

**LO (K) CAL KNOWLEDGE: PERCEPTIONS ON DALIT, TRIBAL AND  
FOLK LITERATURE  
REVIEWED BY PRAMOD KUMAR DAS & NESHA SABAR**

**Pramod Kumar Das**  
Ph. D. Scholar  
Department of English  
English and Foreign Languages University,  
Hyderabad, India

**Nesha Sabar**  
Ph. D. Scholar  
Department of English,  
University of Hyderabad,  
Hyderabad, India

In Critical theory and Postcolonialism subaltern is the social group who is socially, politically, and geographically outside of the hegemonic power structure of the colony and of the colonial homeland. In describing ‘history told from below’, the term *subaltern* derived from the cultural hegemony work of Antonio Gramsci which identified the social group who are excluded from a society’s established structures for political representation, the means by which people have a voice in their society. In Indian context, the dalits and the tribals represent the marginalized of the subalterns. Their literary creation is an ever growing area in literary studies. There have been emerging interests to study these forms. Anand Mahanand’s recent work is such an example.

The book under review consists of three parts- Part-I deals with “From the Subalterns’ Point of View” , Part-II talks about “Lo(k)al Traditions” and “English and the Indigenous Traditions” is highlighted in Part-III of the book. All the three parts of the book contains five essays each so as to make the volume pregnant with fifteen critical essays focusing on the literature and culture of the marginalized sections of Indian society.

The first part of the book talks about the autobiographical aspect of two Marathi writers Laxman Gaikward and Laxman Mane who have taken up caste related issues. Mane narrates the difficulties and predicaments of the nomadic tribal called Kaikadi in his book called *Uppara* or in English *An Outsider*. This book offers a revealing account of the Kaikadi community. It reflects the misery and impoverishment of the people living in the twentieth century. They do not have permanent roof over their head, no permanent place to earn their daily wages no education to assert their living condition. In spite of these ordeals of life they adhere to their tradition and customs and cultures. One might think *Uppara* brings all the socio-cultural account of the tribal

community but, *Uchhalaya* too comprehensively talk about the criminal tribe. 'Jamgama' (also Jadhav, Uchalya, Kasakonore, Ilenore, Gant-Chor..) is a wandering tribe whose main profession for ages has been stealing. The caste system of India had rejected this lowly placed segment of the society as born criminals and *Gunhegaars*. The British classified this community as the 'Criminal Tribe' and put a lot of restrictions on their employment and movement. Since all other means of earning were closed to a Jangama, they typically took to small thefts. Ramachandra Guha and Madhava Gadgil point out that as a consequence of the encroachment, tribes devoted to hunting and collection of jungle produce led a nomadic life, and were not allowed to sell forest produce in accordance with the criminal Tribe act of 1878. They lost their legitimate means of livelihood. The railways and roadways destroyed the business of the tribes. So the only alternative left to them is for survival is on the earth was thieving and looting. Mahanand discusses the narratives of Bama and C. K Janu in the later part of this section focusing on the significance of local knowledge.

Primitive religions originated in early humankind's contact with nature. From the imbalance between its own power and that of the natural elements, primitive humankind gained a sense of the existence of a reality which transcended this world, and was brought into contact with the sacred. In this book the writer brings out the significance of poetry and poetics of protest in the poetry of Basudev Sunani, who has widely dealt and experienced and being born as a dalit, gives innumerable instances of the existence of evil systems in the early colonial period.

The relationship between humans and the nature, or rather, the relationship between humankind and its natural habitat, is a matter which, in order to be dealt with, even briefly, requires some idea of myths, traditions, religions, cultures and philosophical, political and economic systems. This relationship is a vast field of research for ecology, particularly its cultural and ideological dimensions. The human-nature relationship also involves elements of philosophy as it concerns humankind's place in the world. Tribals are always in love with forest and the environment. This book helps us to have glimpse of the attachment of forest and environment by the Aryan woman in Narayan's *Kocherethi*. It is a novel that deals with the Malabar tribes in Kerala, of their history and struggles in life their myths, rituals, social customs and belief system which are considered to be rich and magnificent in modern times. Nature plays a crucial role in the life of Adivasis all over the world in time immemorial. Anand Mahanand has taken Jharkhand region as a case study to delineate the life of the Adivasis. The works of Ram Dayal Munda, Grace Kujur and Mahadev Toppo have been analyzed to underline their concerns for environment. Here the author has tried to study the ecological concerns dealt by these poets of Jharkhand region. Different elements of nature such as forest, trees and fountains have been parts of the tribal life. Their life and culture have been in close proximity with their environment. Therefore, nature is inevitable in their life. This part of the book extensively shares about the dalit autobiographical writings and tribal writings in India, especially the writers who are born and brought up in the same community and have witnessed the wide disparity between the human beings and have gone far and wide to describe the issues in a fuller length.

The second part of the book enlightens us about the rich traditions and the social customs of the indigenous people, these people are at peace and the harmonious living is the basic trend of their life. They are happy with what they have. Even though they are illiterate and uncivilized, but they can serve as words of wisdom to the modern human society. Story telling is an age old tradition through which the knowledge is imparted from generation to generation. It is as old as the human civilization. It has an integral part in the upbringing of the rich social and cultural

tradition of the society. Indigenous people use folk tales and folk dance to amuse the human society within their reach, when we analyze it, we find in it educational values and knowledge in modern society. In this sense, local knowledge is necessary for the upbringing of children. Present day society doesn't pay attention to the age old traditions and social customs of the human society. This study tries to focus on the folk forms namely songs, music, in order to foreground different aspects of their cultural practices. Mahanand has widely discussed the performative traditions of the Gond tribe of western part of Odisha. They have a very rich tradition, even though they are economically poor, but culturally rich. The art of dance and music are the integral parts of their life. In every occasion of festivities like marriage, death, birth anniversary, they play music and dance for joy. In this section Mahanand highlights on the fact that how folktales along with other performative traditions of the tribal people such as song, dance, music, storytelling etc can contribute as a great source for educational values and wisdom in present day society.

The third and final part of the book mainly focuses on the importance of English Language Education among the dalit and the tribal folk. This section of the book highlights the problems of English language learning encountered by the dalit and tribal students in the high schools level. Mahanand has suggested various indigenous ways of learning to make the English language learning more effective and attractive through desi style of learning by using folktales as supplementary material, folklore as a resource etc. In a novel way he has zeroed in on how to develop different language skills such as writing by using folktales, proverbs, folklore etc.

Overall the book is a welcome addition to the field of new literatures in English. It will cater to the various needs of people of all sections of society including researchers working in the field of literature, culture, tribal and dalit study etc. The author has explored various significances of knowing and using folk tale for our academic and cultural benefits. Certainly Mahanand has to be credited to do such an innovative and critical work supplementing the present practice of teaching and learning in a multilingual setting like India.

### **Book Details**

Anand Mahanand . *Lo (K) Cal Knowledge: Perceptions On Dalit, Tribal And Folk Literature*,  
New Delhi: Authorspress, 2013, Pages 142, Price: Rs 450 / ISBN 978-81-7273-735-1

### **Work Cited:**

Anand Mahanand . *Lo (K) Cal Knowledge: Perceptions On Dalit, Tribal And Folk Literature*,  
New Delhi: Authorspress, 2013, Pages 142, Price: Rs 450 / ISBN 978-81-7273-735-1