



Kandha's Philosophy In Gopinath Mohanty's Amrutara Santana

J. INFENTA VIRGIL¹, Dr. K. MALARMATHI²

¹Ph.D. Scholar (FT) Thanthai Periyar Govt. Arts & Science College (Autonomous),
Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India. (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University) Mail id : virgil.27@yahoo.com

²Associate Professor of English Thanthai Periyar Govt. Arts & Science College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India. (Affiliated to
Bharathidasan University) Mail id: malarmathi2233@gmail.com

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Abstract:

This article is about Dongria Kondh's philosophy of life, who are largely populated in the Niyamgiri hills of Southern Orissa. This paper is an attempt made to answer the question of what values the younger readers can acquire from the Indigenous philosophy. Gopinath Mohanty's Amrutara Santana is taken for study to examine this philosophy. The indigenous community is the one who are driven away by the mainstream. Nevertheless, these people are called 'uncivilized', 'illiterate', and so on and they have their own culture, knowledge, literature, and lifestyle. The philosophy of tribes cannot be seen in scriptures nor history. It is collected from the experience undergone as a community which is passed from one generation to another. As said, the Dongria Kondh, the most primitive tribe are distinctive in their perspective. Their philosophy is nature based which interests many readers.

Keywords: Indigenous Philosophy, Religion, Nature, Community.

Introduction

Gopinath Mohanty's Amrutara Santana is about the Kuvi speaking Dongria Kondh tribe. The Kandha are highly populated in southern district of Orissa. They are distinct from the other tribes because of their culture and tradition. Horticulture is their main occupation and Meria festival is famous among them. Kondhs are known as Sons of Nature, as they like to live with nature. This novel has won Sahitya Akademi award in 1955 for celebrating the anguish and ecstasy and how this tribe enjoy life. They lead a modest life with nature, song and dance. They are known for kinship bonds within their community. The Dongrias is considered to be the most 'primitive tribe' in India. They have a long tradition and definite philosophy of life which makes them stand distinctive among others. Tantray and Dar in their article Nature of Philosophy (2016) define Philosophy as, "Philosophy is one such subject pertaining to wisdom. Wisdom is different from intelligence, cunningness, wit, cleverness and being crafty" (339). The term philosophy was coined by Pythagoras. There are four branches of philosophy- Epistemology, Metaphysics, Logic and Ethics.

Mail id : virgil.27@yahoo.com

They have enormous faith on supernatural beings such as Gods, deities, and spirits. Mohanty conveys the way of living and its purpose through a few characters. Kondhs who live away from civilized society, have their tradition, culture and philosophy of life. Indigenous Epistemology is composed by oral tradition as they don't have any written scripts like the modern society. These beliefs and practices have been rather passed from one generation to other by the community. Considering India as a country of sharing various languages, and religion, the tribal philosophy should be studied further than Vedas, Upanishads, and the texts of Jain and Buddhism.

The precise details which is mentioned by Mohanty is an unwritten history of over 2000 years. The Kandha have a deep faith in Reincarnation. Prof. Dr. Subhasish Chatterjee in his article *Belief of Tribals in Supernatural Power and its Relation with Religious Life (With Special Reference to Indian Tribal)* 2018 discuss the concept of rebirth:

The incarnation of a person is completely based on his qualities of roles and functions and accordingly his soul will incarnate either in an animal or human. But as per Hindu philosophy soul will be incarnated in Gond and will be born as Gond and accordingly Brahmin shall be as a Brahmin. Many are also in belief that person will be promoted to the higher caste based on his quality, poor role and functions of past life. (15)

The character Sarabu Saonta, the head of the family who has grown old, feels satisfied with his life. He is content with his present life as he been a good man. "He thought he had been the reincarnation of a bad soul, he would have died, because only the soul of a good man lives long in his next reincarnation" (2-3). The Kandha philosophy of life is that if a person's deed is good, he will have a rebirth. Sarabu thinks that his present life is possible because he had been good in previous birth. And he strongly believes that he will be reincarnated as he is a good man in his present life. Therefore, he could predict his life and there is no cause to regret about his life existing.

Miguel van der Vaelden (2018), shares the concept of God by different philosophy across the globe. According to him, the Western ideology on God is transcendent. He is beyond human experience and knowledge (outside the world). On the other hand, the Eastern ideology on God is immanent. They believe that God is innate, which explains that God is within the creation. They do not rely on the notion that God is watching the humans above from the world. Whereas, he places the Indigenous ideology as third concept. They neither place God inside nor outside the world. They consider world as 'God'. The kandha philosophy says, "He is god, present everywhere: His body is the sky, He is a far above man; He acts and human endures" (175). They are natural worshippers of the mountains, river, the sun, and the Earth. The Kondh does not worship any other god apart from nature and environment. They consider mountains, trees, air as sacred and are devoted to them.

Mohanty who comes from an urban background, is doomed by its culture. He judges and comments on seeing the tribe's culture and tradition. In both philosophy, masculinity plays an important role in communicating between God and people. Each tribal community has its mode of life and their philosophy concerning life. To understand their philosophy, one has to bring in culture. In Kondh tribe, a woman plays the role as the messenger of God. The status of women is predominant in their culture. The village is functioned through the guidance of Bejuni, Disari and Jani. Bejuni is chiefly a woman, who is possessed by God and warns about forthcoming danger. A Disari provides information about medicines and weather condition. And a Jani performs rituals for festivals and ceremony. The self of Supreme Being is seen

through creation and through the creation the Supreme Being converses with people. “They calculate the time at night by looking at the stars in the squares drawn with their fingers before their eyes. Such observation, such calculation and measurements are the result of the divine vision of the Disari and the Bejuni” (194).

Subonglemba Aier is his thesis *A Philosophical Analysis of Religion and Morality in Tribal Culture: With Special Reference to Naga Tribe* analyses the concept of culture:

Culture manifests itself in ordinary consciousness and everyday behaviour, in labour activity and the attitude that one adopts to such activity in scientific thought and artistic creation and the vision of their results, in self-control, in one’s smile and manner of laughing, in love and other intimate relationships, which the individual may elevate to unexpected heights of tenderness and spiritual beauty. The truly cultured person shows all these facets in every manifestation of his selfhood. Culture is characterised by the vital ideas of humankind, of the individual, the social group, the class and society as a whole. (12)

Every indigenous people across the world have their own culture. Rather by representing themselves as an individual, they act as a community. According to Kandha, Culture is superior to everything. Culture is a symbolism of a community. Mohanty says about the Kondh philosophy on culture, thus:

He feels glorious by saluting this ancient tradition. His culture is greater than his life. A life is that of merely one individual, but culture is the life of millions. Culture belongs to the community, and behind the evolution of culture lies the collective character of the community. Culture has primacy of place. (368)

They believe and practise culture as a fundamental aspect in their life. It is a string that connects people to live in harmony. The Kandha is so-called Children of Nature who seek ecstasy in Mother Nature. Through the character of Sarabu Saonta, Mohanty depicts the tribal traits of Kondh. Even though they are worried about the plight of their community, they do not allow it to overrule them. They find ways to make their life more meaningful. Sitakant Mahapatra (2009) mentions the relationship of tribe with nature through Sarabu Saonta. The important trait in tribe is they do not let themselves submit to depression. Rather they find ways to enjoy the pleasures of life and connect with nature.

“Sarabu Saonta was ruminating. All of it was futility, all darkness- ahead and behind. His life had been happy. No anxiety, no worrying- only hunting, farming, wine and enjoyment” (7). In his novel, the kandha is treated as a child of nature who grow up in the lap of nature. The very act of living is celebrated throughout the kandha community. A Kandha does not look back at his life in despair. Nature is a tool which controls their life and living. This paper addresses the young readers who should follow the philosophical way of Kondh tribe. Through this article, three major ideas are expressed from the life of Kondh. However the society has a way of life, few things are to be pursued in this contemporary period. The first thing, is a relationship with nature. The second thing is a relationship with one another in the community. And the third aspect is the connection with God. These values can enlighten the young generation of the society. Humans must return as a child to its mother’s lap. Therefore, one can see how nature, god, and culture are interconnected in their life.

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