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Talking about the Text

1. 'It is time to realise that unless we modify the established notion of literature as something written, we will silently witness the decline of various Indian oral traditions'

Answer: Literature is usually thought of including those compositions like poetry and prose which are written. But going by this notion, one may miss the aesthetic beauty of the compositions as prevalent in many oral traditions. There is another stream of literature containing compositions which are rich both thematically and aesthetically. But as we have a rigid criteria of regarding compositions as literature only when these are written so these do not get the status of literature. This is the case with many Indian oral traditions. Unless we modify our notions of literature there is every possibility that we will silently witness the decline of various Indian oral traditions.

Another View

Oral literary tradition is not a unique phenomenon in India. Oral traditions have been in existence in all parts of the world. Oral traditions do not die out because of their very nature of being transmitted

orally. So it hardly matters whether we modify our notion about literature or not, the oral traditions will continue to exist. What needs to be done is promotion of oral literary tradition through patronage of the state.

2. "Tribal arts are not specifically meant for sale." Does this help or hamper their growth and preservation?

Answer: Tribal arts are not specifically meant for sale. This helps in their preservation and growth. Tribal arts have a characteristic of their own. The tribal arts employ hallucinatory and dreamlike imagination. They are playful in nature. The tribal arts are thematically and aesthetically very rich. The tribal arts present a unique world view of the tribals. So any attempt to commercialise tribal arts will hamper their growth and preservation. Tribals are simple minded, not influenced by the ills of modern societies which are under the sway of evils of consumerism. The tribal arts are a part of life of the tribals. They perform these arts not for the sake of earning money but with spontaneity to express their imagination and world view.

Another View

The non commercialisation of tribal arts hampers their growth and preservation. Without any kind of commercialisation, the tribal artists cannot be economically sound to carry on their creative works. Endeavours should be taken to commercialise their arts so that the tribals are able to preserve their arts. The tribals suffer from abject poverty and marginalisation in the society. So, their arts need to be commercialised. This will give an impetus to the growth and preservation of their art forms.

3. Because India's tribal communities are basically bilingual there is a danger of dismissing their languages as dialects of India's major tongues.

Answer: Most of the tribal communities are bilingual. They have

assimilated many vocabulary from the major languages of the country. It may seem to many of us that their languages are dialects of India's major tongues.

Another View

'Most of the tribal communities in India may be bilingual but there seems no danger of dismissing their languages as dialects of India's major tongues. This only shows that the tribal communities are assimilative in nature. Identity of any language is never destroyed simply because it is borrowing words from some other language. Had it been so then even languages like Hindi and other major languages which keep on borrowing words from foreign languages would have lost their identity. The tribal languages have a structural difference from the major languages of India. Simply the presence of some words of other languages will not make them lose their identity and make them identified as dialects of some major Indian languages.

4. While tribal communities may not seem to possess the scientific temper, there are many ideas from tribal conventions that could enrich modern societies.

Answer: Tribal communities may not seem to possess the scientific temper. However, there are many ideas from tribal conventions that could enrich modern societies. The tribals live close to nature. They treat nature as a living being. They consider it to be the mother who nurtures them. The tribals have a very intimate and positive relation with nature. This positive ideas of the tribals towards ecology can help enrich the modern societies. The tribals are very simple minded. They have not been influenced by evils like consumerism. Some tribal communities follow matrilineal system. Tribal societies do not follow dowry system instead some tribal communities fix a bride price that the groom pays to the bride either in cash or in kind. This can be a lesson for the modern societies.

Appericiation

1. How does 'A Munda song' show that the perspective of the tribal mind towards the girl child is different from that of [other] mainstream communities?

Answer: In 'A Munda Song' the perspective of the tribal mind towards the girl child is different from that of [other] mainstream communities. This song welcomes the birth of a girl child. It celebrates the birth of a girl child. Contrary to the attitude of the mainstream communities, this Munda song regards the birth of a girl child as auspicious. This is beautifully expressed in the lines – A daughter was born, the cowshed filled up. Ironically, in mainstream communities the birth of a boy child is celebrated. The boy child is regarded as the carrier of the baton of the family line. The girl child usually becomes an object of neglect and is looked down upon as a burden.

2. How does 'A Kondh Song' substantiate the tribal urge to gain domination over time by conversing with their dead ancestors?

Answer: The tribals do not have possession over land but they have an urge to gain domination over time. In 'A Kondh Song' this urge is beautifully substantiated by referring to the conversation with their dead ancestors. They request the spirits of their ancestors to accept the offerings of a baby fowl they make. They state that they are offering because they are alive. They request the spirits not to inflict pain on them after the spirits depart.

3. 'Adi Song for the Recovery of Lost Health' is in Miri Agom while Adi Agom is the Adi community's language for routine conversation. How does this reflect upon the high level of language sensitivity of the Adi? Can you think of other parallels in modern languages between the literary variety and the colloquial variety?

Answer: The ' Adi song for the recovery of lost Health' is in Miri

Agom. This language is not used in day to day conversation. It is applied in chanting during rituals. Miri Agom is a highly rhythmic language. The existence of these two different languages testify to the high level of language sensitivity of the Adi tribe. We find such parallels in modern languages also. The Hindi language , the Bangla language, the English language all have two variety of languages – one literary variety and the colloquial variety.

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