

Cultural Identity of Tribals in Relation to NEP 2020

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Abstract :

Cultural identity is the feeling of belonging to a group and part of a person's self-conception and perception that has its own distinct culture. Different types of traditional performing folk art forms along with tribal garments and ornaments, puppetry and tribal wall art have become indicators of cultural identity of different tribal communities of India. Tribals have rich and unique cultural traditions, including, their own language, music, stories and paintings. They have also their own gods and goddesses. Tribal culture foundations include marrying, Child-rearing socializing, worshipping, governing and working. Tribal identity is inherited through stories and myth, developing early in the social environment and outside the conscious awareness of the individual. However, with the 21st century global world there is a strong need to preserve this cultural identity of Tribals. NEP 2020 has provided special safeguard to schedule tribes. The present article, therefore, is an attempt to bring out the relation between the cultural identity of the tribal community and NEP2020 and the means of preservation and propagation of the tribal culture of India.

Introduction :

The tribal culture and tribal community represent an important social category of Indian social structure. The tribals are said to be the original inhabitants of India. Different types of group occupy parts of India, having their own cultural identity and characteristics. A number of groups are still in primitive stage and they are often referred to as "tribals", "adiwasis" and so on. The constitution of India has accepted the use of term "scheduled tribes(ST)". Which was introduced by the Simon commission in 1928.

Culture is a continuing way of life. The tribal culture has its own peculiarity, which pervades every aspect of life. The tribal culture still draws fresh inspiration and vigour from the people and enrich them in return. Culture, custom, and traditions are in heritage from earlier generation and moves to the next generation. The tribal culture is entirely different from the way of life of the other people. The debate on "tribal identity" and "tribal self-rule" or interchangeably "local self-government of and for tribals" revolves around tribal development, which includes their social, political and economic rights. The international Human Rights as well as Social, Cultural and Political Rights have recognized distinct rights of indigenous communities, especially tribals. This is mainly so in light of their relation and inter-dependence with forest, natural resources and land.

There are mainly two tribal groups in the eastern Indian states like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal & Orissa and the parts of Andaman. These racial groups are – (i) Proto-Austroloid and (ii) Mongoloid distinctly identified and separated by certain physical, behavioural and residential pattern. Among the different tribal communities the most dominant group is Santal residing chiefly in the states like Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal & Orissa. Some other tribal communities in these states are Munda, Oraon, and Ho in Jharkhand; the Bhumij, Bhuiya, Gond, Kandha, Santal and Saora in Orissa; the Bhumij, Santal, Kora, Lepcha, Bhutia, Munda, and Oraon in West Bengal; Santal, Munda, Ho, Bhumij, Oraon and Gond in Bihar.

Indian Constitution has provided special safeguards to scheduled tribes:

(i) The scheduled areas are identified and demarcated, that is, the areas in which scheduled tribes are in preponderance; (ii) Article 244 and 244A read with Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution outline in detail the powers, privileges, rights and responsibilities of the President, Union Government and the governors regarding the scheduled areas; (iii) In addition to Article 46 of Part (iv) Directive Principles of State Policy of the Constitution which states that "The state shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the scheduled castes and the scheduled tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation." Special provisions for scheduled tribes have also been made through certain Acts and orders, which are protective, ameliorative and concessional in nature.

- Exempting the scheduled tribes from Hindu Succession Act 1956, Hindu Adoption Act 1956 and Hindu Marriage Act 1956, special provisions have been made for their family and land rights. Thus, the customary marriage and succession rules of the scheduled tribes have remained largely untouched.
- Laws protecting land rights of the tribal communities have recognised their traditional rights over it and restricting its alienation to non-tribals in principle. Moreover, infiltration of the non-tribals into tribal areas was prohibited in concerned areas of India. Most of the State governments have provided legislative and executive measures in order to protect tribal lands.
- The Constitution of India, through its 73rd Amendment, paved the way for a separate and progressive legal and administrative regime for tribal areas to usher in genuine tribal self-rule. The final framework was laid down by the Bhuria Committee Report, which was legalised through the Provision of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996. All ten states with tribal areas were to adopt this law within one year.

Departments in Languages, Literature, Music, Philosophy, Indology, Art, Dance, Theatre, Education, Mathematics, Statistics, Pure and Applied Sciences, Sociology, Economics, Sports, Translation and Interpretation, and other such subjects needed for a multidisciplinary, stimulating Indian education and environment will be established and strengthened at all HEIs. Credits will be given in all Bachelor's Degree programmes for these subjects if they are done from such departments or through ODL mode when they are not offered in-class at the HEI. (11.7 NEP 2020)

Second, suitable infrastructure will be ensured so that all interested adults will have access to adult education and lifelong learning. A key initiative in this direction will be to use schools/ school complexes after school hours and on weekends and public library spaces for adult education courses which will be ICT-equipped when possible and for other community engagement and enrichment activities. The sharing of infrastructure for school, higher, adult, and vocational education, and for other community and volunteer activities, will be critical for ensuring efficient use of both physical and human resources as well as for creating synergy among these five types of education and beyond. For these reasons, Adult Education Centres (AECs) could also be included within other public institutions such as HEIs, vocational training centres, etc. (21.6 NEP 2020)

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Festivals & Ceremonies

Since there goes a proverb, "old is gold", tribal people have been carrying on their age old rich cultural heritage even to day in this global world and amidst such „e" life. They have a separate and distinct cultural identity of their own majority of which is constituted by the share of their festivals and ceremonies in life and through taking part in the tribal cultural occasions and celebrations. At the same time, the nature of tribals" celebration of festivals is primarily congregational and approach is collective. The festivals always have been closed community festival with little scope for non tribals to join and integrate with them expressing their traditional custom and culture and are interconnected to the cultural identity and solidarity of the tribal society at large.

Baha, the Flower Festival and the second biggest festival of the Santals after Sohrai is celebrated in the beginning of spring. The ritual observed revolves around man"s communion with nature and the celebration of beauty. This is the time, Santals believe from time immemorial, when the trees become reproductive and one should not disturb their body and soul by plucking or cutting off their buds, flowers, leaves and branches.² Therefore, it has become a part of their traditional knowledge that Santals never pluck or eat the flowers or fruits of Mango trees, never tear off the leaves of Peepal and Neem trees before celebrating Baha. Women do not use Sal flowers in their hair for decoration and trees are not cut for firewood at this time. If it does happen, the firewood is not brought to the village but is kept outside. As per the tribal traditional belief, any family who breaks such rules will not be visited by the village priest who normally enters every family"s house during the

Baha rituals. Sohrai which is a harvest and cattle festival of santals, Oraon and Munda people in Jharkhand, Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal is mainly celebrated at the beginning of winter harvest when the paddy has ripened on the new moon day of the Bengali month of *Kartik*, coinciding with Diwali or Kali puja, in the month of October-November. The age old traditional belief/knowledge that marks this festival with a unique distinctiveness that Marang Buru (God of mountain), Jaher Ayo (Goddess of forest) and the elder sister of the Santhals would descend on earth from heaven to visit their brothers on this festive occasion. Santals pay homage to their gods and their ancestors as a thanksgiving for their crops, their cattle, their ploughs, and everything that has helped them to attain the harvest. Sarhul, celebrated in the beginning of New Year is one of the grand festivals of tribes (Oraon) in Jharkhand as part of the traditional knowledge regarding the Sal tree and its leaves and their productive role in it. Sarhul which literally means „Worship of Sal“ is dedicated to Mother Earth (Dharti Mata) with the belief that good yield of Sal fruit means bumper agricultural harvest for them. Sarhul festival is very old and traditional in nature and believed to have its roots/origin during the age of Mahabharata. It has thus been carrying the age old tradition and tribal identity from an antique period and consequently attached to the rich cultural heritage of Indian tribal folk at large. The Karam Puja held in August-September is also a sacred festival of agriculture of the tribes like Baiga, Oraon, Kora, Munda, Ho, Kol and Santal etc in the Eastern Indian states. As part of the traditional knowledge, the tribal community believes that due to Karam Devta they have a good harvest and so they worship trees during this festival and pray to the Mother Nature to keep their farmlands green and ensure a rich harvest. Karam Puja being very traditional has also various legends and is based on the tribal indigenous knowledge and culture. Mage Parab (Festival) is the main festival of the Ho and Munda people. It is celebrated during the month of December to February with much joy and mirth among the tribal community. As in many other tribal festivals like Baha, Sohrai, here during this celebration a tribal god Singbonga (in Mage parab) who is credited with the prestige of creating the first man on earth, Luku Kola, is worshipped by the Ho and Munda community. People share their culture, expression and reciprocal understanding in these festivals which are expressive of tribal cultural identity at large. As part of the traditional belief the central idea behind this celebration of the festival is to offer new pulse and other cereals to the ancestors. The Dasae Festival of the Santal which coincides with the celebration of Durga Puja gets its name from the month in which it occurs. The celebration finds its root in the traditional knowledge for it goes back to a period in history when the Santals had to defend themselves and hide their identity behind masks. The origin of the festival may be found in the Karma Puja and the story of Mahisashur which again refer to the traditional belief and culture of the tribal people.



1. Sohrai Festival



2. Karam Festival



3. Baha Festival

2. PERFORMING ARTS - DANCE, MUSIC & INSTRUMENTS

The tribals are fond of dance, music and different types of songs for different occasions. Music and dance of the tribals are always closely associated with their rituals and festivals and reflect their collective nature, community feelings and social awareness. Many of these songs and dances as one of the major parts of folk art forms and the component factors of rich Indian tribal cultural heritage are spontaneous expression of the composers' sentiment, expression of ecstasy, melancholy and vagaries of life. Both past incidents, traditions and current events find expression in their dance and song and music. All these, in a way, portray the cultural identity of the indigenous people of the Eastern Indian states. Most of the tribal people belonging to different states like West Bengal, Orissa, Jharkhand of Eastern India feel proud for a special kind of tribal martial folk art form that finds its expression through world famous Chhau dance which is very unique and distinctively carry certain glorious tribal cultural heritage with its own aesthetics. This kind of dance form is very traditional in nature and mostly narrate tales on Gods and deities. The vibrant Karam dance is performed during the popular Karam festival in which the Karam tree is worshipped as a symbol of productivity. This dance form with typical

musical instrument „Timki“ and ethnic costumes in a circle style rhythmic pattern reflects the real cultural identity of the tribal communities like Oraon, Munda, Ho, Santal, Bhumij, Kol and Kora of the Eastern India ; „Paata Naach“ in Paata Festival (Parab) which is really an adaptation of the Hindu Charak Puja is performed in honour of the Lord Mahadeva. Thus, every tribal celebration from „Baha“ to „Karam“ have a particular kind of dance and musical associations attached to it.

Music is both externally and internally associated with the tribal performing arts and their life as a whole. Since tribal life is collective and community based in nature, they prefer using music as a medium for expressing the innermost feelings of their heart and also as a bridge to communicate with other tribal and non tribal people at large. Tribal music thus play a very dominant role in preservation of the cultural heritage of different tribal communities. Jhumur songs being both tribal and non tribal partly belong to tribal communities like Bhumij, Munda and Oraon. „Paata Sareng“ literally means songs sung at the Paata Parab of the Santal and „Tusu gaan“ usually sung at the Tusu festival is celebrated exclusively by women, young and old alike that again contribute to the formation of a unique kind of distinctive tribal cultural identity.

The multi cultural tribal groups of Eastern India have their own typical instruments that bear their cultural identity. The folk drum remains an essential accompaniment for all sorts of tribal dances. The Santals of West Bengal play the „Buang“, „Banam“, „Madal“ which they call „Tumdak“, or „Tumdah“, a smaller variant of the dhamsha which they call „Tamdak“ and a variety of „Horns“ and „Flutes“ 5(Tiriao)which are made in Bankura and Birbhum. The drum locally known is „Timki“ is used as the main musical instrument in Karam dance. Ankle bells (Junko) and various kinds of fiddles (Banam) are also used as accompaniment to these musical events of the tribal people. Locals of the Bhutia Basti in the hill district of Darjeeling make a variety of ornate trumpets and a blowing conch and the “Thanchen”, a unique long ceremonial trumpet.



4. Tusko Dance



5. Sohrai Dance



6. Mandar

3. Garments And Ornaments

Tribal garments and ornaments are very unique and distinctive in nature. All tribal groups therefore bear certain differences from others in dress and ornaments. A Santal woman hardly leaves her traditional dress and so are with the Bhutia people of the hill districts. Bakhu is a very common and traditional dress of the male and female members of the Bhutia people in the hill districts. It is a kind of full sleeve loose and very comfortable garment to wear. Any Bhutia people in any part of the world is chiefly known for these kinds of local tribal dresses which are distinctively of their own and bear a separate cultural identity of the tribal people there. The woman prefer to put on a silken full sleeved blouse called „Honju“. Santal has their own way to adorn themselves with ornaments which is again very distinctive in nature and style. The change in the tribal jewellerys has come along with the evolution of clothing. Some of the ornaments that Santal women wear are „Hasa-sakam“, „Hasa-mala“, „Methed Sakam“, „ Danda jhinjhri, „ Danda thumko“, and „ Itil



7. Kurukh Garment



8. Tribal Ornaments



9. Tribal Garments

4. Puppetry And Wall Art

Tribals are very often skilled with the art of puppetry. There is a unique and rare form practised among some Santal communities of West Bengal and Jharkhand, the „Chadar Badar“. They are also rich with traditional mythological stories which are based largely on the life of their ancestors like Pilchu Budhi and Pilchu Haram who shared major part in constituting most of these age old stories that Santal have been carrying with them as a part of their rich tribal cultural heritage and identity respectively. Twelve clans (Hansda, Tudu, Murmu, Hembram, Baske, Besra, marandi etc) trace their origin to these mythical ancestors. The distinctive Sohrai wall art which is matriarchal in tradition (handed down from mother to daughter) is very unique and hint towards the tribal cultural identity in Eastern India. With the harvest festival knocking at the door, Santal women decorate their walls with murals of sohrai arts. It’s from here that Sohrai art originated, adding to the rituals and traditions of Indian glorious tribal cultural heritage. This art form is monochromatic, extremely colourful and have been in vogue from time immemorial.



10. Santhali Painting



11. Sohrai Painting

SALIENT FEATURES OF NEP 2020: RELATION TO TRIBAL SOCIAL CULTURE

1. Early childhood care and education: the foundation of learning• The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of: physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy.

- The numerous rich local traditions of India developed over millennia in ECCE involving art, stories, poetry, games, songs, and more, will also be suitably incorporated.
- Prior to the age of 5 every child will move to a “Preparatory Class” or “Balavatika” (that is, before Class 1), which has an ECCE-qualified teacher.
- The planning and implementation of early childhood care and education curriculum will be carried out jointly by the Ministries of HRD, Women and Child Development (WCD), Health and Family Welfare (HFW), and Tribal Affairs.

2. Holistic Development of Learners

- Aim of education will not only be cognitive development, but also building character and creating holistic and well-rounded individuals equipped with the key 21st century skills.
- Specific sets of skills and values across domains will be identified for integration and incorporation at each stage of learning, from pre-school to higher education.

3. Experiential Learning

- In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted
- Will include hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy.

4. No Hard Separation

- Students will be given increased flexibility and choice of subjects to study, particularly in secondary school - including subjects in physical education, the arts and crafts, and vocational skills

5. Multilingualism And The Power Of Language

- Wherever possible, the medium of instruction until at least Grade 5, but preferably till Grade 8 and beyond, will be the home language/mother tongue/local language/regional language.
- Thereafter, the home/local language shall continue to be taught as a language wherever possible.
- This will be followed by both public and private schools. • High-quality textbooks, including in science, will be made available in home languages/mother tongue.
- All languages will be taught in an enjoyable and interactive style mother tongue.
- The three-language learned by children will be the choices of States, regions, and of the students, so long as at least two of the three languages are native to India.
- Efforts to prepare high-quality bilingual textbooks and teaching-learning materials for science and mathematics, so that students are enabled to think and speak about the two subjects both in their home language/mother tongue and in English.

6. Curricular Integration Of Essential Subjects, Skills, And Capacities

- Bagless days will be encouraged throughout the year for various types of enrichment activities involving arts, quizzes, sports, and vocational crafts.

7. National Textbooks With Local Content And Flavour• All textbooks shall aim to contain the essential core material on a national level, but at the same time contain any desired nuances and supplementary material as per local contexts and needs.

8. Knowledge of India

- Will include knowledge from ancient India to modern India as well as future aspirations
- Indian Knowledge Systems, including tribal knowledge and indigenous and traditional ways of learning, will be covered
- Specific courses in tribal ethno-medicinal practices, forest management, traditional (organic) crop cultivation, natural farming, etc. will also be made available.
- Video documentaries on inspirational luminaries of India, ancient and modern, in science and beyond.
- Traditional Indian values and all basic human and Constitutional values will be developed in all student.

9. Transforming Assessment For Student Development

- All students will take school examinations in Grades 3, 5, and 8 also, which will test achievement of basic learning outcomes, and application of knowledge in real-life situations.
- The progress card will be a holistic, 360-degree, multidimensional report that reflects in great detail the progress and the uniqueness of each learner in the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains.
- The National Testing Agency (NTA) will offer a high-quality common aptitude test, as well as specialized common subject exams in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational subjects, at least twice every year for university entrance exams.

10. Teacher Education

- All multidisciplinary universities and colleges - will aim to establish, education departments will also run B.Ed. programmes, in collaboration with other departments such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, neuroscience, Indian languages, arts, music, history, literature, physical education, science and mathematics.

11. Equitable And Inclusive Education: Learning For All

- Socio-cultural identities (such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, and minorities),
- Geographical identities (such as students from villages, small towns, and aspirational districts),

- Free boarding facilities will be built - matching the standard of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas particularly for students who from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Special attention will be given to reduce the disparities in the educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes – through special hostels in dedicated regions, bridge courses, and financial assistance through fee waivers and scholarships.

12. Standard-Setting And Accreditation For School Education

- vocational skills development
- basic education (including preparatory, middle, and secondary stage equivalency);
- continuing education (including engaging holistic adult education courses in arts, sciences, technology, culture, sports, and recreation, etc.

5. CONCLUSIONS

However, with the 21st century global world the indigenous knowledge of different tribal communities of the Eastern India, preserved by the locals has either been confined to the small group of people of this region or left to subside gradually. Therefore, there is a strong need to preserve this traditional knowledge so that it can be carried forward for generations to come. Managing and documenting indigenous knowledge will not only safeguard but also expose the hidden treasures of the region including domestic, religious and healing practices that the world has not known about. Information professionals can also play a major role in managing and documenting the indigenous knowledge of the Eastern Indian states with the proper means of preservation and propagation of the tribal culture there.

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