
A Postcolonial Exploration of H.S Shekar's The Adivasi Will Not Dance

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Abstract:

Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* explores the themes of cultural identity, social status, and emotional resilience within the Adivasi community, highlighting their struggles with displacement, marginalization, and cultural erasure. Through the selected short stories, *They Eat Meat*, *Sons*, *Divine Divination and Death*, and *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, H. S. Shekhar portrays how the Adivasis navigate identity crises while resisting socio-political oppression. This research examines how the vestiges of colonialism continue to pervade contemporary socio-economic structures, perpetuating cycles of marginalization and discrimination and profoundly impacted the identity, social status, and cultural heritage of the Adivasi community. The methodology involves a blend of literary interpretation and post-colonial theory, analyzing how the Adivasis' identity is shaped by historical subjugation, forced displacement, and imposed cultural hierarchies. The findings of the research show that Adivasi identity is deeply tied to their cultural practices, spiritual beliefs, and social struggles. Their social status and heritage are maintained through cultural customs, asserting agency, and beholding tradition for survival.

Keywords: Identity, Resistance, Cultural Customs, Social Heritage and The Adivasis**Introduction**

Post-colonial theory examines the effects of colonialism on cultures, identities, and societies, particularly in regions that have experienced colonial rule. It explores how colonial powers imposed their ideologies, languages, and cultural norms upon indigenous populations, leading to lasting socio-political and economic consequences. This theoretical framework critiques the narratives of dominance and subjugation, highlighting how formerly colonized communities reclaim their histories and resist cultural erasure. Through literature, post-colonial discourse challenges stereotypes, reconstructs indigenous identities, and asserts autonomy over cultural representation (Fanon 1961).

In the context of Adivasi literature, post-colonial theory provides a lens to analyze the struggles of indigenous communities against marginalization, land dispossession, and cultural assimilation. Adivasi literature often reflects the historical injustices faced by indigenous groups and their continuous fight to preserve their traditions despite external pressures. Post-colonial theorists such as Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, and Gayatri Spivak have explored the themes of cultural hegemony, the subaltern voice, and the reclaiming of indigenous knowledge, all of which are relevant to the Adivasi experience. By applying post-colonial perspectives, literature becomes an avenue for resistance, storytelling, and the reassertion of indigenous identities against mainstream cultural narratives.

The cultural identity is explored in the Adivasi community by examining their traditions, rituals, and struggles as depicted in selected literary texts, including *They Eat Meat, Sons, Divine Divination and Death*, and *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*. The study delves into how Adivasi cultural heritage is preserved through oral narratives, folklore, and communal practices, emphasizing the significance of these elements in maintaining their distinct identity (Guha 1999). By analyzing the representation of Adivasi traditions in literature, the Adhivasis highlights the ways in which their customs serve as both a source of pride and a means of resistance against socio-economic marginalization.

One of the key aspects discussed is the role of language and oral storytelling in transmitting Adivasi history and values. These narratives serve as powerful tools for cultural preservation, ensuring that knowledge is passed down through generations despite external influences. Additionally, the chapter examines the importance of food customs, traditional attire, and spiritual beliefs in shaping Adivasi identity. These cultural markers not only reinforce their unique heritage but also foster a sense of belonging within the community. Rituals and festivals such as traditional harvest celebrations and ancestral worship further strengthen their ties to their land and history, providing a communal space for preserving their heritage (Devv 2006).

The Post Colonial theory also addresses the socio-economic challenges faced by Adivasis, including displacement, land dispossession, and economic exploitation. These issues have led to struggles in maintaining their traditional way of life, as modern influences and governmental policies often threaten their autonomy. The impact of industrialization and deforestation is explored, illustrating how these factors contribute to the erosion of cultural practices and force the community to adapt to changing circumstances. The literature analyzed portrays these struggles through the lens of personal narratives, shedding light on the profound effects of losing ancestral lands and the emotional toll of forced migration. In some stories, characters attempt to reclaim their cultural identity through defiant acts of storytelling, artistic expression, or resistance against external forces.

Adivasi literature frequently addresses the socio-economic challenges faced by these communities, including land dispossession, displacement, and economic exploitation. Industrialization and deforestation have threatened traditional ways of life, forcing Adivasi

people to navigate a rapidly changing socio-political landscape. Governmental policies, often shaped by capitalist and expansionist motives, contribute to the erosion of cultural practices, forcing communities to adapt in ways that sometimes lead to cultural assimilation.

Through personal narratives, Adivasi literature sheds light on the emotional and social impact of losing ancestral lands. Forced migration and displacement disrupt community structures and challenge the preservation of traditional customs. In response, many literary works depict characters who strive to reclaim cultural identity through acts of storytelling, artistic expression, and defiance against oppressive forces. By capturing these struggles, literature serves not only as a reflection of reality but also as a tool for raising awareness and advocating for indigenous rights (Ekka 2015).

They Eat Meat portrays the clash between Adivasi traditions and external societal expectations. The protagonist's struggle to maintain cultural identity in an environment that views Adivasi customs with disdain reflects broader issues of discrimination and marginalization. The depiction of food as a cultural marker highlights the importance of traditional dietary customs in affirming identity. The narrative challenges mainstream perceptions of Adivasi people, showcasing their deep-rooted connection to their land and way of life (Basu 2012)

Through an in-depth analysis, it becomes evident that the protagonist's journey symbolizes the broader struggle of Adivasi communities against cultural assimilation. The story also highlights the role of community bonds in sustaining traditions and resisting societal pressure. By depicting the protagonist's resistance to change, the narrative underscores the significance of cultural continuity and the impact of external influences on indigenous ways of life.

Sons explores generational tensions within Adivasi communities, focusing on the conflicting perspectives of elders and youth regarding cultural preservation. The story portrays a father-son relationship strained by differing views on tradition and modernity. While the father adheres to Adivasi customs, his son questions these beliefs, illustrating the pressures of assimilation and the challenges of balancing cultural heritage with the evolving socio-economic landscape. The narrative presents a nuanced discussion on the changing role of Adivasi traditions. While younger generations may seek new opportunities and embrace modernity, elders often struggle to ensure that cultural practices remain intact (Tiwari 2016). The story highlights the emotional weight of these intergenerational conflicts, portraying them as part of the larger discourse on identity preservation amidst rapid societal change.

Divine Divination and Death delves into the intersection of spirituality and social change within Adivasi communities. The protagonist's reliance on traditional divination practices in the face of modern skepticism illustrates the tension between heritage and contemporary influences. The theme of generational conflict emerges as younger characters question ancestral customs, revealing the pressures of assimilation and the struggle to

balance cultural continuity with change. The narrative also raises questions about the evolving role of spiritual beliefs within Adivasi societies. It presents an internal conflict between faith and reason, tradition and modernity, illustrating how these tensions manifest in personal and communal life. The story emphasizes that while modernization poses challenges to indigenous belief systems, these practices continue to hold deep significance for many within the community. By focusing on the protagonist's journey, the story reinforces the importance of spiritual and cultural identity amidst external pressures (Roy 2021).

The Adivasi will not dance presents a poignant critique of economic exploitation and the commodification of Adivasi identity. The protagonist's refusal to dance for a political event symbolizes defiance against systemic oppression. The narrative highlights how traditional art forms and rituals, once intrinsic to cultural expression, are often reduced to performative spectacles for external consumption. The resistance depicted in the story serves as a metaphor for the broader struggle of Adivasi communities against socio-political marginalization. A closer analysis reveals how the story critiques the power dynamics that dictate Adivasi representation in mainstream society. The protagonist's resistance serves as a form of agency, emphasizing the importance of self-determination and cultural autonomy. The narrative challenges the idea of indigenous identity as something to be showcased for entertainment while ignoring the socio-economic realities faced by the community. Through its powerful storytelling, the piece underscores the significance of cultural authenticity and the dangers of cultural appropriation (Verma 2018).

Furthermore, the analysis extends to the portrayal of emotional resilience within Adivasi literature. Stories and characters in *They Eat Meat, Sons, Divine Divination and Death*, and *The Adivasi Will Not Dance* depict the endurance and adaptability of the community, showcasing their ability to navigate hardships while holding onto their cultural roots. The emotional expressions tied to rituals, festivals, and kinship bonds are explored as fundamental aspects that sustain their identity and offer a means of collective strength. Food often plays a symbolic role in these narratives, reflecting love, survival, and resistance, as seen in depictions of communal meals or traditional dishes prepared during times of hardship.

The stories also discuss the role of women in preserving and transmitting Adivasi cultural identity. Female characters in these literary works often emerge as key figures in maintaining traditions, passing down oral histories, and providing emotional support within families and communities. Their struggles against patriarchal constraints and external oppression are intertwined with their efforts to sustain cultural heritage, showcasing the intersection of gender and cultural identity in Adivasi literature (Mishra 2022).

While the short stories primarily focus on literary representations, it also draws connections to real-world issues, emphasizing the contemporary relevance of Adivasi struggles. The discussion underscores the importance of literature as a medium for voicing

indigenous concerns, preserving cultural narratives, and advocating for recognition and rights. By highlighting these themes, the chapter contributes to a deeper understanding of the Adivasi experience, reinforcing the role of storytelling in safeguarding their cultural legacy. The analysis demonstrates how these narratives serve not only as reflections of history but also as tools for social awareness and cultural activism, amplifying the voices of marginalized communities and ensuring their stories continue to be heard.

The selected short stories provide a lens through which Adivasi resilience, cultural preservation, and socio-political struggles are examined. By analyzing the ways in which these narratives challenge dominant discourses and present indigenous perspectives, the study highlights literature's role in shaping cultural consciousness and fostering a deeper appreciation of Adivasi identity. Through storytelling, the experiences, emotions, and histories of the Adivasi people are preserved and communicated, ensuring that their voices remain integral to literary and socio-political discussions.

Conclusion

The study focuses on examining the cultural identity, social struggles, and emotional resilience of the Adivasi community as depicted in selected literary narratives. Through an in-depth analysis of *They Eat Meat*, *Sons*, *Divine Divination and Death*, and *The Adivasi Will Not Dance*, the research explores themes of identity crisis, cultural heritage, and marginalization. By investigating the experiences of characters within these texts, the study sheds light on the broader societal challenges encountered by the Adivasi community (Jain 2023).

Additionally, the research traces Adivasi cultural practices, including their spiritual beliefs, dietary customs, and communal rituals, viewing these as essential markers of identity and instruments of cultural preservation. Social issues such as displacement, economic exploitation, and social neglect are also examined to understand their role in shaping the Adivasi identity crisis. The study further explores emotional expression, particularly in relation to food, rituals, and familial ties, highlighting how these elements sustain memories, offer comfort, and reinforce cultural belonging, ultimately fostering resilience amid social adversities. While anchored in literary narratives, the research acknowledges its contemporary significance by drawing attention to the ongoing struggles of indigenous communities in modern socio-economic contexts. However, its scope remains confined to the selected texts and their portrayal of Adivasi experiences. Although these narratives provide critical insights into cultural identity and social realities, they may not fully encompass the diverse experiences of Adivasi communities across different regions or historical periods. Moreover, as fictional works, they involve subjective interpretations that necessitate careful contextual analysis. By engaging in this focused exploration, the study seeks to deepen the understanding of Adivasi cultural identity, emphasizing literature as a means of amplifying their voices and safeguarding their cultural heritage.

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