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The Forest: Home and Heritage of Tribal Communities

Dr. Deepikha B.

Former Assistant Professor,

Department of English,

Coimbatore (Tamil Nadu, India)

E-mail: deepsbarathan@gmail.com

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Abstract:

The tribal population is the second largest concentration next to the African continent. They are scattered all over the states and Union territories except Punjab, Haryana etc. Forests are the homeland of the tribal people. They have lived in isolation, largely untouched by the society around them. The tribes conserve the diversity of plants for various purposes. They are used for the production of food and medicines. Forests are divine bliss, and many people depend on their livelihood in their forests. Trees in the forests are worshipped as gods by them. Resources are also the shared wealth of a nation, and it helps human beings in many ways. Water is used for agriculture and irrigation by the people. The tribal communities are dependent on the forest for their livelihood. They play a significant role in the Afforestation and ecosystem of the forests. This research paper focuses on how the forests help tribal communities for better living. But nowadays, environmental hazards are caused due to unplanned, careless and improper implementation of government policies. Most development activities impinge upon the environment, affecting the ecological balance. There is a need for resilience in the policies.

Keywords: Afforestation, Diversity, Ecological balance, Ecosystem and Tribal community.

Introduction:

The tribal population is an integral part of India's social fabric. It has the second largest concentration compared to France, Britain and Australia. They are scattered over all the states or Union Territories except Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and the Union territory of Pondicherry and Chandigarh. The population of tribal communities scheduled in the Constitution of India are known as Scheduled Tribes. They are the most marginalized groups in society because of their exclusion and socio-economic backwardness.

Tribal's have traditionally lived in about 15% of the country's geographical areas, mainly forests, hills and undulating inaccessible terrain in plateau areas, rich in natural resources. They have lived as isolated entities for centuries, largely untouched by the society around them. They are entirely

dependent on the forest for their variety of needs, including livelihoods, habitation and other socio-cultural needs. Forest plays an important role among the tribal communities. It served as a home for almost all the tribes.

The ethnic and indigenous people have conserved several plants and endangered species. The major source of income is based on agriculture and forest activities. The lifestyle of each indigenous community is unique and is related to the particular utilization of natural resources. This research paper would focus on how the natural resources in the forest are used by the tribal people in a profitable way. The movie Kumki is taken into study.

Kumki film is about the tribal people living in the forests. This movie is about a beautiful story set on the backdrop of the forests of Karnataka; Kerala. The story is not just about the relationship between a mahout and his pet elephant. It unwinds to a very beautiful slow paced, emotional story with nature as its background. This movie is about the lives of the farmers in a village named Awadhi kudu. The rest of the story is progressing in a slow pace yet visually enchanting because of the hilly environment. The forest is very wide and consists of many trees. The tribal people are dependent on the forest for their survival. It acts as an income as well as a homeland to the tribes.

Tribal people have their own history and cultural heritage. They were living in groups over the past ages. They live from generation to generation in the thick forests. Agriculture is the profession that is carried on from generation to generation. The crops are being cultivated and harvested by the farmers according to the seasons. By doing so they play a major role in the production of food in the totality. The parts of trees are used for various purposes like edible oil, fruits, firewood etc. The visual images in the movie give a glimpse of the import and export of the crops. Even a festival is performed in the month of January to initiate the harvest season. Usually the chief of the tribe performs the rituals.

Nature performs dual role in the case of tribal communities. It is both the mother and guardian to them. They worship nature as their gods and goddess. Many rituals are being performed during the festivals for nature. And the first harvest produced by the farmers is attributed to nature.

In the movie a huge tree is located in the centre of the forest and it is being worshipped by the tribal community as God. The tree had shown the remains the last destruction in the forest. It adds to the cultural heritage as the ancestors lived inside them. Trees were used as homes by the people. They not only gave them shade but provided them shelter. That remains is still preserved in the tribal community and the ancient history is retold from generation to generation.

Elephants play an important part in this movie. Kumki elephant is the other hero of this movie. It helps the tribal people in many ways. Agriculture is being performed with the support of this elephant. It protects the people from other harmful animals too. The relationship between the hero and the elephant marks the idea of oneness of nature with the humans. Both of them behave like friends in the movie. The hero takes the elephant almost ever where along with him. It plays and runs behind him

in the forest. The elephant trainer earns money only through this elephant. This shows that animals are not only the other species in the ecosystem but also a supporter to human beings. Hence, the preservation of animals is important as some of the animals go extinct in today's modern world. Though many forests and zoological gardens are available in every parts of the world, there arises a need to conserve them.

Even tigers help in the production of one type of wheat. This concept is shown in one of the movies. People see tigers as threat to the humanity. But they too help in the agriculture in many ways. Most of the human beings are unaware of this concept. Animals should be seen as friends to the humans and not as any hazards. The behavior of the animals is based on the way we treat them. Kumki movie is a clear example. The elephant trainer has tamed the elephant right from the baby stage. He has taught him all the skills that is necessary to earn money. And, he used the elephant for his personal income. But he neither burdens the elephant nor stuffs him with loads. This shows that forests are homeland to human beings. They not only provide shelter but also provide a source of income.

In today's modern world there is need for the conservation of bio diversity. There exists no balance between the ecosystem and the human beings. Deforestation and pollution are the major hazards to the environment. They are dangerous to both the human beings and the animals in the forest. There is a need for various preventive measures and policies for the conservation of forests. The government has implemented sustainable development goals for the betterment of ecology and the ecosystem. The implementation of the goals helps to preserve the environment.

The tribal people live in groups mostly in the forests. They play a major role in the conservation of the bio diversity. The fundamental goals of tribal development are to foster sustainable development of the tribal community. It is done by preserving the distinctive identities and culture of these people. Agriculture which is the main source of income for the tribal people is primarily conducted on terraces or through shifting cultivation. Both of them have relatively low productivity. Hence there is a need for the resilience of the policies.

Nature is created by God and it is omnipresent. According to the tribes, nature is all powerful. If nature decides, creatures can be destroyed in few moments. But these tribes consider nature as their God. They pay huge respect to nature. It is a source of income and livelihood to the tribes. without nature the tribal community wouldn't exist on Earth. The relationship between nature and human beings is balanced in the case of tribal people. This promotes the biodiversity in the forests. This was the scenario in the ancient period. But in today's modern world there arises a demand for sustainability. Proper implementation of policies will promote the biodiversity and it in turn helps the tribal people.

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