Chapter – V

Community and Indigeneity

The "Tribes" are known as various names– as "First Nations" in Canada, as "Indigenous" in the United States, as "Aborigines" in Australia, as "Maori" in New Zealand, as "Indigenous Peoples" in the discourse of Human Rights, as "Janajatis" in India, and as "Adivasis" in the terminology of Asian activists.

These communities are too numerous and dispersed in distant geographical location and possess divergent and distinct cultures. So to embrace them in a single category is next to impossible. Social scientists, academicians, anthropologists all over the world have tried to define the term "Tribe" in many conflicting ways.

In the Indian context, T.B. Naik (1960), D.N. Majumder (1967), Andre Beitelle (1973) and a few noted others have raised the problem in proper perspectives and discussed about the criteria and indices of the tribal life particularly in Indian setting. According to Naik, least functional interdependence within the community, economic backwardness, geographic isolation, common dialect, community panchayat, an adherence to community beliefs, rituals and customs should be the main criteria for a tribe to be a 'tribe'. Majumder has stressed on definite territorial group, joint ownership of property, kinship relation, dormitory institutions, and distinctive customs.

Ehrenfels discarded the words "economically backward"[13], "primitive means" and "under developed stage" in the definition of tribe and preferred to replace all these words by "self sufficient". He believed that Khasi, Gond, Bhil, Agaria and some other tribes were in part economically self-sufficient compared to their non-tribal neighbours. He also viewed that though each individual of a tribe

might work for his family group remaining dependent of the other members, yet it was to be seen how far every individual lived in solidarity with the tribes as a whole, rather than as a co-partner in the caste hierarchy of non-tribal Hindus.

The core element or the chief characteristic which has been encircled in the definitions of tribe is "community" – the concept of community and regard for community. Then comes self or individual. Shereen Ratnagar comments in her book *The Other Indians: Essay on Pastoralists and Prehistoric Tribal People* (2004),

> All over peninsular India in the iron age of the first millennium BC, megalithic memorials and graves were raised for the dead with massive stones, even though housing was confined to one-room pole-and-thatch or mud huts. It is significant that it was the dead who were 'housed' in structures of permanent stone, not the living. Stone graves were collective, containing the excarnated remains of several men, women, and children. There is not only collective burial, but dozens, even hundreds, of collective stone graves are sometimes found in one cemetery. Collective and secondary burial, emphasis on the group rather than the individual. (42)

Since the advent of colonialism the scenario has been changing. Today very few tribes occupy coherent areas being deprived of their right to land and right to forest, few tribes speak their own language, or share/participate in community's economic structure or material culture. Colonialism has introduced individual ownership rather than lineage tenure of land opening the door of their indebtedness to the landlords, land-grabbers and money lenders. The fabric of kinship has been torn. On the other, Adivasi literature, Dalit literature and Sub-altern writings have come up into the fore. Ramnika Gupta (2009) puts it in the book *Indigeneity: Culture and Representation* (2009) as,

> The writing of the tribal people is a testament to their agony and their trials. It is also a medium through which they try to find solutions to their problems. Their writing is an expression of their revolutionary spirit against the "established" who have conspired to kill their culture and control their resources. Tribal literature has endured over the past 5000 years, despite all odds, because of the unity of its people. Today it is being written in well over 90 languages; profusely in Hindi too, which has not only enriched it but also familiarized the Hindi belt with the life and the culture of the adivasis, with their spirit of togetherness and freedom. This literature has proved quite cataclysmic in positively shaping the non-adivasis' perception of and attitude towards the adivasis. Adivasi literature is about life. It is about man's co-existence with nature; it is about freedom, equality and brotherhood, about social integration and honesty. It is free from greed and acquisitive instincts… Today, the adivasi is more aware. New thoughts and ideologies have made inroads into his thinking, giving him a different perspective. He has a new sense of 'self', a heightened consciousness of his rights, and an awareness of the discrimination and injustice meted out to him. (Devy et al.191)

It is the 'self-realisation' only which has been the source of contemporary adivasi and dalit literatures. These writings have been exploring the truth of contemporary life and help rediscovering their history.

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to examine how self and community have been represented in contemporary dalit literature, dalit autobiographies and tribal writings. It is also noted how in American literature tribal sense of community and its collective identity have been viewed by the

anthropologists and social scientists and lastly how Verrier has documented and represented the tribal life, its self and community feeling, its unity and solidarity amidst diversity through his numerous and voluminous writings along with his living a tribal life for more than half of his life span. Dalit movement has always attempted to bring tribals into its fold due to the common experience of pain and suffering. In Arjun Daugle's *Poisoned Bread* (1992), a long interview in the Appendix clearly shows how untouchability and aboriginality become common experience of social exclusion.

Self and Community in Dalit writings especially Dalit Autobiographies and Literatures:

Any significant representation of the Dalit experience, until very recently, received a little space in the mainstream of Indian literature and culture. Some upper caste litterateurs and sociologists through their writings tried to represent the Dalit lives sympathetically, but due to their very caste position they failed to portray the Dalit lives authentically and to come out of the caste prejudices. They pictured the 'untouchables' as mean, submissive and tied up in the vicious circle of caste and destiny. Dalit literature emerged as a new literary movement in the 1960s in Indian literary and cultural discourse especially in Marathi language, followed by the Dalit Panthers Movement and movement led by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, a formidable scholar and undisputed leader of the Untouchables.

Etymologically, the term 'Dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit word "Dalita" which means "oppressed". In Marathi language it means "of the earth" and "that which has been grounded down". Ambedkar called them 'Pad Dalit' to convey their vicious repression by the social system. In Indian context they were called untouchables and ranked at bottom level of the caste hierarchy. Those untouchables

were referred to as "Chandala" or "Avarna". Gandhi called them "Harijan"[14] (The people of God). J.H. Hutton called them, at international level for these untouchables, "Exterior Castes'. Indian official term for these people is Scheduled Caste (S.C.). The agonies such as injustice, atrocities, caste humiliation, and discriminations faced by these oppressed people, their struggle for self respect and dignity, voices against the destruction of nature and environment, oppression of women and racial discriminations taking place in Australia, Canada, Latin America, Africa and other countries as well as in India - all are echoed and represented in the Dalit literature. In the United States, the African descent writers Phillips Wheateney and Olaudah Equiano started writing protest narratives first in the late 18th century. Their writings are called "Black writings"[15]. In India these narratives have its roots in the 11th century. One of the first Dalit writers of that time was Madara Chennaiah, a cobbler-saint living in the age of Western Chalukyas. Some scholars regard him as the "Father of Vachana Poetry". Dohara Kakkoiah, a Dalit by birth, was another poet whose six poems survive confronted with the agony of that time. The term "Dalit literature" was used for the first time in the first conference of 'Maharashtra Dalit Sahitya Sangha' held at Mumbai in 1958. Now it has spread in many languages all over the country.

Annabhau Sathe, Bandhu Madhav, Daya Pawar, Shantabai Kamble, Namdev Dhasal, Laxman Mane, Laxman Gaikwad, Sharnakumar Limbale, Waman Nibalkar, Arun Kamble, Hari Narake, Bhimsen Dethe, Muralidhar Bansode are among the most noted Dalit Marathi writers who have contributed a lot in Dalit narratives. Munshi Premchand, Amrita Nagar, Mulk Raj Anand, Salaman Rushdie, Malkan Sigh, Arundhati Roy, Joy Prakash Kardam, Omprakash Valmiki, Vasant Moon, Mahaswetha Devi, Bama, Marku, and Sivakami all advocated the rights of the Dalit

community, inspired the people to rise against oppression and focused on the 'Dalit consciousness' in their writings as the core element.

Since the post-Ambedkar period, women especialy Dalit women have been making use of literature as an instrument to express their sufferings and voices through poetry, essay, novel, autobiography, short story etc. Baby Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) is a ground breaking autobiography of Dalit women. The conflict and struggle between the Mahar community and upper caste has been portrayed in this autobiography. Kamble, like other Dalit students, had to bear the burnt of humiliation and hatred, injustice and harassment not only from her school mates but from her teachers also and lastly even from her husband falling prey to 'child marriage'. She used to keep the records of her experiences in life on scrap papers and store them in her petty shop. Maxine Berntson, an American-born researcher and sociologist, visited the Dalit settlement Phaltan in 1982 and accidentally came to meet Baby Kamble in the same area. Berntson collected Kamble's writings, serialized them as 'Jina Amucha' in the women magazine "Stree". Later, Maya Pandit of CIEFL, Hyderabad, translated 'Jina Amucha' from Maratha to English and English translation of it; *The Prisons We Broke* (2008) was published with a large introduction of the translator. Maya Pandit also published an interview with Kamble. This literature is more about Dalit's blind beliefs and superstitions and possessions of evil spirits by both men and women considering them as curse of god and goddesses. It has transcended the boundaries of personal narratives to provide with a sociological, historical and political record. It magnifies Dalit feminist critique and protests against religions as a whole.

Joothan: An Untouchable's Life (2008) is a famous autobiography of Omprakash Valmiki. It was originally published as an essay "Ek Dalit ki

Atmakatha" in 1993. It was translated by A.P. Mukharjee (2003) into English during 1997-2002. 'Jootha' means "polluted" food that is associated with animals. 'Joothan' portrays the pain of poverty, humiliation and the atrocities on Dalits. It has participated in the larger and much old debate (perhaps the most famous example of it is the Gandhi-Ambedkar debate and rivalry over the leadership of the former 'untouchables' over the power to represent the Dalits and determine their identity). This tussle over defining the Dalit identity is seen in 'Joothan'. Jotha's self-identity is embedded in his community identity. The first one is inseparable from the second. Her self identity is constructed in her society.

Valmiki tells that the upper caste people often used to call them "Oe chuhre" or "Abey Chuhre". They never used to call them by their original names. The abuse, hatred, atrocities, discriminations made by the uppercaste people were all directed not to Valmiki, 'the person' but to Valmiki, 'the caste' which he represented. Valmiki is a symbol. This designation of the Dalits by their caste titles and not by their individual names was an act of negation of their human identity by the uppercaste people. When an upper caste school headmaster asked Valmiki his name, he answered by calling himself Omprakash. This definition of the 'self' by the child narrator in terms of his individuality is instantly challenged by the headmaster when he scornfully put another question "Chuhre Ka?" and the narrator had to answer in the affirmative. Several of his friends and colleagues were upset by his persistent using of his name as Valmiki as it embedded him with his caste of origin. Valmiki insisted on using it for self-definition as it became his "badge of identity". This experience of Valmiki's life has become a metaphor for Dalit literature.

Bama's *Karukku* (2000), is the most popular Dalit women's autobiography. It was published in Tamil in 1992 and English translation of it came out in 2000. It

is the life-story of a Dalit woman. The author considers herself 'Karukku', the story of Dalit mass. Bama was a converted Catholic and discovered that her discrimination was rooted in her birth as a Dalit. On the other, she struggled in churches, schools and society. She described how the Dalit women for their survival had to work as labourers or sweepers with their family, faced humiliation and became victims of injustice; she realized that her existence as an individual was solely dependent on that of her society/community. Her women suffered a double curse, curse of being a woman, and curse of being a Dalit in her house. Bama's autobiography gives a nice example of how the young children through games are socialized into cultural pattern and common experiences of their community. The games replicate the social relations between the 'high' and the 'low'. Some boys would pretend to be 'naikers' (upper castes) and the rest would be their labourers. The labourers went round calling the 'Naickers' 'aaya' and the 'Naickers' would humiliate and insult the 'labourers' as they worked in an imaginary field. She goes on further in *Karakku* (2000)

> Sometimes we played at beings
> nuns and priests who came and
> gave us blows.
> Then we played at being married and setting off
> a bus journey; the husband coming home
> drunk and hitting his wife; the police
> arriving and beating him up. (49)

The above excerpt narrates the common pain and humiliation of Dalit men and women. On the other, it also shows how community helps the individual in practicing its exhaustive cultural pattern and to survive with dignity which at the

same time put them apart from the mainstream culture. This distinctive experience also builds the core of their sub-culture. P.K. Nayar considers Bama's 'Karukku' as a 'Testimonio', defines it in his article "'Bama's Karukru", published in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* where he quotes John Beverley as, "A novel or novella-length narrative in book or pamphlet (that is, printed as opposed to acostic) form, told in the first person by a narrator who is also the real protagonist of the events he or she recounts, and whose unit of narration is usually a "life" or significant life experience" (Nayar 84).

Nayar goes on further:

> The 'testimonio' is the voice of one who witnesses for the sake of an other, who remains voiceless. That is, the speaking subaltern subject of the narrative gives voice to the lived experiences of herself and of those who are victims of socio-linguistic-literary marginalization. 'Testimonio' is a collective document here and 'Karukku' moves from individual to community through a narration of trauma. (Nayar 84)

In her preface to the book, she starts with the personal pronoun "I" as, "There are many congruities between the saw-edged palmyra karukku and my own life" (iii). The contexts of her life is described in the second paragraph as "events that occurred during many stages of my life", "unjust social structures that plunged me into ignorance". The narrative changes in the third chapter where she writes "There are other Dalit hearts like mine… they, who have been the oppressed, are now themselves like the double–edged Karukku" (viii).

Here she speaks for an entire community. The opening line of the autobiography is - "Our village is very beautiful" (1). She continues: "Most of our people are agriculture labourers."

When she describes her community she uses 'our people', not "my people". Her narrative is not a unified subject "I" but a collective "our". Moving from the individual to the collective she thereby expands her identity – her self into the world. In the second chapter, she writes, "when I was studying in the third class" (11). Now she moves from "I" to "we", when she goes on, "We who are asleep must open our eyes and look about us. We must not accept the injustice of our enslavement by telling ourselves it is our fate, as if we have no true feelings: we must dare to stand up for change …" (Bama 25).

Another characteristic point of this shifting from individual to community is that both the self and the community are faced with trauma, but it is shared with its members and it is the trauma only which holds the community together. Bama puts it in *Karukku* (2000) as,

> Today I am like a mongrel – dog, wandering about without a permanent job, nor a regular means to find clothes, food and a safe place to live. I share the same difficulties and struggles that all Dalit poor experience. I share to some extent the proverty of the Dalits who toil far more painfully through fierce heat and bearing rain…
>
> Life is difficult if you happen to be poor, even though you are born into the upper-castes. When this is the case, the condition of those who are born into the Paraya community, as the poorest of the poor struggling for daily survival, does not need spelling out. (67-68)

This sharing of agony and pain is also noticed in Valmiki's *Joothan* (2003), and Vasanta Moon's *Vasti* (1995) and Kaushalya Baisantri's *Dohra Abhisap* (2009). Valmiki's sister-in-law and his family faced starvation but did not allow him to choose his family occupation of slaughtering animals. Vasanta was fed by and taken

care of by the larger community even whenever his mother's income was very meager to support him. Baisantri described how her grandmother received help from her nephew residing in Nagpur when she decided to leave her marital home. All these construct a positive role of the family and community in the growth of the individual. Vasanta Moon's autobiography *Growing up Untouchable in India: A Dalit Autobiography* (2000) came out in Marathi as *Vasti* (1995). Dr. Gail Omvedt has translated this autobiography into English in 2002. The life of Mahar community as victims of social injustices, discriminations, poverty, atrocities and caste has been portrayed in this writing. To earn the means of livelihood and to bring up her children Vasanta and Malti, Vasanta's mother had to work in the houses of the Britishers as maidservant and faced social boycott by the upper caste people. Vasanta portrays struggle between Mahar (Dalit) and upper caste. Since his boyhood, he became associated with the Samata Sainik Dal, a political organization of the Dalits founded by Ambedkar, to fight for the cause of Dalit upliftment. In his autobiography he presents the memories of many of his community like his mother, friends and senior members of the "Vasti" to give a fuller and vibrant account of his community–their consciousness of self and community, and solidarity maintained therein. Moon's statement in the concluding chapter of the Vasti "In this autobiography of mine Gangya is present, Balya in present, Pandya is there, Janya is there" (175), highlights the importance of community in an individual's life. And the community becomes a metaphor for a Dalit individual's life.

Sharan Kumar Limbale's *Akkarmashi* (1984), a magnificient Dalit antobiography, appeared in 1984 in Marathi language. Its English translation *Outcaste* (2003) was published in 2003. Limbale mentions in his author's note of the book,

> My history is my mother's life, at the most my grandmother's. My ancestry doesn't go back any further. My mother is an untouchable, while my father is a high caste from one of the privileged classes of India. Mother lives in a hut, father in a mansion. Father is landlord; mother, a landless. I am an 'akkarmashi'(half-caste). I am condemned, branded illegitimate. (ix)

G.N. Devy in his introduction to the book *Outcaste* (2003) quotes Limbale as, "I have shown the events, incidents and experience from my life of twenty – seven years…This is the story of my life, an expression of my mother's agony and an autobiography of a community" (xxiii).

This autobiography has presented the overwhelming experience of his and his community's life and their status as outcastes. "Outcaste" becomes a metaphor for the numerous kinds of exclusions that disrupt an individual's harmonious integration with society, and this autobiography strongly projects the continual omission of Limbale from social privileges which is seen when he prefers to call his new born son 'anaarya' which means to come of a low-born and of mean social stature. Though this gesture might be considered as a revolt against the existing hegemonic value system, yet the name remains a potent symbol of liminality and dispossession. Like Laxman Gaikward's *Uchalya* (1987), Limbale portrays hunger as an all pervasive context of the autobiography which he adds on:

> Bhakari is as large as man. It is as vast as Sky, and bright like the Sun. Hunger is bigger than man. Hunger is more vast than the seven circles of hell… A single stomach is like the whole earth… There would have been no wars if there was no hunger. What about stealing and fighting? If there was no hunger what would have happened to sin and virtue, heaven and hell, this creation of God? (50-51)

Devy, in his introduction to the autobiography remarks, "This outburst is not of a hungry man bounding for meals; it is more a saint's quest to understand the meaning of the world, which in this case is read in the alphabet of hunger and want" (xiv).

The most remarkable point of these testimonios or autobiographies is that it is the Dalit community only not Moon / Baisantari / Bama / Limbale / Valmiki himself / herself becomes the protagonist of his / her autobiography. The fidelity to the community over self for the Dalit writers is also evident from the titles of the autobiographies; none of which employs the name of the narrator towards his / her individuality as a subject. The use of psedunym, though common to atrocity narratives, suggests that the real name is less important than his/her social identity as "Dalit", "Woman", "Mahar", or "Tamil". The readers become attentive to "Bama– the Dalit woman" or "Baisantari–the Dalit woman" rather then real 'Bama' or real 'Baisantri'. This pseudonymity distantiate from Baisantri – the person and on the other, intimate Baisantri – the Dalit representative.

Tribal sense of community, solidarity and self: As viewed by the anthropologists/sociologists and its representation in literature especially tribal literatures:

Up till now we have discussed about self and community and their representations in Dalit literatures. Though Nirmal Kumar Bose (1941) in his remarkable essay, "The Hindu Methods of Tribal Absorption", has described how the aboriginal tribes, who originally lived on shifting cultivation and hunting and gathering, have been drawn through the process of assimilation into the caste Hindu groups, and though the tribes are economically backward, live in an isolated geographical region, speak common dialects or languages as good as their caste Hindu counterparts, yet the concept of community and self is strikingly similar to that of Dalit self and

community. In Dalit literatures/testimonios community and self have been considered as inseparable, each being dependent on the other. Likewise, in tribal sense of community and self, unity and solidarity of community are given prior importance. Community serves as the core concern. In the Translation's Afterword of the book *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* (1986), Spivak places this solidarity as, "*Chotti Munda* repeatedly dramatizes subaltern solidarity: Munda, Oraon and the Hindu outcastes must work together. Today such a solidarity has a name: dalit. The seduction of an identitarianism in the name of the dalit can learn a lesson here" (290).

The indigenous people have been living since time immemorial in the forests and hilly or mountainous regions all over the world. They are living in unison with nature and its components, flora and fauna. The animals, birds, insects, reptiles etc. are their intimate neighbours. They have learnt some group/community habits from them on the one hand and for their very existence and survival on the earth, on the other, they had to live together in a group or in a community immaterial of the distinctive characteristics the communities possessed. In a tribal world no single act, may be act of recreation or act of bravery, or act of slavery, or act of revolt, or act of resistance, or act of creation, is performed without the involvement of the well beings of the whole community or group. Collective leadership, collective thinking, collective accomplishment, collective skill are the prime concerns in the tribal world. Self is not any alien concept, rather self, community and solidarity constitute a single but broad concept underlying the principle of togetherness.

The term "tribe" is created as one of the social categories by the colonial anthropologists and British officials. In the early colonial period, it was used interchangeably with other terms such as 'caste' and 'race'. It is recognized as some

distinguished social groups distinct from those labelled as 'castes' and gained specific meaning by the end of 19th century. The Categorization of the tribes as distinct social groups remained problematic since the beginning as because they were never entirely cut off from Hindu society and as because of their close proximity with their 'caste' neighbours in respect of culture, religion and language. Carol Upadhay in his paper presented at 'The conference of Indian Sociological Society', December 1996 on "Anthropology, Adivasi Movements, and the Politics of Indigenousness" remarks:

> The category of tribe emerged out of 19th century European debates about the history of mankind and the origins of the various 'stocks' or 'races', debates to which ethnologists in India contributed by classifying" and ranking the Indian populace in relation to other 'nations' or 'stocks' of the world. In constructing their arguments they drew upon the dominant paradigms of Victorian social thought, evolutionism and, later in the 19th century, 'race science'[16] (Kulik 1991; Stephan 1982)... The distinction between caste and tribe, which became entrenched in official writings by the late 19th century, was also based on this racial mapping of Indian society. The 'tribes' were understood as remnants of aboriginal groups who were not conquered and absorbed by the invading Aryans, like the lower castes, but were pushed back into the remote forests and hills. The construction of category of tribe also drew upon the earlier evolutionist dichotomy of the 'civilized' and 'primitive'. But while the primitiveness of 'tribes' elsewhere was constructed in opposition to European civilization, in India 'tribe' stood in opposition to Hindu 'civilization' as defined by Orientalist scholars, i.e. caste society (Beteille 1992; Skaria 1997). Fundamentally, then, 'tribes' were defined in

opposition to ‘castes’ rather than in terms of any concrete common characteristics of their own. (4-5)

Some British administrators turned anthropologists such as W.V. Grigson, W.G Archer and J.H. Hutton respected tribal culture and their ways of life, advocated better governance for their sustenance and at the same time voiced for preserving their customs and cultures which resulted in enactment of the Government of India Act, 1935 creating the ‘Excluded’ and ‘Partially Excluded’ areas and the consequent scheduling of tribes.

Modern anthropology is derived from the colonial discourse on tribes that the tribals are at a lower stage of evolution, they are in need of uplift and more development by the state, and they should be exposed to the market economy through the process of integration. They also view that it is the tribes’ backwardness, simplicity and isolation only which have made them prone to exploitation and oppression, and advocate for preserving those cultural traditions or customs which the Government officials regard non-threatening. According to Fuer-Haimendorf, Indian tribes form “... autochthonous societies which persisted until recently in an archaic and in many respects primitive life-style”, and which are under threat from “the mounting influence of economically advanced and politically powerful groups” (1).

The tribals all over the country have been launching movements for their self-rule and regional autonomy since long. Many committees/commissions have been set up to stop the movements, the last of which is the Bhuria Committee[17], which in its reports (1995) echoes the same old perception on tribes saying that the tribal societies have got “their own customary laws, traditional practices, community ethos, . . . many tribal communities have been living autonomously cut off from the

rest of the society, . . . have been practicing democracy, having been characterized by (an) 'egalitarian spirit' and 'communitarian and co-operative spirit" (Vikalp 48-49).

The very notion (anthropological) of 'traditional culture' has helped the urban elite and educated political leaders to construct 'Adivasi identity'. Davalle quotes from a Christian political leader who listed the five major qualities of 'tribal life' as: "equality, dignity of labour, common ownership of the means of productions, dancing and singing to make life liveable, and efforts towards community welfare" (161).

So we observe that the whole of tribal life is embraced in its community. It is the central point of different characteristic features and aesthetics of tribal identity. Tribal solidarity and the community spirit are revealed in their daily livelihoods, in art and crafts, in pleasure and pain, in wars and conflicts within and outside, even in exercising their franchise. Of course it does not mean in any way that self is not respected in the construction of their identity. The tribal heroes or heroines (in earlier matrilineal family, the mother, the central power of the family) played important role in the community, served and guided the community as of their own, individualism being regarded over collectivism.

Now we shall observe how community, solidarity and self have been represented by Friedrich Engels in his prolific writing *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884).

Engels has confessed that his book has been supplemented by Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient society* (1877), Johann Jakob Bacofen's *Mother's Right* (1861), and John Ferguson Mc Lehnan's *Studies in Ancient History* (1886), comprising a reprint of "Primitive Marriage". Engels writes:

> The great majority of American Indians never got beyond the stage of tribal integration. Constituting numerically small tribes, separated from one another by wider border-lands, and enfeebled by perpetual warfare, they occupied an enormous territory with but few people. Alliances arising out of temporary emergencies were concluded here and there between kindred tribes and dissolved again with the passing of the emergency. But in certain areas originally kindred but subsequently disunited tribes reunited in lasting confederacies, and so took the first step towards the formation of nations. In the United States we find the most advanced form of such a confederacy among the Iroquois. Emigration forms their original home west of the Mississipi, where they probably constituted a branch of the great Dakota family, they settled down after protracted wanderings in what is today the state of New York. They were divided into five tribes . . . At the beginning of the fifteenth century at the latest, this developed into a regular "permanent league", a confederacy which, conscious of its new found strength, immediately assumed an aggressive character and at the height of its power – about 1675 – had conquered large stretches of the surrounding country, expelling some of the inhabitants and forcing others to pay tribute. The Iroquois Confederacy was the most advanced social organization attained by the Indians who had not emerged from the lower stage of barbarism (that is, excepting the Mexicans, New Mexicans and Peruvians). (93-94)

He has also described that the perpetual alliance of the five consanguine tribes on the basis of complete equality and independence in all internal tribal affairs helped from Confederacy. The blood relationship constituted the true basis of the Confederacy the organ of which was called Federal Council. This Council consisted

of fifty sachems all enjoying equal rank and dignity. The sachems were distributed among the tribes and gentes to represent them in the Council. They would be elected by votes. Each of the tribal councils could convene meetings and decisions would be taken unanimously. The Confederacy had no official head. This type of social institution existed in the Iroquois for over four hundred years and still do exits.

Engels also mentioned that the confederacies of tribes came into existence since the time of Caesar. It existed among German and American tribes, among the Greeks of the Heroic Age and among the Romans at the time of the so called Kings. And it is the community spirit only which gave birth to such confederacies. The core element of these tribe confederacies is that these were the first steps towards the formation of 'state'.

Engels puts it as, "It was the most highly developed constitution the gentile order could produce; it was the model constitution of the higher stage of barbarism. As soon as the society passed beyond the limits for which this constitution sufficed, the gentile order was finished. It burst asunder and the state took its place" (142-143).

So, obviously, tribal sense of community and its solidarity have larger contribution than any other social groups to the discourse of modern civilization.

Tribal literature deals with the life and culture of the adivasis, with their coexistence with nature, with their social integrity and honesty, with their freedom, equality and brotherhood, with their fights against oppression and injustice meted out to them, and with their age-long tradition of folk songs, folklores, rituals, legends exploring the truths of the contemporary lives and history of the earth leading towards their self realisations and self-assertions. Today new thoughts, perceptions and ideologies have emerged in the domain of their thinking. Now a

tribal person is more sensitive and conscious of his rights – rights of land, forest and livelihoods, a new sense of 'self' has developed and all these changes and necessities are reflected in the adivasi literatures of today. Now the tribes want to hear of their pains and agony by their own ears not by the eyes and ears of the dominant elites, which, Vaharu Sonaware has finely described in his poem 'Stage', quoted in Ramnika Gupta's 'Adivasi Literature' in *Idigeneity: Culture and Representation* (2009) as,

> We never went on stage,
> Nor were we called
> A gesturing finger
> Showed us our proper place.
> There we sat,
> And they stood on stage
> Telling us about our own pain.
> Our pain remains ours
> It never became theirs . . .
> They twisted our ears and warned us
> Apologise or else . . . (191-192)

It is an expression of rising awareness and of breaking their age-old silence. Now one wishes to speak of one's pain in one's own language. One is eager to know and learn one's culture, one's history, one's geography. A new sense of self-analysis and self-realisation evolves. It has been finally interwoven in his prose-narrative in another place as,

> We belong to an uncorrupted society whose value system has remained positively in place. We have been living united as a cohesive community,

> trying to forget through our dances and our songs the sufferings you inflicted upon us. You deprived us of civilisation, dispossessed us, but we continued to play on our flute and drum, and kept our dialogue alive which has become a forceful na [roar]. Our flute is our beacon of light. We are determined to enlighten entire tribal communities, breaking the barriers of language and place. We have picked up the pen and that would be our strength. Don't mislead us and call us junglee (uncivilised). We are nature – born, we co-exist with it and grow with it. We believe in protecting nature and preserving its bounty. We do not want to control and master nature . . . We will not let our identity be submerged or our self-respect be crushed. We will be your equals in life's struggle without giving up our innocence, simplicity and unity. . . We will study in our mother tongue so that all the tribal people are united. We shall discover our history. . . We will prove that we are the "givers" and not the "snatchers." (192)

Both the poem and the prose-narrative express self-realisation of the tribal people, and this self-realisation has been the focal point of tribal literature of today. Self- realisation and self-analysis of an individual are achieved through the community he or she belongs. One's pain as well as pleasure and one's feeling are embedded in those of one's community. Here individual and its community are two sides of a coin. In both the narratives the personal pronouns 'we' and 'our' have been used, and emphasis has been given on the words "cohesive community", 'co-exist', and 'unity'. Tribal sense of self, community and solidarity forms a trinity where community and its unity have been prioritised over self.

Laxman Gaikwad's *Uchalya* (1987), winner of the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1988 and translated in English by P. A. Kolharkar as *The Branded* (1998), is an

autobiographical novel giving a personal account of the life of a downtrodden (Gaikwad himself) who was born in 1956 and brought up in Uchalya community which the British classified as 'criminal tribe' in its Criminal Tribes' Act 1871. Many tribes in India have been living for thousands of years with an invisible existence completely unknown to the so-called civilized society.

The Uchalyas are deprived of all admissible means of livelihood, forced to wander from place to place and resorted to practice 'thieving, lifting and pick-pocketing' as their only means of livelihood. The members of the community are to bear severe exploitation due to the caste hierarchy which keep them away from education, religion, economics and politics of the mainstream society. Their own world of ignorance, superstitions, and primeval norms of justice circumscribe their lives. This Uchalya community is reduced to outcaste-lower than the lowest untouchables, which Gaikwad retrospects about him and in the opening sentences of his life narrative he describes the sub-human conditions of his tribal community as, "No native place. No birth-date. No house. No farm. No caste either" (1).

Like some other nomadic and denotified tribes, the Uchalyas have been bearing the stigma of being born criminal since the pre-colonial period and bore the same identity at least up to 1980s in Independent India. G.N. Devy puts it as:

> The social category generally known as the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes of India covers a population of approximately six crores. Some of them are included in the list of scheduled castes, some others in the schedule of Tribes, and quite a few in the category of other Backward Classes. But there are many of these tribes, which find place in none of the above. What is common to all these Denotified and Nomadic Tribes (DNTs) is the fate of being branded as 'born criminals. (21)

Lack of education and severe inhuman restrictions of settlement have restrained them to be aware of their true self. Their wretched and barbaric state of living has been rightly and painfully expressed by Dr. Vaman Nimbalkar in 'Dalit Literature: Nature and Role' as, "To feed themselves, they gathered roots and fruits from the jungle, hunted birds and animals or sold shells, needle and thread, beads and strings, stones and soil to make both the ends meet with great difficulty" (141).

These nomadic tribes lived sub-human life in abject poverty and acute hunger and their agonies could not be brought to the forefront till 1980s. It was Gaikwad, the first learned member of the community, who first brought the untold saga of 'Uchalya' community to the forefront of the academic and social platforms through his publication of *The Branded*, English translation of *Uchalya* in 1998.

What Baby Kamble has expressed in her 'Jina Amucha', Gaikwad also has identified his own suffering with the suffering of his community. He has voiced the struggle of his community against starvation, humiliation, exploitation, poverty, injustice and inequality. He not only describes the saga of his community, but also exposes the crude and evil consequences of the caste system on his people. He goes on, "The community in which I was born has ever been rejected-ostracized by the caste-ridden hierarchy among which it has been fated to live. For hundreds-nay-thousands of years this man-forsaken community denied its innate humanness by all and sundry, has been forced to live a life no better than that of a godforsaken animal" (vii).

Laxman has presented a stark picture of abominally unhygienic conditions of his people. When the law restricts the Uchalyas all other means of livelihood, they beat their children to teach them 'thieving skills' such as picking pockets, stealing footwear and bundles of things, deception, and deception by sleight of hand while

engaging a person in conversation. As the 'Uchalyas' is termed as a criminal tribe, its members are disallowed to stay in a place more than three days without a "pass", a permit from the police – patil, a headman in charge of law and order. If someone violates, he or she is beaten and arrested by the police and freed by paying an exorbitant amount to the police for which they are ultimately caught in a debt-trap.

Though Gaikwad's grandparents (Lingappa Gaikwad and Narasabai) and brothers (Manikdada, Anna, Bhau, and Harchanda) thrived and depended on 'thieving', Gaikwad's parents earned by respectable means (1-4).

His father, Martand managed to get a job in Chamle's farm and felt the necessity of education. The cruel beating of the police to his family members and his father's inspiration paved the way for his education, which he nicely puts in *The Branded* (1998) as,

> Seeing the beating and tortures, I wet my shorts. Hence I was unwilling to accompany Dada on these thieving trips. Father, as a result of his service with Chamle had begun to grasp the state of affairs a little better. He understood that a child must learn to read and write. Instead of a Bharat Blade, he put in my hand a slate and pencil and enrolled my name in a primary class for children. I started going to school. (16)

Laxman became the victim of acute poverty. He had to starve for many days. Out of terrible financial constraints he lost his father. He was penniless to perform his father's last rites. The irreversible losses caused by poverty is narrated by him as, "Poverty took away my mother. She died a miserably poor woman. Harchanda was missing. Father was the only sustaining ink with the rest of the family. Now, that too, was snapped. He could have lived some more years. But poverty deprived him of medical aid. Starvation killed him – this thought made me very sad" (173).

He also describes how a young girl of two years old was sold for a meagre sum of two hundred rupees. It made him restless to think that even after independence, people of the outcastes are forced to sell their siblings to feed themselves and he utters, "What is the use of freedom, if living with dignity and self- respect is impossible?" (185).

Gaikwad's self realisation undergoes transformation initiated by education. He constructs and re-constructs his self in the ambit of his school education where he encounters with the teachers of upper castes who taught him to give up his "dirty and slovenly" habits acquired from his community, to brush his teeth regularly, to take bath daily. Now Laxman himself washes his clothes (with sticky mud) and advises his sisters-in-law to clean the floor daily, to wash the earthen jars of water regularly. He declines to consume liquor which the Uchalyas prescribe as antidote for fever and cold. Earlier in the months of "Ashadha-Shravana" (July-August) Laxman would eat coconuts and food offered to propitiate the spirits in the cremation yards. Now he takes fast on Fridays and Saturdays, gives up eating crabs, fish and pigs as because his teacher Mahadeo Bembade agrees to teach him the singing of devotional songs and thereby he gradually gets an entry to the houses of the upper caste people. With the help of Bembude, he earns blessing of Patil, an upper caste religions orthodox, to read scriptures such as the 'Ramayana', the 'Shivaleemrit' (condensed edition of the 'Bhagavadgita') (82-83).

This transformation of his self brought a change in perception of the higher castes because at that time no lower caste people was allowed to go through the scriptures and sing devotional songs. This elevation (through his changing habits) helped him win the dignity and respect in the caste-ridden unjust hierarchical order of the society. To fight against starvation he managed to get a job in a spinning mill

at Latur which enabled him to look after his ailing father and brother Harchanda who had quit thieving. He sold bananas and breads and worked in double shifts to supplement his earnings, earned good wills of his fellow workers, befriended the Marathas and the merchants (93, 102-03).

But the unhygienic cooking conditions of the mill, its deafening noise of the machines, suspended Cotton particles in the air, and some other evil practices, affected seriously on the health of the workers, caused disease like tuberculosis, forced them to borrow money in high rates for treatment, polluted the surroundings (147-151).

This led him to voice against injustices and irregularities. He adopted the path of non-violence even when the agents of mill-owners committed atrocities on the workers. Later he was removed from his job but that could not stop his struggle for justice. He opened tea-stall his wife opened grocery shop. Grappled with poverty and hunger, he thought of an idea to form an organisation for the welfare of the poor, for the emancipation of his community, for freedom from want and hunger, for dignity and self-respect for the branded communities. He formed the District "Pathrut Samaj Sanghatana" and carried out its works with earnings from his grocery shop and cycle repair shop. He started the organisation at a time when he could not afford a cup of milk for his daughter and had to borrow Rs 150 for his father's cremation (167-70). Gaikwad's autobiography, *Uchalya – The Branded* (1998), is a social document which records the agonies of his community and his progress as a social worker and activist. He got acquainted with many social workers and activists, strived to unite and strengthen the nomadic and denotified tribes. His work was to redress injustice to his community. He pursued education, got self and social awareness, united his community, dedicated himself to the cause of his

community. The pain of the author-narrator for his community has been chronicled in its narrative. Here self and community revolves round the same string.

Mahasweta Devi, a Bengali novelist, short-story writer, playwright, journalist and social-activist worked with the lives of the oppressed, the down-trodden and the marginalised or the 'subalterns' whom Bart Moore Gilbert denotes in *Postcolonial Criticism* (1997) as, "... subsistence farmers, unorganised peasant labour, the tribals and communities of zero workers on the street or in the countryside ... disadvantaged sectors within the metropolis, particularly those involuntary, economic migrants represented by the 'urban house-worker'" (28).

These have-nots of the society constitute the core of Mahasweta Devi's writings. Because of the empathy she had for the indigenous people, one will find no difference in her writings between the artist who creates and the person who suffers. She was an activist at the grass-root level from where she struggled against the existing norms, traditions and customs of the male-dominated society which restrict and alienate the marginalised segments from the mainstream society, thwart their growth and development and keep them at the periphery. Her writings are documents of the pains and joys, hopes and sufferings, and the exploitation and oppression of her marginalised people at the hands of the power-mongers of society. Her deep involvement, politicized and committed consciousness, untiring and unbounded zeal and above all her love for the indigenous people sustained her ignited creativity, earned her many accolades and placed her as one of most spirited postcolonial writers. Her books have been translated in English and various Indian languages such as Telegu, Marathi, Punjabi, Oriya, Gujarati, Kannada, Assamese, Malayalam and a tribal language – Ho. She achieved the perception, sensitivity and power which are reminiscent in the great writers of world such as Chekhov,

Dostoevsky and Maupassant. She was greatly inspired by Kavi Kankan Mukundaram Chakraborthy, the 16th century Bengali poet.

Her important novels include *Jhansir Rani* 1956 (The Queen of Jhansi), *Andhar Manik* 1998 (Jewel in Darkness), *Hajar Chaurashir Ma* 1974 (Mother of 1084), *Aranyer Adhikar* 1977 (Right to the forest), *Agnigarbha* 1978 (The womb of fire), *Chotti Munda O Tar Tir* 1980 (ehotti Munda and his Arrow), *Rudali* (1993), *Titu Mir* (2000) and notable short stories are 'Bitter soil', 'Breast stories', 'Imaginary Maps', 'Old Woman', etc. These works reveal that the more she becomes involved in the lives of the destitute, of the poverty-striken and down-trodden common people and of the deprived tribes, the more she re-discovers herself. Her self-realisation and self-analysis attain refinement in these community spirit, in the sufferings and struggles of her Santhals, Oraons, Mundas, Lodhas and Shabars, and in the touching predicament of the world around her.

Her book *The Book of the Hunter* (1994) was first published in Bengali in 1994 and its English translation came out in 2002. It is the story of Shabar[18] tribes (also known as Sabar or Saora) where legend and history, fact and fiction, myth, oral history and folk-lore unite together to produce a dramatic whole.

Mukundaram, a Bramhin priest, being forced to leave his native village, settled in a village situated at the edge of a jungle where lived a tribe of hunters belonging to the Shabar clan. Mukunda got acquainted with the diverse cultural values of the Shabars, met Tejota, respected for her wisdom in the community, and Kalya Shabar, the young son of Tejota. Kalya is married to his childhood playmate Phuli, daughter of his mother's friend. Both of them loved each other with great affection. But Kalya was so possessive about Phuli that he did not like her to speak even to Jagadishwari, wife of Mukunda as because Mukundas were Brahmin, upper

caste, town dwellers and possessed different cultures and traditions. On the other, Kalya was so proud of his tribal customs and heritage he restrained his wife from going house to house of the dominants to sell goods, as it was below the tribal decency, decorum and dignity. Phuli, in conversation with her friend Sana, says, "He dislikes my doing so and says, it's one thing for you to sell meal and skin in the market that's what we tribals do. But I won't let you go selling door to door in town" (Devi 86).

This perception of preserving dignity, individuality and community culture is noticed also when Kalya explains his mother Tejota why he did not approve her wife of coming in close contact with the family of Mukunda. Kalya goes on, "They give her handouts, as if she were a beggar, Mal Rice, coconuts, bananas and all kinds of other things! Nowadays Shabars do see other folks too. The time is gone when we were the only people! Their houses are nice; they talk well and have good hearts. Phuli sees how they are and judges me by their standards" (121).

This may appear to be as inferiority complex on the part of Kalya, but at a deeper level it is not so. B. Sangavi, S.Seetha and S. Senthil Kumar (2018) argue that,

> It is not just the matter of accepting the basic needs, provisions and help of the elites. It is not just materialistic subservience but it is also emotional, social and cultural. In a way it is eclipsing their identity. Kalya cannot digest the idea of comparison or relative merit with those of the elites. The Shabars have their own code of conduct, their own paradigms; their own values which they feel should not be put to test or made to come into clash with those of the elites. (157)

Kalya is concerned of the process of assimilation and apprehends that contact with civilized society will encroach on their customs, traditions and rob of their identity as Shabars. His views, perceptions and voices are the voices of Shabar community. He reconstructs his self within his community, for his community and by his community. Now Kalya does not think of himself or of his mother, he thinks of the welfare and very existence of Shabar community.

The notion of community or subaltern solidarity has been considered as one of the most important themes in her writings, she believed that it is the unity, sisterhoodness, and solidarity of a community only which can save her tribes from extinction and marginalization. She also prescribed that if the exploiters can use community as the tool of offence and defence, then the weak and the exploited should use it as their strength. Mahasweta Devi finds no hostility among the members of her wretched community, in the contrary, they support and help each other in their struggle for existence. In *Rudali*, Sarichari and her husband work hard as partners. Similarly, Sarichari and Bikhni, two aged and lonely women also support each other for survival. In this novella, Devi expands the notion of communal solidarity or co-operative spirit in the marginalized sections of the society, where even prostitutes are not considered out castes. They are viewed as destitutes only who are forced to sell their bodies as means of this livelihood. They unite, form a group of Rudalis to "invest a howl of grief into a howl of triumph". This communitarian spirit is also revealed in her *Chotti Munda and his Arrow* where Chotti Munda, the protagonist, initially living in a cloudy state, hesitates to fight, but very soon comes to realize that so long as all the oppressed are united, the fruits of modernity and development will not be enjoyed by them which she puts as, "Mundas will not be able to live with their identity. In all national development

work they will have to be one with those who . . . are the oppressed of the land and work as field hands, as sweated workers for contractors or trader. Then there'll be a shirt on his body, perhaps shoes on his feet" (139).

Community and Self in Rahula Sankrityayan's *Volga Se Ganga* (1947):

Before venturing into a study of Elwin's treatment of self and community in the tribal world, it is imperative to find out literary echoes in other contemporary writing as well.

Rahula Sankrityayan (1893 - 1963), a versatile scholar with multi faceted talent, travelled down from sea to top of the hill (Himalaya) , from country to country (Cylon, Nepal, Tibet, Japan, China, Iran, Egypt, Russia etc.) by spending more than two-third of his life-span not only in quest of knowledge but also to represent and document the lives of the primordial races, the nomads, the tribes, the Aryans, and to produce a scientific survey of social evolution of mankind. His works diverged in the field of history, literature, politics, biography and autobiography, travelogue, anthropology, philosophy, philology, and old scriptures. He was adept in and conversant with various languages such as Hindi, Sanskrit, Tibbati, Russian, Urdu, Arabi, Pharsi, Tamil, Kannad, Singhali, wrote one hundred twenty seven fundamental and edited books contributing to more than fifty thousand pages. Sankrityayan was a class conscious social worker, started his political life with the Congress party and the Congress Socialist party, became member of the Communist Party, was imprisoned (1940-41) for two years in Hazaribag Jail, lastly became Buddhist, practiced Buddhism and Marxism till to his death. Above all he was a philosopher – philosopher of the 'Lokayat' people, philosopher of the aboriginal races. *Darshan-Digdarsan* (1947*)*, *Human Society* (1942), *Scientific Materialism*,

Buddha-Philosophy (1942), *Volga-Se-Ganga* (1947)*, Kinnar Desh* (1948), *Iran*, *Ghamakkar Shastra* (1942) are a few of his noted writings.

His *Volga Se Ganga,* a prolific historic novel cum travelogue, was first published in 1942 and its English translation (From Volga to Ganga) came out in 1947. It contains twenty stories of people of Indo-European race which had forerunners in the Assyrians, the Egyptians and the Indus Valley people, centuries earlier, through which Rahula has tried to give an account of the historical, economic and political evolution of human society starting from 6000 B.C. to 1922 A.D. and pictured evidentary documents at each stage of evolution. The book starts with the stories Nisha, Diva, Amritashva, Puruhut etc. which deal with the most pre-historic races and Rahula has described the stages of evolution based on the theories enunciated in Lewis H. Morgan's *Ancient Society* (1877), Engel's *Family, Private Property and Origin of State* (1884) and guided by his own thinking and contributions.

The first story "NISHA" is of an Indo-European race residing at the banks of the upper Volga during 6000 B.C. Sankrityayan starts in *Volga se Ganga* (1947) as, "This story takes us back some 360 generations of human life. All the races of India, Iran nd Europe formed one people then. It was the dawn of mankind" (1).

The story started with lively descriptions of landscape where under the roof of the blue sky the earth was covered with snow, and an unbroken realm of terrible silence prevailed there in every direction. The narrator found no creatures other than a half-dozen of children belonging to the age group of one year to eight years – all living in a hill-cave which was their house, a house in darkness. As for grown-ups, there was an old woman. A boy, called Agin, was crying as the small piece of bone he was sucking was snatched away by his sister, Rochana (light). The old woman

kissed and fondled Agin's face, was trying to soothe the child's weeping by putting him to her skinny breasts which hung down like dried half-grown pumpkins in the framework of ribs starting out from under her shrivelled skin (3). This deep love and affection for their children has been described in *Volga Se Ganga* (1947) as,

> Agin begins to cry afresh. Two women enter, and bang down in one corner the bundles of wood piled on their heads. Then one of them runs up to Rochana, the other to Agin. The latter, crying all the harder, howls "Ma-ma!" His mother frees her right hand, and undoing above her right breast a hairy white bull-hide dress pinned with porcupine-quills, lets it slip down. There is too little flesh on her young body, because of the scarcity of food in winter, but it is remarkably graceful . . .The young woman, sitting on the bull-skin she has dropped, puts Agin's mouth to her soft breast. He clutches it with all his fingers, and begins to suck. Just now the other young woman, equally naked, carries Rochana over and sits down near her. (3)

All these subscribe to the cohesion and deep bonding of the community. At that stage, people would live on hunting and gathering. Whatsever they gathered and got on hunting would be delivered amongst themselves. The whole community would go for hunting with the implements of wood, bone and stone in their hands. The Mother, head of the group, would march ahead and the rest would follow.

In the hills and forests, not always the humans remain at the position of predators, sometimes, the animals prey on the human beings. As they were returning to their cave-home, they encountered with a pack of four wolves who,

> manoeuvred about them for a while, and then four of them in one rush, sprang upon the girl of sixteen. The Mother, who was at her side, thrust her spear into one wolf's belly and stretched it on the ground, but the other three

fastened their claws in the girl's thighs, pulled her down, and instantly ripping open her stomach began to tear out her entrails. Just when everyone's attention was fixed on trying to rescue the girl, the remaining three wolves pounced on the unprotected back of the youth of twenty-four, not leaving him the slightest possibility of defending himself, and dragging him to the ground began tearing open his body also . . . Abandoning the dying man where he lay, and raising the three bears and the dead wolf, they set off running, and reached their cave in safety . . . The Mother's group should also have moved somewhat further south, but the girl of sixteen had just then fallen ill. According to the code by which Man lived in that age, it was not part of the duty of the Mother, the family head, to jeopardise the lives of all for the sake of one; but the Mother's heart had weakened, and today they had lost two members instead of one. Two months still remained before the return of the game; in this interval it was still to be seen how many more lives will be lost. Three bears and one wolf were not enough to get them through the winter.

The children, who, poor things had gone to bed with empty stomachs, were overjoyed. The Mother began by cutting up the wolf's heart and giving it to them . . . Each one pressed the Mother to take a bite form their morsels of the roast, but she only said; "Well, today eat your bellyful, form tomorrow there will not be so much.

Later, she got up and brought from one corner of the cave a swollen bladder, saying, "Here, there is honey – wine, tonight drink, dance, enjoy yourselves." (Sankrityayan 7-8)

In this narrative, we observe a sharp interaction between the self and the community. On the one hand, the Mother is guided by the code of the community-her boldness, courage, the spirit of fight-all are meant for the survival of her community. She enjoys with the members of her community, represents the community and bears no separate existence outside her community. On the other, while she is 'a mother' of two deceased children other than 'the Mother' of the community, she mourns her children and does not share in eating, drinking and dancing. Her self-realization overshadows her community spirit. The community participates and shares her pain. Self-realisation of each individual, solidarity of the community are also noticed when each of them values life and death equally. Their ways of life progress with ups and downs at every stage, creation and destruction go hand in hand. They do not believe in any absolute pain and absolute joy, they do not curse or bless for their sufferings or happiness to any supernatural spirit (God). Whatever comes in their life is shared equally within them. Their society/history advances through the process of dialectical materialism. Marxist scholars denote this stage as an age of "Primitive Socialism"[19]. The society in that epoch was matrilineal one, which Rahula describes in this story as,

> They had a ruler the Mother – but her's was no rule of injustice or inequality. All but the grandmother and the big man were he Mother's off spring, while she and the big man were both children of the old woman, so that there could be no question of "mine" or "thine" among them. In fact a very long time was still to elapse before the coming of the age of properly. The Mother, it is true, had paramount authority over all the males equally. (8)

The elevation to the post of 'The Mother' is not followed by any mechanical process. Every individual woman, old or young is conscious of the headship, eager

to retain it, fights among themselves. As soon as she retains the post, every other follows her forgetting their conflicts. Community spirit rules over individual's thinking. But at the stage of ascending the position of matriarch, each individual woman analyses and realizes herself over the community; their personal attachment, love and preference to their male partners vary, each of them may be characterised with separate identity.

Inter-and-intra tribal conflicts and wars are among the common characteristics of the tribal world which we see even today in the North-East states such as Manipur, Nagaland, Arunachal, Assam, Meghalaya. The self and community as depicted in the stories of Rahula's *Volga Se Ganga* (1947) underwent continuous transformations through the mutual interactions between the two.

Verrier's Repsentation of Self and Community:

Elwin's *The Baiga* (1939), is one of the most celebrated texts of cultural ecology in India and is hailed as one of the seminal works on tribes and their condition in Central India. It placed him as premier 'defender of the aborigines' in our country. The songs and dances described in this book solely exhibit the community activities of the Baiga tribe in details. Here he narrates the Karma dance, the Jharpat dance, the Tapadi dance and the Bilma dance. For dancing they dress better, put on ornaments (both boys and girls), put tufts of peacock's feathers in their hair, use, generally, four different kinds of drums – *mander, dhol, nangara and timki,* and wooden clappers called *tiski*. The Karma is the greatest dance of the Baiga and all others are variations of it, in which men and women, young and old all can share. The Karma dance, as Verrier puts in *The Baiga* (1939),

> has two main formations – both centering round a group of men singers and drummers. This group stands in the middle of an open space, two or there

> men have the long *mandar* swung round their necks. They begin to drum, and the others start singing. Gradually, the girls collect and stand in a line a few yards away from the men ... when sufficient girls have assembled, the men begin to sing.When they have finished the the fast 'verse' of a song, the girls take hands and try to repeat what the boys have sung. If they succeed, the drums begin and the dance is on. If they fail, they have to go on trying till they get the words correct ... the drummers give a loud yell, jump in the air, run towards the girls, crouch down before them. The girls recede three steps, the drummers following them, then advance, recede and advance. The central bunch of men remains still, and the line of women and the drummers gradually work round in a large circle ... Here the women go round in a large circle, sometimes clockwise and sometimes anticlockwise, and a line of boys and girls with the *tiski* in their hands go very fast round the circle in opposite direction ... The women in the Karma dance always circle round the men, but in the first formation, the circular movement proceeds very slowly… while in the second, the women go round rapidly. A third formation, which is regarded as a separate dance though it is really part of the Karma, is called the Dassereliwar. The notable thing about this is that it is the only dance in the neighborhood where men and women hold each other ... (432-434)

Khalla Karma, Lahaki Karma, Jhumar Karma and Khalti Karma are different types of the Karma dance named after the changes occurred in the postures and movements of different parts of the body.

The Jharpat dance, another refinement of the Karma dance, is usually confined to the young using *mandar* drum.

The Tapadi dance is meant for the women only. No drum is used. Two lines of women face each other, do not hold hands, clap bending low, ultimately both the lines join together, and go round in a big circle.

The Bilma dance, a marriage dance, starts with the drum *nangara*. When a large number of people gather near the drums, they cry "Kring, kiring", the drums begin, and everybody starts dancing just where they are; men and women mix together.

The *Dassera* dance, meant for the boys only, is danced when a drummer sits with the *dhōl* and beats it monotonously, and a few men run round and round in a circle (435-437).

At the first look, we may think that dance is simply a recreation, almost the only recreation. But it goes beyond that and exerts a far-reaching impact on their ways of life. Not only the friends and lovers participate therein, boys and girls, young and old, all residing in the village or community assemble and perform and strictly abide by the dance-code. Setting aside how much they become prey to poverty, marginalization, exploitation, natural and man made disasters or some other odds, they practice dance regularly in every season. Nothing can stop their conjoint activities like dances and dance-songs. All the dances start with line but round up in a big circle which portrays their circularity of life, and which reminds them as well as the readers with their co-living with fierce animals of the forests and for which they had to move in circle keeping their infants at the centre for their protection. In most of the dances, some men or drummers are posited at the centre and the women in generally move round the circle. They proceed to the men at the centre bending their bodies, recede and advance. All these represent their egalitarian society where women enjoyed freedom at par with their male-counterparts.

The dance, performed in a circle, is very rhythmic and disciplined. It is like a garland of beads. If a single bead is lost or torn out, the entire garland will be of no use. As each single bead is valued to a garland, every individual is respected and valued to the community.

Here individual and community are inseparable, yet, at a glance, the whole dance team i.e. the community is visible to the common eye. Verrier, in most of his works, has prioritized the community acknowledging the inseparable role of the individual.

For most of Verrier's tribes and especially of the Baiga and the Gond, dance is at the centre of their celebration of life. Guha in his paper "Savaging The Civilized: Verrier Elwin and the Tribal Question in Late colonial India" published in *Economic and Political Weekly*, Sep., 1996 remarks, "The gaiety of aboriginal life came through most vividly in their love of the dance. The dance was in itself an index of the vitality of tribal life" (2377).

And, without dance, as Elwin wrote in his article "The Dance in Tribal India, Part-I," in *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, May 22, 1955

> Tribal life sinks into utter monotony . . . The tribes men like their recreation to have a kick in it, and they find small consolation in missionary tea-parties or Congress meetings to discusss agricultural reforms. Without the dance, the tribesmen is overwhelmed with boredom; he is swallowed by his work and his anxieties; there is no tower into which he can escape.

Baiga's songs and music are associated with their dances. Accordingly, songs are called *Karma* songs, *Jharpat* songs, *Bilma* songs, *Tapadi* songs etc. Generally, the Baigas do not sing or dance the *Saila*; they rarely sing satirical *Sajani* songs popular among the Gond; but they are very fond of the *Dadaria* songs, the

songs which have no origin in dancing. The *Dadaria* or Salho as they called in Chhattisgarh, are true *ban-bhajan* or forest –songs. A group of Baiga sing it by the fire, young lovers sing them to each other, many a proposal and elopement are made in the verse. Each verse of *Dadaria* is very short containing two to three lines. The first line is referred to homely familiar object of the countryside, where the second or last line is always nearly about love and has no connection with the first. Some fifty *Dadaria* songs have been collected in *The Baiga* (1939), one might be mentioned as,

> The peg is cooking in the pot.
>
> Without seeing my love, I find no happiness, my friend. (444)

The Karma songs, as Elwin puts, "are much longer than the Dadaria; they are generally sung at a dance, but sometimes privately between lovers or carelessly as a man might sing a refrain from an opera" (Elwin 444).

It contains some six to eight lines. The *Jharpat* songs are as good as Karma songs but with a little variation in the introductory part. These songs give vivid and intimate pictures of Baiga life. Elwin describes them as,

> They illuminate not only the love affairs, but the ordinary details of everyday life – the man weary after the long labour of clearing his bewar, the girl making a fence of thorns round her garden, creaking shoes that ruin an elopement, the planting of chili seedlings by digging with fingers holes in the soft earth, the scorpion that interrupted a romance with the sudden anguish of its bite. (454)

The Karma songs like,

> O love, regard my sorrows, my unhappy fate.
>
> I work all day to fill my belly.

I have no clothes for my body.

All my life is wasted caring for my husband.

O love, regard my sorrows, my unhappy fate. (457)

are the songs at work.

Here in the song "I" represents all of the tribal women at work and at romance. Verrier has not introduced any heroine or protagonist in the song to express the pitiable condition of the community through the experience of the protagonist. "I" is the symbol of all marginalized tribal women who wish to have a moment's respite from their utter poverty and hunger and to store energy for next day's hard work. Romance gives them vitality for work. To work collectively is the dire need for their survival – for their community. The longing for unity and solidarity which permeates aboriginal life is revealed in most of the narratives of Verrier. These are expressed in their festivals where the tribals sit, gossip, eat, drink, sing and dance together. This friendly and communistic nature of his Baiga tribe is also seen in constructing their houses which are built around a common square.

In another place, Verrier describes the predicaments of his tribes through the *Karma* Songs of *Folk-Songs of Chhattisgarh* (1946) in which the whole community express themselves by using the personal pronouns "we", "our" as,

We children have come to see the Karma

Let us join in the dance

We had never seen this village

We did not know the road

We asked our way as we went along

Let us join in the dance

We have brought no vessels

We have no rice or pulse

We came begging along the road

Let us join in the dance. (172)

Here the whole community cries or voices for the pains and sufferings caused by industrialisation and colonialism. The experience and feeling of individual is expressed through those of the community he or she belongs to, community's sufferings are not manifested by any individual's experience that is generally seen in Dalit autobiographies or narratives.

The unity, solidarity and egalitarian spirit is also observed in Elwin's tribes' *bewar* or shifting cultivation especially in Baigas bewar cult.

In the first year, the Baigas prepared their field and sew seeds, so they were to depend on hunting and gathering. When fruits were ready at the end of the first year, they would hunt and gather in the second and third years much less than the first year. The community would depend on the crops from the first year, hunt and gather for ritual purposes and for supplementing diet. In the third year, a combination of both cultivation and hunting-gathering would promote their survival. Both men and women would take part in gathering and cultivation.

Though Baiga society was a patriarchal one, women enjoyed full freedom, shown in the previous chapter, except cultivating or digging the land with axe. The family was the organising principle and it worked as a group. The male members, in the month of May-June (Indian month of *jeth*) would prepare the fields for cultivation, while the females would pick up leaves. In the second phase, whole family would take part in working in the fields during the periods of sowing, fencing, harvesting and threshing. In periods while only the men would work in the

fields, women would stay at home and prepare *pej* (house-beer), gather leaves and fruits.

In his seminal book *The Baiga* (1939), Verrier advocated of reinstating *bewar* in the Maikal Hills, and tried to prove that ecological roles and practices of the community were regulated by communitarian codes and also reflected the psychology of the community. While favouring reinstating of *bewar*, Elwin placed "bewar" both as an identity of the community and as a sustainable means of community's livelihood. In *The Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* Guha and Gadgil (1992) accept Verrier's analysis and remark, "Shifting or *jhum* cultivation was a characteristic form of cultivation over large parts of India, especially in hilly and forested tracts where plough cultivation was not always feasible" (Guha and Gadgil 150).

British officials, save a few, did not accept Verrier's proposal for reinstating *bewar*. Debates continued. Some of the present-day scholars are critical of Verrier in this regard. Archana Prasad (2003, 2011) admitted that 'bewar cult' was embedded in Baiga's culture, *bewar* represented Baiga's identity but refused to accept it as the only viable means of livelihood. She describes Verrier's ideas as romantic ones, which she puts in *Against Ecological Romanticism* (2003), as, "The romanticised communitarian model cannot counter the destruction of tribal local economies and production systems by corporate capitalism" (139).

At the advent of capitalism, colonial government towards the last of the nineteenth century banned *bewar* cultivation inspite of defence of Baiga's *bewar* by some government officials cum social workers like Dr. J.H. Hulton, Mr. W. V. Grigson, Sir Bompfylde and Verrier himself. Then came the great famine of 1897 which severely damaged shifting cultivation and over half the Baiga population died

of starvation (126). Some became beggars, some resorted to plough cultivation with the help of their the Gond and the Hindu neighbours. Verrier expresses their sufferings through the mouth of Dholi Baiga of Udhor in *The Baiga* (1939) as,

> Now the *Bewar* has been stopped, he says, 'we daily starve, having had no food grain in our possession. The only wealth we possess is our axe. We have no clothes to cover our body with, but we pass cold nights by the fire-side. We are now dying for want of food ... We cannot go elsewhere, as the British government is everywhere. What fault have we done that the Government does not take care of us? Prisoners are supplied with ample food in jail. A cultivator of the grass is not deprived of his holding, but the government does not give us our right who have lived here for generations past'. (130)

Verrier has recorded two songs which vividly express the utter agony of the Baigas when their *bewar* cultivation was stopped, one may be mentioned as,

> Such a calamity had never been before!
> Some he beats, some he catches by the ear,
> Some he drives out of the village.
> He robs us of our axes, he robs us of our jungle.
> He beats the Gond; he drives the Baiga and Baigin from their jungle
> The police come with orders to catch us like dogs.
> O such a calamity had never been before! (130)

In the narrative, the protagonist Dholi Baiga has expressed the pains and sufferings, starvation, wretched conditions of his community, his own sufferings being embedded with that of his community. The banning of shifting was at the root of the predicaments of the Baigas. In Dalit autobiographies or life narratives, the

protagonist or the narrator describes his/her own experiences along with those of his/her community. Here the narrator, from the very beginning, starts with the sufferings of his community, by saying "we have no clothes", "we cannot go elsewhere" and so. Elwin himself also in his collected songs, describes in details how his Baiga community as a whole suffered a lot in the hands of the British who robbed of their land, their right to *bewar* and their right to forest, and lastly robbed of their dignity by treating them as animals.

As most of the works of Verrier are the documentaries and representation of tribal ways of life, these manifest the characteristic features of the identities of his tribes as a whole, but that does not mean these undermined individual tribe's feelings and experiences. He felt difficulties in writing complete autobiography of any of his tribes (132). Yet he has portrayed fifteen life-stories of typical Baiga's, in *The Baiga* (1939), such as Mahatu, Phulmat, Yogi Dewar, Baihar, Lahakat etc. and a few in his two novels *The Phulmat of the Hills* (1937) and *A Cloud that's Dragonish* (1938).

In the life-stories of the Baiga, Verrier pictures the stories of both male and female. The protagonist or the narrator describes his/her own experiences gathered in the community but the feelings and experiences are not the property or possession of any individual alone; these are all which the whole community encounters with, survives in and progresses on. Mahatu, one of the best informants of Verrier, lived in a Leper Refuge with his wife and son. He tells his life story in *The Baiga* (1939) as,

> After my father's death, we lived six years in Damin Tola, then we went to Karadih. There my mother took a new husband. In Karadih I cut bewar for seven years. Then came the Utarna Sahib with his wife and children. He

> called all the Baiga to him. I went with the others. We met in a bewar where the trees had just been felled. There were many trees everywhere, some were so big that the Sahib's wife couldn't climb over them. When she saw them lying there, she wept and embraced them, calling them her children. Then she said to us: "From to-day your bewar is stopped; you are never to cut it again". The Sahib tried very much to let us continue, but his wife prevented him.
>
> So then I went to Chauradadar and lived there five years. When bewar was first stopped we had a very hard time. In Karadih in the bewar days twenty-five drums used to come out for the Karma dance. Afterwards there would be only two or three, and there was no more joy. We were all broken up, some ran away to one place, some to another place. We had little food, for we didn't know how to plough and we believed it to be a sin . . . (132-133)

Here in Mahatu's long personal history and in several others' stories, *bewar* as community activity occupies the central reference point. Mahatu's story may be divided in two parts, one part reveals 'joy' when he, his family and his community practised *bewar* cultivation, other part brings sorrow for him as well as his community while *bewar* is banned. Whatsoever Mahatu feels, expresses, voices, exhilarates-these are the feelings, voices, expressions, exhilarations of his community also. Beyond the community, he has no other sayings. His joys and sufferings mingle with those of all the members of his community. Mahatu's story might be considered a condensed Dalit autobiography.

Out of the two novels of Verrier, *The Phulmat of the Hills* (1937) is a magnificent novella which describes a tale of the Gonds. Phulmat is the heroine. The novella starts with a 'powerful trouble' called 'serpent dance'. Phulmat is a gifted

dancer. Other remarkable characters are – Panda Baba, a respectable Gond *gunia*; Gamira, Phulmat's lover; Bhuta, - who longed for Phulmat but she later hated him; Tutta, a silent lover of Phulmat but failed to express his love due to his poverty. In this novella, different aspects of Gond tribe such as their myths, songs, dances, daily life styles have been highlighted. Phulmat, Panda Baba, Bhuta, Punjabi - everybody reveals community's characteristic identities through their interactions within and outside. Phulmat, the protagonist, is the romance of the forest. Her romance does not originate from any Platonic love; it springs out of love at work, love at the daily activities of the community manifested in their festivals, songs and dances. She follows the domestic code, cares for her lepered husband and children, participates actively in community's festivals. She is abandoned by her lover being struck by leprosy, her biological urge could not restrain her to be seduced by the Punjabi, and lastly being abused by her community members she resorted to a little shop at the close vicinity of his village to earn a living. She represents her community's values, poverty, hard struggle for existence, on the other, she has been able to place herself above the average standard of community's values. On the one hand, Phulmat and her Gond Community constitute an inseparable unit; on the other Phulmat has gone beyond her community presenting it a unique enviable model. Verrier has placed here the individual self vis-a-vis the community.

The Agaria (1942), one of Verrier's noted monographs, deals with the origin of the Agaria tribe, character of the Agaria, division and totemism of the Agaria, their myths, magic and crafts, the economics and decay or collapse of an industry. In Verrier's own words "the marriage of myth and craft" is the central theme of the book and gives *The Aagaria* (1942) great significance. Both myths and crafts are the properties of community. Each individual contributes, memorises, circulates the

myths, keeps them functional and takes part in craft works. But these are presented and marked as the products and properties of the community. The Agaria are the iron – smelters and blacksmiths of the Central Provinces of India; they are large in numbers in Maikal Hills. They would produce iron from the native ore by using their primitive methods of smelting. The ancient smelting industry, called clay furnaces, have greatly declined but still may be found in many parts of India.

The mythology of the Agaria draws quite unusual interest as it directs and vitalises the life of the tribe. Economic basis for the cult, religious observances, social relations etc. are framed on their myths. Obviously these myths are functional and are properties of the community. So, the book *The Agaria* (1942) is Verrier's representation of the whole of tribe of the Agaria community.

Elwin's another voluminous monograph *The Tribal Myths of Orissa* (1954, 699) contains near about thousands of stories of tribes of Orissa viz. Bondos, Gadabas, Murias, Konds, Brinjhwars, Gonds, Bhattras, Jhorias, Pengus, Juangs, Kamars, Koyas, Parengas, Saoras etc. The stories possess both similarity and distinctiveness in regard to contexts and textures, embrace the whole of the life of these tribes. The stories are non-didactic and are of homely quality constructed out of the simple events of everyday life where conjoint activities of the whole community are involved.

In a Gadaba story, described in this book (519-520), we see that one day twelve brothers went to hunt in the forest. Meanwhile, the eldest brother felt thirsty and the youngest brother carried a gourd full of millet-gruel with a carrying stick. The eldest started drinking, the other ten advanced in the forest. Suddenly a horse, sent by 'Mahaprabhu' as they believed, appeared, eldest brother caught it, failed to mount on into and went for searching a bamboo ladder. Meanwhile youngest brother

got onto it, fled and reached to Jeypore hills, became Raja of that place, managed to marry daughter of Raja of Jeypore. The other eleven brothers reached the hills later. The twelve brothers took the names of twelve tribes Kond, Bondo, etc. In this myth we observe that the Gadabas have no "tribal hero" but the twelve brothers, an anonymous family, have taken its place. In a few other Gadaba stories Elwin has stressed on the "attire of their women". The cloth is made of the bark-fiber of jungle shrubs. The women themselves extract the fiber, spin the yarn, dye it and weave it small tension-looms. Many women wear great brass-rings in the ears, dress their hair in 'door-knocker' style. In story no. 15 (529) we notice outstanding independence of spirits of the Saora tribes. They hold permanent and substantial settlement, earn their living by swidden cultivations, and do not suffer from caste feeling.

Elwin was not an artist in the strictest sense of the term, but was an ardent lover of tribal art and its patron. He lived the life of a tribe, reached to the utmost corners of the tribal habitats, touched passionately the tribal minds and hearts, observed and participated in the songs and dances and became keenly interested in their arts. Verrier believed that though those arts could not be compared to the modern arts, they have parallels in the arts of Ajanta and Ellora. Verrier's *The Tribal Art of Middle India* (1951) and *The Art of the North-East Frontier* (1959) containing near about 230 and 240 photographs respectively, describe and portray artistry of Indian tribes. Decoration of body followed by tattoing in festivals, wearing of leaf-flower-feather dress are collective performances of Verrier's tribes. Dongria Kond's hair-pin of brass (9) Bison-horn Maria women's brass fillet (10), Baiga hair-ornament (12), tribal's use of clothes woven and coloured by themselves, 'carved paintings of comb in the doors of Muria Ghotuls (46-54), the head-dresses of Bison-horn Maria, the 'fantasy' and the use of 'funeral pillars' throughout the

Middle India, the tribal art of 'Mask' as pictured and shortly described in *The Tribal Art of Middle India* (1951), and also the art works of his North East Frontier tribes such as the 'wood-carving' of the Wanchos, Konyaks, Angamis, Noctes, unique and distinct textile designs (48-66); 'pictures of Pantomimes ' found in Buddhist temples in Tawang exhibiting the wonderful artistic works of the Monpas, Sherdukpens, Khamptis, Singphos and Kamang - present the brilliant collective works of Verrier's tribes. Their unity and solidarity helped sustain and excel these indigenous art works. So Verrier's works representing the myths, stories, songs and dances in festivals, customary practices, indigenous arts of his tribes are embraced in a community guided by a co-operative and an egalitarian spirit.

The unity, solidarity and collective interests of community have been superbly described by Verrier in his *The Muria and their Ghotul* (1947). Ghotul is a village dormitory, a bachelors' hall, called '*Junglingshau*' in German language. Ghotuls, morungs and all such 'communal barracks of the primitive races' are seen among the communities of Austro-Asiatic cultures all over the world from Bhutan to New Zealand and from Marquesas to the Niger. But Muria's Ghotul is unique, Verrier asserts it, in *The Kingdom of the Young* (1968), as, "The Bastar Ghotul is one of the most highly developed carefully organized in the world. For what is a village guardroom for the Naga, a boys' club among the Uraon, a refuge for temporary sexual association in Indonesia, is for the Muria the centre of social and religious life" (ix-x).

S.C. Roy in his study on the Oraons, expressed similar views and told that in *The Oraons* (1915) the Uraon dormitory was, "an effective economic organization for purposes of ford-quest, a useful seminary for training young men in their social and other duties, and institution for magics – religious observances calculated to

secure success in hunting and to augment the procreative power of the young men" (211).

Verriers also continues in *The Tribal World of Verrier Elwin* (1964),

> For although the ghotul was an independent autonomous children's republic, it had an all-pervading influence on the grown-ups, who could not manage any social function without its help. All the unmarried boys and girls of the tribe had to be members of the ghotul . . . The boys acted as acolytes at festivals, the girls as bridesmaids at weddings. They danced together before the clan gods and at great fairs. They formed a choir at the funerals of important people. Their games and dances enlivened and enriched village life and redeemed it from that crushing monotony which was its normal characteristic in other parts of India. (163)

Ghotul life is strictly disciplined. The *cheliks* and the *motiaris* are to obey the strict ghotul code made by the community itself. The leader appointed is assigned with the duty of judging and punishing the offenders. In *The Kingdom of the Young* (1968) he mentions,

> Their offences, of course, cannot be understood properly except against the background of general moral and social life of the tribe. To the Muria tribal solidarity is the supreme good, and anything that breaks this precious unity and fellowship must be condemned. Individualism is the great sin. For this reason, quarrelling and homicide are rare, theft is almost uncommon. There are few who refuse to share the common work and interests of the community. Adultery is bad, not only because it infringes the rights of another Muria, but because it breaks up the carefully regulated domestic system of the people, and threatens to disrupt it by jealousy and hatred. The

> Muria consider work important and lay great stress on it. Slackness and laziness are very severely regarded and are the commonest sources of friction between wife and husband. Cleanliness, decency, decorum and modesty are virtues much prized ... in the highly specialized and concentrated fellowship of the ghotul, the general tribal instinct for unity is intensified. (79-80)

In the whole of the ghotul life including fidelity, celebration of rituals and customs, performance of recreational activities, attitude to sex and practice of democracy, discipline is enshrined in their conjoint activities, in their egalitarian spirit and in their community's code. In his *The Muria and Their Ghotul* (1947) and *The Kingdom of the Young* (1968), an abridged version of the former, Verrier has represented the characteristic features and aesthetics of the Muria identity of the Muria community.

Verrier did not approve of the commonly accepted meanings of 'primitive 'and 'civilized'. Ramachandra Guha (2005) places Verrier's self argument and definition of primitiveness as,

> 'Primitiveness', in his view, should be taken to mean 'self-reliance, community work and a spirit of co-operation, artistic creativeness, honesty, truthfulness, hospitality, a highly organized society', 'who is Backward', asks Elwin, 'the creative artist at her tribal loom, the gentle mother with her child among the hills, or the inventor of the atom bomb which may destroy her and all the world? Are these self-reliant, co-operative tribes the really backward as against the self-seeking, individualistic, crafty products of our industrial civilization? (Guha 284)

Save one or two (two novels and some typical Baiga life stories), all of Verrier's voluminous monographs and writings are documentaries of whole of the lives of Indian tribes whom he had encountered with and with whom he had lived the life of tribals for more than half of his life-span, representing the tribes as communities and establishing himself as a sole defender of Indian tribes – the tribal communities. Throughout our discussion in this chapter we have seen that Verrier's presentation embraces the whole of the ways of tribal life – their myths, stories, songs and dances, celebration of rituals and customs, hunting, fishing, cultivation, love and sex, art works. All these cooperative activities are enshrined in an egalitarian spirit. Unity and solidarity lie at the centre of Verrier's representation of characteristic features and aesthetics of distinctive identities of his tribal communities.

In Dalit autobiographies, the narrator or the writer or the protagonist starts with the 'individual' and ends in 'community'. In the Dalit autobiographies, which we have discussed in very short in this chapter, we observe that these are the Dalit communities and neither Moon, nor Limbale, nor Bama, nor Valmiki, himself/herself becomes the protagonist of his/her autobiography. The choice of title of Moon's autobiography *Vasti* signifies the importance of community in an individual's life and establishes that autobiography is not of any individual but of a community. Although Dalit autobiographies are exhilerated with community spirit, Dalit women's autobiographies are something different. Baisantri and Bama's narration of the role of the community in their personal experiences is, at times, replete with grievances against the Dalit men's autobiographies, as in the patriarchal society Dalit women become the victims of caste, gender and class. Their subjectivity is defined even in conflict with their community spirit and values.

Mahasweta Davi also starts with individual pains and sufferings and ends in those of the community. Her narrators or the protagonists represent community's identity. Devi voiced for her beloved tribal communities of India she encountered with. She defended the cause of Indian tribes and advised to take recourse to the path of violence if it so needed. She worked for the salvation of her the tribal communities. Devi translated some of Elwin's books in Bengali and possessed love for the tribes as good as Verrier. G.N. Devy (2009) remarks,

> Elwin's love for the tribal communities of India has almost no parallel, with the exception perhaps of Mahasweta Devi and Shankar Guha Niyogi. His involvement with them went far beyond anthropological interest, aesthetic fascination or altruistic community work. In the course of his work, Elwin became increasingly aware that defending tribal well-being was his responsibility. (xviii)

Elwin married two tribal girls, celebrated tribal customs, rituals, participated in songs and dances, had got the opportunity to spend many a evenings in the Muria ghotul, save the intimate moments, voiced for their rights of land and forests, advocated respect and love for the tribal ways of life for sustenance and survival of his tribal communities. So, Verrier probably did not need to express or represent the community's identity through individual's identity. Whatever he did represent, he did that directly for the community. Like Mahasweta Devi, Elwin also found no wrongs in his tribes. Unity, solidarity and communitarian spirit are the core elements of representation of his communities, and last but not the least, 'Respect and love for the tribal ways of life and culture' may be marked as 'Elwin's code' which is more relevant today when tribal communities across the country regularly experience

victimhood of exploitation, atrocities, alienation from the rights of land and forests and indignity – 'a collective trauma'[20].