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Preservation of Tribes, Folk Art, Music and Culture

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ABSTRACT : Man and culture are inseparable and considered being the two sides of the same coin. One does not exist without the other. The cultural innovation was the most remarkable mechanism that led man to more and more complex setting to adapt to the new environment. In fact, culture maintains order, balance with nature and natural as well as supernatural forces through their disposition, feelings, attitudes and manners as well as in significant forms, which they give to material objects. Simply defined, cultural heritage refers to that package of cultural asset that man has created and maintained in the forms of values, norms, cultural tradition, beliefs, knowledge and range of activities that often provide meaning and substance to human life. Representing extreme variations of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, the intangible cultural asset produces a spectacular identity of a nation, which makes an astounding spectacle of the overall psyche and sentiments of entire communities residing in that nation. In fact, intangible culture is the soul of all that we see in the tangible form of the culture. It can be pretty easy to conserve a temple or a palace but to conserve the real meaning of the temple, we should also conserve the festivals, processions, music dance and other rituals associated with it.

Tribal Society is an enigma to the world of culture and heritage. In the broad sphere of Indian society, the tribal communities represent an important social category of Indian social structure. They are considered as the original inhabitants of India, who carry forward a legacy of rich and distinct cultural traits for many decades. Tribal society displays a fascinating profile of ethnic diversity. They belong to different racial stocks, speak language of different families and show considerable variations in their heritage. The variation in physical and biological environment of their habitat is equally amazing. This bewildering variety in race, language, habitat and economy is fully reflected in their culture, which like a mosaic evokes the admiration of social scientists to study the dynamics of their society.

KEYWORDS: culture, tribe, folk, art, music, preservation, tradition, conserve

I.INTRODUCTION

Need for Preserving Tribal Cultural Heritage

The intangible heritage that the tribal population possesses including the traditional knowledge system contains many positive and productive elements that are really invaluable for the entire humanity. Despite its significant role to integrate the society and enhance the sense of ownership to the concerned people and culture, intangible heritage faces serious threats for its existence. In many parts of India fast pace of modernization has been taking toll on it. The danger also comes from the rapid process of globalization, homogenization, and pervading influence of western culture. There is even more critical situation facing tribal culture: the intense pressure of adopting the cultural framework of ruling class elite within. [8,9]Each human community has developed its own ways of life to satisfy human needs through the process of interacting with specific environment and the universe throughout the centuries. These processes provide living communities with a sense of continuity with its previous generations and are important to cultural identity, as well as to the safeguarding of cultural diversity and creativity of humanity. There are many challenging factors that are quickly bringing permanent changes in the present day and every one of us should be primarily concerned with the preservation of human cultural inheritance in its multiplicity of forms and manifestations. There is thus an urgent need to preserve intangible heritage in order to contribute to the development of mankind.[10,11]

The whole tribal society at present moment is going through the critical stage of transformation. Various modernizing forces have brought rapid transformation in their whole socio-cultural milieu. Cultural intermixture is on increase and this is sure to effect a perceptible change in the life style of tribes. [6,7]Changes brought through modern and scientific attitudes are healthy sign for their development, but at the same time attention should be paid to preserve their traditional systems, which have immense value. The art and culture of tribes should be given new orientation and respectability in the overall scheme of cultural development. The best traits of both the tradition and modernity should be synthesized for their sustainable development. The tribal people have rich traditions, cultures and heritage with unique life styles and customs. Till date, it is not being preserved. Today the rich cultural heritage of the tribes manifested in its folklore, costume, jewellery and lifestyle, is under serious threat, and may fade into oblivion. There is no authentic documentation

of the traditional tribal lives, history and cultural heritage in India. At present there is no centre of excellence or one stop information centre, which holistically deals with the tribal folklores, customs and traditions and its application for promoting endogenous development.[4,5]

Role of Media in Preservation of Tribal Culture and Tradition

There is general agreement that the media has the capacity to influence audience attitudes, and that it exerts influence on social life. A media impact study commissioned by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in 2003 revealed that the impact of media was “visible in the social, cultural, and political aspects of tribal life...” Article 49 of Constitution of India obliges the state to protect every monument or place or object of artistic or historic interest, declared by or under law made by Parliament to be of national importance, from spoliation, disfigurement, destruction, removal, disposal or export, as the case may be and the state shall endeavour to preserve, protect and promote the cultural heritage of the country, including monuments, places and objects of artistic or historic interest ...to enrich society and the cultural life of the citizens.[12,13]

In this context the print media and the digital media can provide a powerful public voice for this indigenous culture. As a public service, media must continue to be a virtual public classroom, a platform for display of indigenous cultures, and it must guard itself against temptations to indulge in mindless commercialism and politicking, a weakness many newspapers and television channels in the region have suffered. [14,15]The print media’s research departments must identify those aspects of the country’s tribal culture which has remained untouched and are more vulnerable to the phenomenon of loss and displacement. Tribal culture and tradition should be presented by the print media in order to sustain and promote the originality of our cultural heritage that can create awareness among the younger generation. The younger generation needs intellectual feed that has cultural values and deep perspectives. The print media’s role in educating young minds on the distinct manifestations of tribal culture—be it the literary canons, spirituality, or folklore, will be immense.

Senior citizens, academics, culture bearers, writers and researchers, [3,4]the academia—all must work to evolve a discursive community that will create a public space of common concern dedicated to disseminating cultural knowledge, articulating cultural aspirations, and advocating cultural maintenance and promotion. When we look at the three popular domains of tribal culture, namely literary culture, spiritual culture, and folk culture we find that the media can create adequate public space for disseminating cultural knowledge and facilitating popular discourse amongst them.[16,17]

In an age in which a networked society is given much importance, there remains an imbalance between the globalization the digital technology brings and the preservation of Indigenous culture. Alongside the promise of better education and communication, digital media and networked technology can widen the horizon of knowledge amongst the Indigenous societies and can provide an alternative to Indigenous traditions for younger segments of society. It may be obvious to say that the mass media in general and television in particular, have a huge cultural significance, since television is the most popular and ubiquitous popular medium, offering diversity and availability unmatched by the print media. The way in which the audiences of mass media and television interpret the world shapes their existence and their participation in society. Television can be considered “the site of convergence that joins the private world of the home with the larger public worlds beyond the front door”.[18,19] In an effort to prevent the wholesale extinction of Indigenous practices, many digital preservation projects by the Government and the NGOs are currently underway. When we analyse globally we see that at the University of the South Pacific, in Fiji, students are encouraged to film traditional ceremonies in their home villages while on holiday, which are later on uploaded to the University's Cultural tradition database. In Canada, the Aboriginal People’s Television Network gives native peoples in Canada an opportunity to share their cultures with non-Native Canadians but not any such attempt has been made in our country. [2,3]There is a need today to develop digital media and networked technology according to the modes and habits of these Indigenous cultures. This may include developing strategies to enable Indigenous people to utilize digital technology, creating digital toolsets that allow modification and customization for Indigenous content, and exploring the development of technology according to the goals and ways of thinking of Indigenous Peoples. The three phases necessary for a robust digital preservation, promotion and growth may include:

1. Straightforward documentation of Indigenous traditions;
2. Translation of Indigenous traditions into emerging technology and contemporary cultural modes of expression;
3. Application of principles of Indigenous traditions to develop new technologies.

So the need of the hour is to preserve the rich & fast diminishing cultural heritage of the tribes by making people aware and motivated towards it. Hence the need of media arises on this tribe to highlight the salient features of its values. The media can play a vital role for an exhaustive documentation of tribal values in the form of documentaries, which could be an important tool for future generations to know about its culture and customs. The media through their documentation

and presentation of culture will help to expose and promote the tribal cultural identity and uniqueness to the outside world. The media must play a proactive role in the cultural sphere, as it will in the political sphere. This desire is in fact expressed unambiguously by the government when it links the media's role to the country's social, cultural and political imperatives: that the media in India must be conscious that "it serves a small vulnerable society that survives on the strength of a distinct cultural identity" and that it must be sensitive to the "cultural and social complexity in the environment of rapid political transformation".[20,21]

II.DISCUSSION

To preserve & promote various forms of folk art and culture of the tribals throughout the country including West Bengal, the Government of India has set up seven Zonal Cultural Centres (ZCCs) with headquarters at Patiala, Nagpur, Udaipur, Prayagraj, Kolkata, Dimapur and Thanjavur. These ZCCs organize various cultural activities and programmes all over the country on regular basis. These ZCCs under Ministry of Culture are also implementing a number of schemes for promoting the folk/tribal art and culture, details of which are as below -

- i. Award to Young Talented Artists: The Scheme "Young Talented Artists" is carried out to encourage and recognize the young talents especially in the field of rare art forms. Talented youngsters of the age group of 18-30 years are selected and given a onetime cash award of Rs. 10,000/-.[22,23]
- ii. Guru Shishya Parampara: This scheme envisages transmitting our valued traditions to the coming generations. Disciples are trained under veterans in art forms which are rare and vanishing. Rare and vanishing art forms of the region are identified and eminent exponents are selected to carry out the training programmes in 'Gurukula' tradition. The monthly remuneration for Guru – Rs. 7,500/-, Accompanist – Rs. 3,750/- and Pupils - Rs. 1,500/- each for the period of six month to maximum 1 year for one scheme. The names of the Gurus are recommended by the State Cultural Affairs Departments.
- iii. Theatre Rejuvenation: To promote theatre activities including stage shows and Production oriented workshops, etc. Honorarium Up to Rs. 30,000/- per show excluding TA & DA is paid. The groups finalized on the basis their credentials as well as the merit of project submitted by them.
- iv. Research & Documentation: To preserve promote and propagate vanishing visual and performing art forms including folk, tribal and classical in the field of music, dance, theatre, literature, fine arts etc. in print/ audio – visual media. The art form is finalized in consultation with state Cultural Department.[1,2]
- v. Shilpgram: To promote folk and tribal art and crafts of the zone by organizing seminar, workshops, exhibitions, craft fairs, design development and marketing support to the artisans living in the rural areas.
- vi. Octave: To promote and propagate the rich cultural heritage of North East region comprising of eight States namely Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura to the rest of India.
- vii. National Cultural Exchange Programme (NCEP): It can be termed as the lifeline of the Zonal Cultural Centers. Under this scheme, various festivals of performing arts, exhibitions, yatras etc are organized in member States. Artists from other zones/states are invited to participate in these programmes. Participation of artists from the Zone in festivals held in other parts of the country are also facilitated. Zonal centres also participate in Major festivals happening in member States by arranging performances during these festivals where large number of audience get chance to enjoy and understand art forms of other regions. These festivals provide opportunity to taste and understand various cultures of our country.[23,24]

Sahitya Akademi, an autonomous organization under Ministry of Culture, encourages the preservation and promotion of languages, especially the unrecognized and tribal languages. The Akademi periodically organizes language conventions throughout the country in this regard.

This information was given by the Minister of State (I/c) of Culture and Tourism, Shri Prahlad Singh Patel in a written reply in the Lok Sabha

III.RESULTS

In an effort to restore and keep alive the spirit of lost glory of disappearing musical instruments related to folk and tribal art, the Eastern Zonal Cultural Centre (EZCC), under the Ministry of Culture has recently launched Vadya Vatika Museum at its Salt Lake campus.[25,26]

Apart from instruments from the nine eastern states, the museum hosts instruments from other states too. Vadya Vatika has more than thousand such instruments.

Director of EZCC Ashis Giri said, “The focus is to keep the tradition of folk and tribal art alive, give publicity and patronise such instruments. Vadya Vatika has folk instruments from not only eastern India but also from other states, a few of them lost.”

The EZCC is also making efforts to digitise the museum so that a visitor can get to hear the instruments and read a small description of the instrument at the touch of a button. The centre is in talks with NCSM for this.

The Centre at its Bolpur office has created Srijani Shilpagram huts from nine states to preserve the cultural heritage. “We also invite and bring artistes from these states to perform. There is also a light-and-sound show. We are also trying to create another museum there for the various masks and dolls. These masks are used during various folk dances like Gambhira, Chhau, Mukha, Sai Jatra (Odisha), etc.”[27,28]

The centre is also reaching out to folk and tribal artistes at block, village and panchayat levels. “We will do a cultural mapping, where we can get information about the art and artistes at the click of a mouse. There will also be an effort to give them more scope to perform at different parts of India through cultural exchange,” said the director.

Another work undertaken by the centre is more artistes, eligible for pension. Giri said the idea is to give them financial support so that the later generations are encouraged to carry on with the tradition. He informed that to get the masks for the museum, the centre is visiting different district clusters where masks are made such as Purulia, South Dinajpur and Doors. “We are doing workshops at these places where we pay artistes for attending it and also providing them with all the raw material. We plan to complete the mask museum within the financial year,” said Mr Giri.

Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation, is a community-supported nonprofit organization set up in 2000 with the objective to project tribal issues before authorities and to promote ethno- Cultural aspects of tribes. The Foundation was established to work on Gujjars studies and nomadic research in Jammu and Kashmir (union territory).[29,30]

Preservation of folklore of Gujjars

The Tribals have a rich tradition of folk-songs and folk-tales. These treasure houses of folk wisdom are declining and are feared to vanish with the passage of time. Hence, there was an emergent need to collect, document and preserve the folk treasure of songs and tales. With a view to meet this objective, the Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation has undertaken documentation of tribal culture and artifacts.

Dictionaries in Gojri

With the advent of literature, words acquired new meanings as well as usage. To facilitate the common reader to have a peep into the world of unknown words, the publication of dictionaries became essential. Most of our tribal regional languages started producing literature on a regular basis, uninterruptedly, since forties only, therefore, dictionaries were not available in these languages. Foundation published 2 Dictionaries Folk-lore Dictionary of Ujjar Tribe, Hindi Gojri Dictionary in 2000-2004.

Encyclopedia of Himalayan Gujjars

Keeping in view the importance of encyclopedia in the development of a language, Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation has taken in hand the publication of Encyclopaedia of Himalayan Gujjars in 2000 and first volume of this encyclopedia have been published in 2003 covering the following field of research:- a) Gujjar Archaeology & Architecture b) Gujjar Archeology, Architecture & Coins c) Gujjar Handicrafts d) Gojri Language & Literature

Seminars and conferences

Most of Tribal areas are nearly inaccessible. The tribal writers and artists residing in these far flung areas did not have the means and access to keep them abreast of changing trends on the literary scene. To bring writers of the State in close contact with one-another, Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation organized Mushairas, Seminars, Literary Conferences, Sham-i-Afsanas, Sham-i- Ghazals, and Literary Get-togethers at in villages.[31,32]

Art conservation

To conserve and preserve priceless tribal artifacts, manuscripts, miniature paintings and other artifacts Tribal Research and Cultural Foundation has to established Museum at Jammu in future.

Field Activities

The Foundation has closed its field and collaborative activities in 2014. However, research and study work is going on about the tribes without help from Government.[33,34]

IV.CONCLUSIONS

“Tribal, Folk and Devotional Music” by NA Jairazbhoy in AL Basham (ed.). A Cultural History of India. London: Oxford University Press, 1975, pp. 234-237. Excerpt from Chapter XVI Music (pp. 212-242):

Classical music is the most refined and sophisticated music to be found in the subcontinent of India. There are many other forms, however, which have a specific function in the society, and these are by no means devoid of artistic expression. The great diversity of music in India is a direct manifestation of the diversity and fragmentation of the population in terms of race, religion, language, and other aspects of culture. The process of acculturation, so accelerated in modern times, is still not a very significant factor in many areas of the country. There remain remote pockets where tribal societies continue to live much as they have done for centuries. Even though some of these may show evidence of borrowing from higher cultures, they nevertheless manage to assimilate these elements into their own culture in such a way as to enhance their own identity.

There are more than a hundred different tribes in India, numbering more than 30,000,000 people, called Adivasis. They are found mostly in the hill regions, particularly in central and eastern India, extending to the Nilgiri Hills in the south. Racially, most of these tribes have been described as Proto-Australoid, and their religions as being animistic. Between them, they create a considerable variety of music, some of it tonally quite simple and involving only two or three notes, and some using as much as a full octave, usually pentatonic. Most of their music is monophonic, with the exception of the tribes in Manipur, Assam, where a simple form of polyphony is quite common.[35,36]

A variety of instruments is used: some tribes have perhaps no more than a drum, while others have quite a number, including some in each of the four major categories-chordophones, aerophones, membranophones, and idiophones.

Many of the tribes have two distinct types of music, the ‘outdoor’ ensemble, which is often performed by members of a different tribe or a Hindu caste, and their own characteristic tribal songs. The outdoor ensemble is used at weddings and on festive occasions. It varies in size and structure, depending to some extent on the affluence of the tribe. The main instruments are the double-reed oboe-type, a straight, curved, or S-shaped horn, a variety of drums – kettle-shaped, cylindrical, or frame drums similar to the tambourine – and cymbals. The names of these instruments sometimes vary from one [p. 235] tribe to another, although it seems likely that they represent a common tradition.

Songs in a tribal society are mostly functional and often have the sanctity of a ceremonial rite. Such are, for instance, the songs which accompany the events of the life-cycle-birth, initiation, marriage, and death. Similarly, the agricultural songs which accompany the burning and preparation of the fields, planting, transplanting, harvesting, etc., have an element of ritual associated with them, and there is often a real fear that the harvest may not prove fruitful unless great care is taken over the formalities. Although many of the tribes practise this ‘slash and burn’ method of cultivation, there are still tribes which are in the hunting and food-gathering stage. Some of these have songs to propitiate their deities, in the belief that this will ensure the success of their ventures, and songs to give thanks at the successful conclusion of the hunt. When things go wrong, in times of disease, drought, or shortage of food, the tribal shaman is often invoked, and he generally has his own repertoire of songs.[37,38]

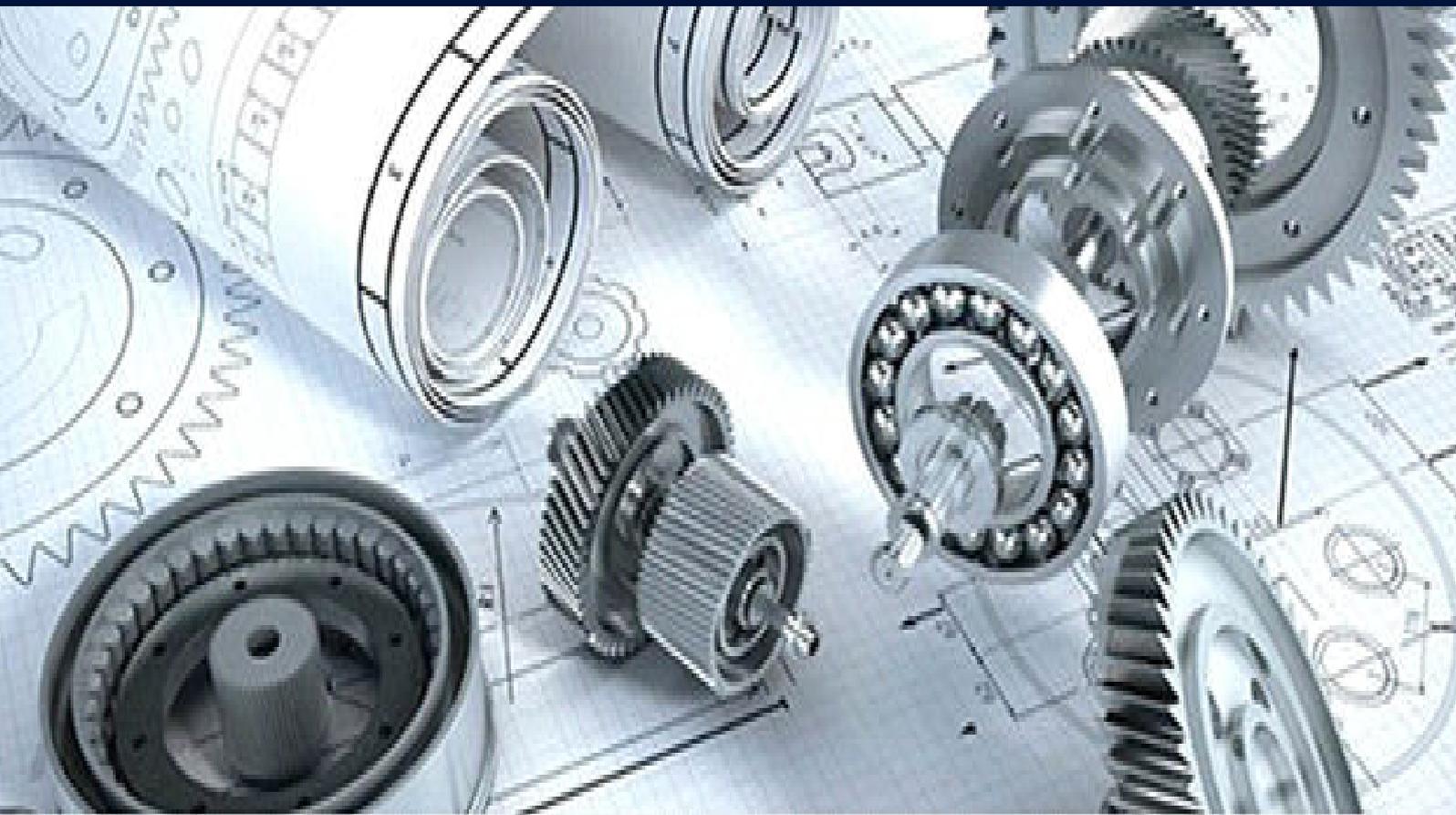
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