, music and dance also evolve from nature itself. They are people of the soil, the *Matir Manush*. Their philosophy and livelihood, their social, religious, cultural and other activities depend on it. Their day-to-day work, rituals and practices depend on it. Their innovation, creativity, music, dance, art and craft grow from and revolve around it. Nature helps them flourish and motivates their very existence. It is in this ecosystem that they live and thrive. Hence, the forms, textures and colours produced by them are a tangible expression of their reverential relationship with nature and their immediate visual surroundings.

I will now speak about my experience as an illustrator for a children's book on the great Santal Rebellion or Santal Hul of 1855-56. This book, titled *Disaiabon Hul*, was published by Adivaani Publishing House, Kolkata. I was very excited by the idea of recreating the forgotten history of the Santal Hul but had just one month to wrap up all the illustrations and art work. An incident during my visit to Barhait, the birthplace of the revolutionary leaders, Sido and Kanhu Murmu, provided the inspiration for my work. My paper is from the perspective of an artist who found inspiration in the terrifying world of state control.

**BIONOTE:** **Saheb Ram Tudu** is an animation film designer, book illustrator and sculptor. He completed his Masters from the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, India in Animation Film Design in 2011. He has won the International Animated Film Association's Best Student Animation Film Award (ASIFA Award) consecutively in 2010, 2011 and 2012. Saheb is also an alumnus of the Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, India, where he completed Bachelor of Fine Arts in Sculpture (2002 to 2006) followed by the Masters program in the same discipline (2006 to 2008). One of his major Masters' degree sculptures / projects was on display at the 27th State Lalit Kala Academy Art Exhibition, UP 2007-08. He is currently working as project animator in Cognizant Technology Solutions, Kolkata. He may be contacted at the email ID: [tudusaheb98@gmail.com](mailto:tudusaheb98@gmail.com)

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### **Runglwo: Undergoing a much awaited Paradigm Shift**

SANDESHA RAYAPA-GARBIYAL

Linguistic Empowerment Cell

Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

**KEYWORDS:** RUNGLWO, ASSIMILATION, LANGUAGE, SCRIPT, TECHNOLOGY

In their quest to learn about their new colonies, Imperialists sent their envoys that included missionaries, anthropologists and sociologists to investigate the languages and cultures of the colonies. It was thus through the need of such colonizers that Runglwo was first recorded. Runglwo has three variants (Byangbalwo, Bhyankolwo and Darmalwo) and UNESCO recognizes it as a severely endangered language. Its speakers are the Rungmung or Shaukas from the remote Himalayan town of Dharchula. The community practices vertical

transhumance and moves from its base to other regions that include areas in India, Nepal, Tibet and China. Their demography is less than 8,000 and consists of a generation that has moved on or is moving to other Indian cities in its quest for better education and job opportunities. The Rung still follow their elaborate rituals related to birth, marriage and death but they are finding it difficult to pass their ancestral oral language to their children. Runglwo's survival is therefore at peril. Realizing this, the present generation is applying technology especially from the cellular/mobile world in assimilating and recording the language from among its elders. They have recently been able to get their state government of Uttarakhand to recognize the need of teaching Runglwo in the schools located in their region. The endangered oral language is now going through a major paradigm shift. Though Runglwo is classified under the Tibeto-Burman language family, the elders of the community are choosing the Devanagri script as education was initially introduced to them through the medium of Hindi. This is understandable as most inhabitants residing in Dharchula prefer Hindi. On the other hand, there are many from the next generation preferring the Roman script. Majority are going with the flow as they understand the need of the hour and would rather have work done in any script if it leads to the preservation and possible language regeneration among the next generation of speakers of Runglwo.

**BIONOTE: Sandesha Rayapa-Garbiyal**, Assistant Professor at JNU's Linguistic Empowerment Cell (LEC), specializes in the area of English Language Teaching (ELT). With a Masters in Linguistics and on-going research focusing on Syllabus Design for Communication Skills, she aims to use her experience for running positive, focused and energised classes. For over a decade, she has gained experience in planning and developing curriculum in both 'English as a Second Language' (ESL) as well as 'English as a Foreign Language' (EFL) scenarios. She has also conducted a Communication Skills workshop at IIT, Delhi and prepared candidates for various examinations such as IELTS, GMAT and CAT. She may be contacted at the email ID: [sandesha.rayapa@gmail.com](mailto:sandesha.rayapa@gmail.com)

**The Familiar Case of the Nishad in the *Mahabharata*: An Alternate Reading**

SAROJ KUMAR MAHANANDA & ABHISHEK PUNDIR

Department of English

KEYWORDS: NISHAD, PURANETIHAS, POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION, SANSKRITIZATION, TRANSITION

If one wants to make sense of one's present, one must go back to one's past. But as the knowledge of the 'past' largely rests on the 'politics of representation' one needs to be careful about different renditions of the past. In the context of India, whether it is in the colonial historiography or the post-independent historiography, one invariably goes back to the mythology to make sense about her people.

In such a scenario, considering the large presence of indigenous or the tribal population in the country, the case of the Nishad in the epics makes for an interesting reading. The Nishads, originally a hunter-gatherer tribe of central India, who are variously known as Savar/Shabar/Sawar/Sahara or Bhil in different narratives, are a prominent marginal social group having reference in both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. In the above epics, they are represented as barbaric, savage and uncivilised people whose very sight threatens the Aryan notion of 'purity'. But, more than the marginalization - not to talk of increasing Sanskritization - of the group, there is also the issue of Brahmanical appropriation of various icons of this group (as exemplified by the reigning deity of Odisha, Lord Jagannath) which has steadily affected the obliteration of their special identity.

It is in this context, the present paper would attempt to have a fresh look at the Nishad, since the ages down to the current times, to make sense of the 'politics of representation' and its ramification in a constitutional set up of modern India and to see how the Nishad fares in relation to others.

**BIONOTE: Dr. Saroj Kumar Mahananda** is currently working as Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. His publications include *Dalit Literature and Historiography* (2014), *Reading Resistance: Essays on Dalit Literature* (2013) and *Aborigines in Patrick White's Select Fiction* (2004). He may be reached at the email ID: [smahananda@jmi.ac.in](mailto:smahananda@jmi.ac.in).

**Abhishek Pundir** is a PhD scholar at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. He is working on the topic “*Agneyan and Muktbodh: Interrogating Modernism in Hindi Literature.*”

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**Existence and Identity: The Intellectual Discourse of Arundhati Roy on Tribal Resistance**

SHABEENA KUTTAY

Department of English, Govt. Degree College  
Bemina-Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir

KEYWORDS: POSTCOLONIAL, SUBALTERN, NARRATIVE, RESISTANCE, MODELS OF DEVELOPMENT

The twentieth century postcolonial India witnessed the rise of a host of new social, political and literary movements. Dalits, Tribals, farmers, women and various ethnic groups, who are the contemporary subalterns of ‘free’ India, came forward to raise demands and issues that have been left unattended in the established political and theoretical discourses. To protect their existence and identities, and to simultaneously seek their emancipation, their narratives struggle to fight exploitation and discrimination carried out against them due to their specific identities. In the emerging inequities and inequalities, the narratives of these marginalized sections need to be strengthened by intellectual contributions from the civil and literary society. The present paper titled “Existence and Identity: The Intellectual Discourse of Arundhati Roy on Tribal Resistance” highlights the importance of grassroots workers and intellectual activists engaged in addressing the problems among Tribal communities in India. The necessity of intellectual intervention is analysed in the paper in the context of the flawed model of growth, development and globalization adopted by subsequent governments and the Indian state. This postcolonial and neo-imperialistic model has deprived the Tribals of their resources as well as identity and has threatened their existence. The purpose of the paper, consequently, is to interrogate, through selected essays of Arundhati Roy, the resistance narrative of the constitutionally protected yet subjugated indigenous people of India.



BIONOTE: **Shabeena Kuttay** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Govt. Degree College, Bemina-Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir, and also pursuing her PhD at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [shabeenakuttay@yahoo.co.in](mailto:shabeenakuttay@yahoo.co.in)

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**Text, Context and Reader: An Ideological Reading of *Miri Jiyori***

SHIMI MONI DOLEY

Department of English

Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: FOLKTALE, NARRATOLOGY, EXOTIZATION, FOCALIZATION, IDEOLOGY

*Miri Jiyori*, an Assamese novel, written by Rajanikanta Bordoloi, is based on a folktale of the Mishing tribe involving the tragic love story of Jonki and Panoi. It was published in 1894 and is the first story to be written in Assamese. Jonki (the boy) and Panoi (the girl) were childhood sweethearts who grew up together and desired to be man and wife when they reached their adulthood. But the parents of Panoi, specially Panoi's father Tamed, did not want to marry off their daughter to an orphaned pauper like Jonki and thought that Komud, the son of the village headman, would be a better suitor for their daughter. The tragedy arises as Panoi resists this plan of her parents and, finally, elopes with Jonki. The fleeing couple faces many obstacles on their way which ends with their capture and enslavement by the ferocious Hill Miris. While trying to escape from their captors they are caught and put to death. Thus, this tale of passionate young love ends in a tragic note.

The primary purpose of my paper is to deploy narratological analyses in establishing the ideological self-evidences that the narratorial voice expresses overtly and camouflages covertly in *Miri Jiyori*. The focalization of the novel apparently is to convey the vision of the underdog and the marginalized, but a re-reading and interpretation of the text demonstrates a privileging of the dominant discourse and an 'exoticization' of the 'Other' i.e the Mishing tribals. This renders the text as an ideological instrument whereby it jars with the ideology of an aware Mishing reader. The frame of values articulated in the narrative installs hierarchical distance between the narrator and the tribal folktale retold. My focus would be a sociological

and discursive enquiry into the unstated and the unrevealed beneath the “said” in the narrative.

BIONOTE: **Shimi Moni Doley** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [shimi.doley@gmail.com](mailto:shimi.doley@gmail.com)

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**Defining the ‘Tribe’ in State Discourse: From Adivasi and Schedule Tribe to Indigenous Peoples**

SHREYA JESSICA DHAN

Centre for Political Studies, School of Social Sciences  
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: TRIBE, HISTORY, ANTHROPOLOGY, ASSIMILATION, CULTURE

Tribals from the very beginning are freedom-lovers and any kind of imposition from outside authority disappoints them. Since antiquity, tribals are having a history and heritage of their own. For centuries, generation after generation they have their own religious beliefs, myths, stories, traditional and customary practices, and their identity has been developed around these life-giving forces. Over a period of time, the redefining and conceptualizing of tribe or a group of people by various discourses from the colonial to the post colonial state has led to the dangers for these groups to identify themselves. In India everyone has defined tribes in his/her own suitable terms. The state discourse has its own suitable definition of tribe to fulfil its requirements. The Academicians, anthropologists, political parties has defined tribe according to their own suitability. So far the tribal’s perception of defining himself/herself has not been recognised from the tribe’s perspective. As far as the tribals are concerned they do not identify themselves as backward, uncivilized or wild. The world-view that the outsiders hold is completely different and alien to them.

So far tribal identity has been constructed around the contexts of various kinds of threats like alienation of land, forced assimilation and cultural domination. The formation of tribal identity could be seen in the so called ‘tribal belt’ in the Central part of India. The

incorporation of various elements like culture, language, social institutions and traditional symbols are used for formation of their identity.

BIONOTE: **Shreya Jessica Dhan** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Centre for Political Studies, SSS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [shreyajessica@gmail.com](mailto:shreyajessica@gmail.com)

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**Revisiting Mahasweta Devi's *Aranyer Adhikar*: In Theory and Practice**

SUDIPTO MUKHOPADHYAY

Department of English, Subhas Chandra Bose Centenary College  
Kalyani University, Kolkata

KEYWORDS: ADIVASI, FOREST RIGHTS, NARRATIVE, RESISTANCE, IDENTITY

If we look deeper within the folds of colonial time, we find a recurrence of tribal resistances trying to configure one's own identity. The 'right to forest' is one such paradigm of identity formation that has been appropriated by the adivasis which bears its evidences in the oral narratives/performances contingent to each community. This concept, theoretically speaking, provides one with the 'right' to the resources of the forest and the adivasi lands. But in practical reality the 'rights' are often transferred and substituted to a larger bourgeois world. At this juncture, do we need to revise the definition of the concept of the 'right to forest'? Again, the grand narratives built around the resistances mark a 'fixed' beginning and a 'fixed' end so as to contain them within a separate domain of pragmatics. Is this a logic of academic bourgeoisie to institutionalize the concept and deter its implementation? Further, we see a celebratory rhetoric around this concept as an appeasement of sorts to defer the struggle of reclamation. It is imperative to struggle and survive with one's own tradition and adapt with the changing cultural patterns. Yet the question remains, how do we reconcile the two? This paper deals with this problematics and would try to formulate a methodology of study of the tribes in transition specifically focusing on the Santali (Santhal) community.

BIONOTE: **Sudipto Mukhopadhyay** is currently employed as Assistant Professor at the Department of English, Subhas Chandra Bose Centenary College, Kalyani University,

Kolkata, and also pursuing his PhD at the Centre for English Studies, SLLCS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He may be contacted at the email ID: [otpidusm@gmail.com](mailto:otpidusm@gmail.com)

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**Tribal Literature: Santhals and their Cultural Anxiety**

TERESA TUDU

Department of English

Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi

KEYWORDS: ANTHROPOLOGY, IDENTITY, EXPRESSION, CIVILIZATION, SANTHAL

Tribal life has become one of the popular discourses in contemporary academia. There have been intense and detailed research works on tribals carried out by the anthropologists and sociologists. The information embedded in their works supply the basis to differentiate these tribals from the so-called civilization. This differentiation which portrays them as naïve and ignorant individuals makes them vulnerable to the suppression of the ruling class. Since old times, there had been voices against the discrimination inflicted to them. But it is in more recent times, with the advent of education that the tribals have been able to give expression to their experiences and to articulate their demands to acquire their legal rights.

The alien and fascinating indigeneity of Santhals has been always appealing to the non-tribals and attracts researchers and writers to dig into their territory. Mostly, these tribals have been portrayed as the objects of analysis, hunger-stricken and uncivilized. Consequently, the socio-political mainstream that is unaccustomed to accept them as civilized human beings, tries to subjugate them. They agree to accept them as their ally only at the cost of their betrayal to their identity. The available literature of Santhals is the demonstration of the voices of the people struggling to liberate themselves from the clutches of varied suppressions that problematize the very essence of their identity. Taking characters from every stratum, Santhali writers are enriching Tribal literature and foregrounding the unmapped realm of Santhal community.

The present paper intends to analyze some literary works that deal with the cultural and political ascendancy of Hindu culture and religion over the naive Santhals living in the non-tribal vicinity and their despair on the segregation from their community and culture.

BIONOTE: **Teresa Tudu** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Department of English, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [teresa.tudu@gmail.com](mailto:teresa.tudu@gmail.com)

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***Apne Ghar Ki Talash Mein: Identity, Subjectivity and Home in Nirmala Putul's Works***

VASUNDHARA GAUTAM

Department of English

BML Munjal University, Gurgaon, Delhi NCR

KEYWORDS: NARRATIVE, ADIVASI, NON-ADIVASI, REPRESENTATION, PATRIARCHY

Adivasi narratives have emerged as an area of critical inquiry gaining currency in the last two decades. The emergent Adivasi writings address the manifold socio-political and economic issues that are closely linked to the existential reality of the Adivasis. Their writings provide an insight into their world and problems which ranges from the question of injustice historically inflicted upon them by the colonial laws and policies which are prevalent in the post-independence period as well. The fact that Adivasis have been (mis)represented by non-Adivasi writers, taking cue from the social stereotypes ingrained in the scriptures have also given rise to a continual anxiety within their writings.

Through the poetry of Nirmala Putul, an eminent Adivasi woman poet, my paper would try to analyse the several concerns of an Adivasi writer that she has addressed. Her poems not only criticise the so-called civilised society or the outsiders for exploiting the natural resources and threatening their existence, she also exposes the hypocrisies and miseries alongside the positive aspects that are evident within her own society. The question of women identity and their challenge towards patriarchal domination emerges very prominently in her poetry. Through the instance of Nirmala Putul's poetry I would like to bring up and argue how the

Adivasi women's voice and their rightful existence has been sidelined further from the larger questions of marginal identity altogether.

BIONOTE: **Vasundhara Gautam** is currently employed as Guest Faculty at BML Munjal University, Gurgaon. She has completed her Masters and M. Phil from the Department of English, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi. The topic of her M. Phil dissertation was "The Representation of 'Adivasi' in Select Regional Writings in Translation". Her areas of interests are Tribal Literature and Folklore, Women Studies and Film Studies. She has presented papers in many national conferences. She may be contacted at the email ID: [vasundhara.gautam@gmail.com](mailto:vasundhara.gautam@gmail.com)

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**Rhythms of Resistance: A Study of the Kondh Tribe of Orissa through 'Blood Earth'  
Project**

VED PRAKASH

Department of English

Central University of Rajasthan, Ajmer

KEYWORDS: RHYTHM, RESISTANCE, ORISSA, KONDH TRIBE, BLOOD EARTH PROJECT

The Kondhs are indigenous tribal groups of Orissa, India. They are land dwellers with great adaptability to the forest environment and their highest concentration is found in Rayagada, Kashipur, Kalyansinghpur, and Muniguda. Kondhs have a rich cultural heritage and an immense amount of love for nature. There are many subgroups among the Kondhs such as Maliah Kondh, Kutia, and Dongria Kondh. At present, most of these tribes are fighting against the state government and other powerful international mining agencies for their subsistence. For instance, the Odisha government gave the consent to UK-based mining organization, Vedanta Resources, for mining in Niyamgiri Hills. This led to a huge environmental disturbance; thereby, in 2013, the Supreme Court ruled that Vedanta's bauxite mining project should have the permission of *gram sabhas*. After failing in legal procedure with regard to mining, the state government is resorting to illegal means by intimidating

tribals and arresting activists on charges of fabricated Naxal links. The state government says that the tribals have no right/power to reject bauxite mining.

This paper is going to look at the cross-genre mesh up, combining revolutionary songs in Oriya and Kui tribal languages performed against state-funded atrocities. The protest songs amalgamated with dub poetry by the singer, Delhi Sultanate, and electronic music composer, Chris McGuinness, will be examined, keeping in mind various modes of resistance. This paper will focus upon the second project of 'Word, Sound, Power' titled 'Blood Earth' which explores the relationship between music, struggle, and cultural responses to violence through word and sound.

BIONOTE: **Dr. Ved Prakash** is currently teaching in the Department of English, Central University of Rajasthan. He worked on Reggae music for his PhD. His areas of research interest are African-American Literature, African Literature, Writing in English. He may be contacted at the email ID: [vedprakash@curaj.ac.in](mailto:vedprakash@curaj.ac.in)

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### **Tribal Education and Employment Situation in Jharkhand**

VIJAY BARAIK

School of Sciences

Indira Gandhi National Open University, New Delhi

KEYWORDS: POVERTY, ILLITERACY, EMPLOYMENT, TRIBAL, URBAN

Jharkhand is a region of vast physical and cultural diversity along with wide disparity. The region possesses contradiction in development with coexistence of glaring paradoxical situations. Roughly 40 per cent of the mineral resources of the country are in the state and some of the minerals of the country are found only in Jharkhand. Yet the poverty level is one of the highest among all states in the country. More than 70 per cent main workers engaged in primary activities and large unemployed population exist despite the presence of well known Asia's first iron and steel industry, world's one of the few heavy engineering establishments of that time, India's automobile giant-Tata Motors, and many other industries with mining

activities in the state. Large numbers of villages remain illiterate amid most modern educational establishments in the state. Vast potential of manpower and human resources are available but end up wasted due to lack of opportunity. Large areas and numbers of villages are inaccessible or services and facilities are still inaccessible for those villages still confining as cul-de-sac forcing people to live in isolation and many decades behind the normal and modern urban population. Very poor living conditions of the PTGs are hard realities. The state is characterized with indigenous people and realized due to their longstanding demand for separate state, but aspirations remain a distant hope. There is a lack of forward and backward bearings (infrastructure without outcome, education without jobs, local resources without employment generation, etc.). Amid this situation, employment in the state for educated tribal youth is a distant dream and thus employability of education has weakened among them. Stranded tribal youth in considerable number including sizeable educated ones are opting for out migration in search of employment and livelihood despite adverse and often harsh movement/out-migration and working conditions outside the state.

In the above background, this paper examines the situation of tribal education and employment in Jharkhand. It also attempts to look into the attainments and challenges in this direction. The study is primarily based on secondary data from the Census of India, National Sample Survey, NCERT, DISE, NUIPA and other government and non-government sources.

**BIONOTE:** **Dr. Vijay Kumar Baraik** is currently working as Associate Professor of Geography in the School of Sciences, IGNOU, New Delhi. His area of interest is regional development and planning. He has published books, research papers and popular articles on the issues of development and disparity, development and deprivation, health and education among the Tribes in Jharkhand. He may be contacted at the email ID: [vijaybaraik@ignou.ac.in](mailto:vijaybaraik@ignou.ac.in).



KEYWORDS: IDENTITY, COMMUNITY, VIOLENCE, LIBERATION, NARRATIVE

"Because she is the illegitimate daughter of a white father the Oraons don't think of her as their blood and do not place the harsh injunctions of their own society upon her. She would have rebelled if they had. She is unhappy that they don't. In her inmost heart there is somewhere a longing to be part of the Oraons."

One of the largest tribes of South Asia, the Oraons have been portrayed by Mahasweta Devi in the story without the indication of any stereotype. The story is induced with powerful images of the small village in its true state. Mary in "The Hunt" is a perfect example of the confluence of both the worlds. The subaltern identity of the suppressed tribe doesn't hesitate from alienating the one who appears as an outsider because of her 'white blood' despite her being a part of their identity as a tribe. She was friends with all the women, she was the best dancer at the festivals yet it is very apparent in her behaviour that she didn't want to live a life like that. This subaltern could speak for herself as well as the whole community and can be seen more as the representative of the modern day India.

This paper is going to explore violence as the main theme of the story that is implicated through the colonisers to begin with and being perpetrated by the colonised thereafter. Violence is seen to be building the characters, identities, and histories. Through the violent history of colonisation the subjects like Mary Oraon surface as cultural amalgamation hence she uses violence through the traditional 'hunt' by assassinating her predator to re-establish her identity as part of the Oraon community and explore liberation through this act. The paper will further delve into the three ways marginalisation of Mary; for being a part of the tribal society, having a mixed racial identity and moreover being a woman.

BIONOTE: **Violina Borah** is currently pursuing her PhD at the Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She may be contacted at the email ID: [violinaster@gmail.com](mailto:violinaster@gmail.com)