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# The Issue of “Identitism” and Understanding the Status of Tribal Women Writers in India through Sociology of Literature

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### Abstract

“Identitism” here refers to the fight for self-recognition, self-esteem of tribal women writers. This paper is intent to present a theoretical understanding of the above reference in context. Theoretical scientific premises in this context is Sociology of Literature, though less adhered to and less appreciated in India. Reasons might be any but most of the significant works on tribal women writers and their socio-economic, political status are less opted. Either they had been rated based on the quality and quantity of their literary endeavors but they had not been treated as a social human being with self-consciousness, self-esteem and self-identity. They would have been treated as members of the animal kingdom only, not as normal humans having their own social status and role, having their own economic issues, having their own identity issues among the other groups of writers. They are less acclaimed with lesser known identities on the international platforms. Most of the scholars and their scholarly works in understanding the identity issues of tribal women writers in the arena of Social Sciences and Humanities are limited to the cultural and literary aspects of the tribal women writers till so far because of the lesser appreciated scope of Sociology of Literature. This paper is chiefly to snatch the scholars attention towards understanding the status of tribal women writers in context to their identity and space of their own in India on the scientific grounds of the Sociology of Literature that provides us deep insight into the subject and helps us in developing an understanding through Sociology of Literature in contest to the Indian Tribal Women Writers and the issue of their identity.

**Keywords:** Identitism, sociology of literature, status of tribal women writers

### Introduction

The issue of tribal women writers Identities in India is nowadays a matter of discussion among all the literary groups. Prof. *Ganga Sahay Meena April 15, 2016 writes to convey* “Tribal literature is the creative energy generated at the national level post 1991 to protect the Tribal identity and existence in the face of intensified exploitation due to economic liberalization. According to Prof. Ganga Sahay Meena ji.

As India is celebrating Aazadi ka Amrit Mahotsav in 2023 standing on the threshold of the auspicious occasion of 75th anniversary of Independence. There are a number of steps that have been taken by the government of India towards tribal welfare. Writing is an important tool for tribal women to voice their experiences-of identity, sexuality, marriage, love, family, life and culture. But often women find it hard to use traditional forms of writing and literary conventions to convey these personal experiences. Tribal women who are writers too, like other women in society, are helping in the family’s economic status and playing a major role in society. Her contribution in family and society is equal to the men in family. They are working shoulder to shoulder with their counterpart in maintaining the overall growth of the family. As we all know that writing is not an easy task, especially when it comes to tribal women as her wholehearted

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dedication is towards her family. She wanted to write but did not get enough time and space out of her everyday duties. Apart from the prominent schemes of NSTFDC and other government policies like Term Loan, Adivasi Mahila Sashaktikaran Yojana-an exclusive scheme for Scheduled Tribe women, Adivasi Shiksha Rinn Yojana-Education Loan scheme, Micro Credit Scheme for Self Help Groups (SHGs)-comprising Scheduled Tribes as its members, Tribal Forest Dwellers Empowerment Scheme are some of them the question that arises here is that is there any specific program or policy designed for the socio-economic upliftment of tribal women authors. The country is celebrating ‘Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav’, commemorating 75 years of India’s independence. Freedom struggle, and ideas, achievements, actions and resolve at 75, are the five pillars of the 75 week-long celebrations. The Prime Minister of India, stressed that it is our duty to bring the inspiring stories of tribal heroes and heroines in the freedom struggle before the country and to introduce them to the new generation. During the period of slavery, there were many struggles against foreign rule including the Khasi-Garo movement, Mizo movement, Kol movement, etc.,” the statement said here seems very touching and attractive to please all but we can understand how it is possible that a writer will write on all these issues without any soul support. Writing needs sufficient dedication, time, money

and space to write. A writer is a human too. They need food, shelter, clothes, education for their children, medical help to their dependents and other expenses related to everyday livelihood matters. Writing needs complete dedication, continuous thought processes and some tools and electronic gazettes to write and get published. Effortless publication processes and finally they need to assemble in the form of a forum or social group. They need a platform to bring forth their collective ideas and to promote them towards making policy to support them in their writing endeavors. Tribal women in India are hardworking than tribal men and they contribute significantly towards their family income but their income generating sources are limited. Low income necessitates more hands in labour as a result they are reluctant to send their children to formal schools. On the other hand tribal women writers are fighting for their self-recognition. In the last few years tribal women writers are trying to establish their self-identity. This paper precisely focuses on the initiatives taken by the tribal women writers for their self-identity so that their works could be streamlined. To understand the concept let's begin with mentioning the keywords first.

### Identity

"Identity" here refers to the fight for self-recognition, self-esteem of tribal women writers. What is the best way to define identity? This might be due to Identity Crisis, a state of mind when a feeling of being uncertain about who or what you are aroused at its prominence. "Identity" is the byproduct of the fear of identity theft-a feeling of being uncertain about who or what you are: or nonidentity i.e. the fact of not being the same.

In the most general sense, we can define identity as a person's sense of self, established by their unique characteristics, affiliations, and social roles. Moreover, identity has continuity, as one feels to be the same person over time despite many changes in their circumstances. Identity encompasses the memories, experiences, relationships, and values that create one's sense of self. Thus, the philosophical-scientific controversy is re-constructed in terms of *identity politics*, where criteria of truth and falsehood are less relevant than the quest for coherence.

This amalgamation creates a steady sense of who one is over time, even as new facets are developed and incorporated into one's identity social identity include age, ability, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and religion. These are the 'big 8' social identities. Examples of Social Identity (Race, Class and Gender) Social identity refers to a person's membership in a social group. The common groups that comprise a person's social identity include age, ability, ethnicity (Ethnicity refers to the cultural origins of your family. Your ethnicity may influence the morals, cultural traditions, food, and religion you practice), race-race refers to the distinct genetic features of a person, most commonly (but not only) identifiable by skin color., gender-Gender refers to a person's identification as male, female, trans, two-spirit (Native American), and so on. Gender attributes (masculine and feminine) are socially constructed and often ascribed to people based upon their sex at birth., sexual orientation, socioeconomic status-Socioeconomic status primarily refers to people's wealth but also points to a range of other social and cultural markers associated with people of different social classes (such as job type, food preferences, and values), and religion. As explained by Chris Drew, a PhD scholar's article published in May 2023.

On the basis of above discussions we can say that there are the four core elements of identity

1. Sense of Significance
2. Purpose
3. Personal Qualities
4. Values At the same ground of discussion we see that there are three stages of identity construction
  - i). Unexamined Ethnic Identity
  - ii). Ethnic Identity Search
  - iii). Ethnic Identity Achievements.

### Understanding the Status of Tribal Women Writers through the Sociology of Literature

*Here the idea conceived and took birth on the basis of Identity but in reference to understand the status of tribal women writers in India on the Sociological theoretical and scientific premises. The idea here strikes us as how sociology is connected to literature. This we can better understand with the help of Sociology of Literature, a subfield of Sociology. Here we have to quote lines in support of the concept from renowned social scientists and literary theorists. An English writer and critic Oscar Wilde once said "Literature reflects society and society shapes literature. "Nature imitates Art more than Art imitates Nature." meaning a writer writes what he observes, experiences and lives in his social surroundings. In this regard German-American sociologist, Lewis Alfred Coser said "Literature, though it may also be many other things, is social evidence and testimony." (Lewis Coser) meaning Literature is one of the primary sources on which sociology depends. The sociological orientation of literature & literary persona interprets that a literary creation does not come into existence all by itself, but has definite social situations determining its birth. It also reveals that the understanding of the culture of a society is made possible through its literary documents. Indian Women Writers are conceptualized here within the boundaries of sociological viewpoints. In the field of sociology of literature a very few efforts have been made in the last few decades. If ever any study is made on Women Writers that have been discussed in context of their works, estimated on the basis of their character definitions in their works, characterized on the basis of their language usages but their works have not been appreciated from their view points, their rating in comparisons to the men writers are somewhere found very low.*

Whenever the studies have been made for women writers their literary works have been discussed very much rather than their personal or public achievements, challenges which they have faced to give outlet to their creativity and direct indirect hurdles they faced during their whole writing process. In this study effort has been made to understand the actual situation of women writers, interesting is the sample because it has been selected from among the women writers who have adopted English as their medium of expression, study is limited to those whom are struggling still to prove themselves in their battle-fields, comparison is drawn to satisfy the urge of a researcher with men writers and eminent women authors too. Andrew O'Hagan says in his lecture on "On the Power of Literature and Words",-"Literature is not life-style, it is life. Herry Levin rightly says that "Literature is not only the effect of social causes but also the cause of social effects; it performs for society, religion, education and family life." John Hall quotes to say that "There are two important aspects of literature for a sociologist, one it may improve the behavior of sociologist sensitivity toward the society and the reactions

of its persons. Secondly, concentrating on the functionality of imagination it becomes more precise to understand the actual experiences of humans both as a writer and as a content” Tom Burns in his book (Sociology of Literature-1973-penguin Education) said “Literature is a unique mode of human action. It helps to interpret fiction, poetry, drama as institutional forms with a history as sociologists tried to interpret laws, myth ideology, political and economic theories.” Thus literature is treated as an institution as it is an attempt to make sense of our lives and sociology is an attempt to make sense of the ways in which we live our lives. Apart we need to know the viewpoints of Leo Lowenthal and Walter Benjamin,

- i). Michel Foucault
- ii). Pierre Bourdieu
- iii). Anthony Giddens
- iv). Erving Goffman
- v). Jürgen Habermas
- vi). Max Weber
- vii). Bruno Latour.

Without knowing them it will be quite difficult to understand this research work in sociological perspectives.

### Conclusion

The concept of status of Tribal Women Writers in Sociological panorama is now clear to us. So this is now crystal clear that if we have to understand the status of Tribal women writers we will try understanding their socio, economic and political statuses that is directly putting our wholehearted concentration on their situation in society. As Lowenthal suggests the following viewpoints to be considered while making a study in sociology of literature for systematization or comprehensiveness in the study in this areas:

- i). Literature and the Social System
- ii). The Position of the Writer in Society
- iii). Literature Society and Social Problems as Literary Materials
- iv). Social Determinants of Success.
- v). Functional Content
- vi). The Writer’s Attitude
- vii). The Role of Social Environment.

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