

## Media and Marginalized: The Role of Tribal Writers in Social Media

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**Abstract:** *Social media is not only a space for communication but it also provides a platform to showcase the ability of creative writing such as poem, short story and novel. Being a social media, Facebook offers more space to post what we think and what we write. Many of us use it as our personal diary and exhibit our talents. Now-a-days, social media, especially Facebook allows its audience in presenting their literature skill.*

*In this paper, the researcher decides to enquire about the space of showcasing the skill of creative writing in social media among five tribal people. The paper also focuses on the issues, challenges and scope of public space of the tribal writers in social media. A qualitative methodology will be applied in the proposed study. The data will be collected through personal interview and observation. For that the Social media pages of these writers will be observed and conduct interview with the writers.*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Creative Writing, Tribal Writers

### Introduction

Media is one of the most powerful tools for the overall development of a society. It can change the attitude of mankind. Since the last 20 years, social media has become an umbrella term for the media which allows communication through texting, sharing of pictures, videos, audios and posts. Words such as network, connectivity, reaction etc are some of the common usages in day-to-day life. Social media possesses the features like easy accessibility, interactivity, updating facilities and so on. Facebook, Twitter, Online portals, Linked In, YouTube, Telegram are the major prevalent and familiar among the social media. The influence of social media on the mankind is excessively high, so that there emerged a situation, where those who are inaccessible with social media are out of the society. They are considered as outdated and barbarians. So everybody attempts to reach in the mainstream with the acquaintance of social media.

According to the Constitution of India, Article 366 (25) defined scheduled tribes as “such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled Tribes for the purposes of this constitution”. The tribal communities in India have been recognized by the Indian Constitution under ‘Schedule 5’ of the constitution. Hence the tribes recognized by the Constitution are known as ‘Scheduled Tribes’. The criterion followed for specification of a community, as scheduled tribes are indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large, and backwardness. This criterion is not spelt out in the Constitution but has become well established (<https://www.clearias.com/scheduled-tribes-in-india/>). According to Kerala Public Service Commission website, there are 35 Scheduled Tribes in the state. Most of them are inhabited at Wayanad, Idukki, Malappuram and Kasaragod districts.

The contemporary society is a mediated society. Everybody has a contact with media in some way or other. The people are highly influenced of media and the messages from it. The boundless impact and influence of social media on tribal people is a focus area of sociological and media studies. Social media helps the tribal people to redefine their life style, trends, educational and political awareness, physical activities, social life, learning and so on (Dutta, 2016). In Kerala, there are tribal people who are active in cyber world, especially in cyber literature. Narayan is a famous and is considered as the first Tribal novelist in Kerala. His debut novel Kocharethi (Published in 1998) dealt with the lives of Tribal communities in Kerala. Like him, there are several other people who are active in Tribal literature and social media platforms. This paper addresses the tribal people who deal with cyber literature as Tribal writers. They approach Internet and social media platforms mainly for their literature works.

The paper ‘Media and Marginalized: The Role of Tribal writers in Social media’ is aiming to examine the role of Tribal writers in Facebook. It also focuses on how social media helps them to encourage their literature works.

## Rationale of the Study

Tribal literature is one of the core areas of discussion in humanities. Tribal writers started occupy their roles in academic and cultural venues. Most of them are written in their own language or mother tongue, where some of the languages are indigenous. Language is a cultural capital and the use of mother tongue in communication has a pivotal role than any other language. Both print and social media have helped Tribal writers to reach the mainstream. In Kerala, institutions like Kerala Sahithya Academy, KIRTADS (Kerala Institute for Research, Training and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Tribes) etc offers various venues and workshops to the Tribal writers. Literature festivals such as KLF (Kerala Literature Festival) and Pattambi Kavitha Carnival are also enhancing the talents of these people. In this mediated society, it is necessary to discuss about the Tribal writers and their role in Social media, especially in Facebook.

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## Objectives

1. To examine the role of Tribal writers in Social media
2. To understand the usage of Social media among the Tribal writers.

## Research Methodology

The study has completed by using Interview method (Personal telephonic interview) for Data collection and Interview analysis was used for data analysis. Five Tribal writers from Kerala were selected for the study through convenient sampling. Convenience sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where members of the target population that meet certain practical criteria, such as easy accessibility, geographical proximity, availability at a given time, or the willingness to participate are included for the purpose of the study. It is also referred to the researching subjects of the population that are easily accessible to the researcher (Alkassim, Etikan and Musa, 2015). To conduct the interview, an Open ended questionnaire was prepared by the researcher herself.

The details of samples are given below:

Samples	Writing language	Category
A (Female)	Mavilan Tulu, Malayalam	Mavilan
B (Male)	Mavilan Tribal language	Mavilan
C (Male)	Ravulla	Ravulla
D (Male)	Muthuvan, Malayalam	Muthuvan
E (Male)	Malavettuva, Malayalam	Malavettuva

After gathering data from the samples or respondents through Personal telephonic interview, data was analyzed with help of Narrative analysis.

## Analysis and Findings

Tribal literature is the literature of a search for identity, of exposing the past and present forms of exploitation by outsiders, and of threats to tribal identity and existence, and resistance. This is a pro-change, constructive intervention (Meena, 2016). Tribal literature is nothing but the folklores and oral stories and poems of the tribal community. Every country has rich tribal literature. The availability of the same is in two forms; oral literature and the modern written literature. While tribal literature is lost among the piles of un-understandable languages, the literature is being translated to major languages giving it a national form. Amidst the diversity of India with more than 800 spoken languages, tribal literature tries to find its way in-between the official 22 languages, to be seen, to be heard, and to be identified (Rang, 2020).

Most of the Tribes in India are rural and semi-literate or illiterate; consequently, they are negotiating with the issue of digital divide (Vanneman, Noon, Sen, Desai & Shariff, 2006). Tribal communities and organizations are having their own Facebook, Twitter pages, websites, and YouTube channels; these resources are used for sharing news and thoughts on Tribal lives and contemporary issues. Along with sharing festival-related, cultural, educational and job-related information, these social media spaces promote internet-based activism and legitimize issues related to basic human rights. Again, there are some dedicated tribal websites and blogs that compile and report local socio-political matters, instances of oppression and injustice.

## Analysis of Objective 1

The first objective of the study is to understand the role of Tribal writers in Social media. All the samples of this research are active in Facebook. They post at least one poem per day. They also post their old poems, articles, translations, their print publications etc. They get exposure on Facebook groups such as Kerala Adivasi Aikyavedi, Adivasi Moment etc. Tribal writers have become the identity of the whole tribes in Kerala. They get acceptance in Social media.

Media helps in Social inclusion. There exists Digital inclusion in Facebook through Tribal literature. It is also known as E-inclusion. It can be considered as policy intervention in order to reduce digital inequalities and to foster participation of all citizens to the information society (Pieter, 2011). We cannot ensure a social or physical inclusion through Digital inclusion. That's the other face of social media, especially Facebook. The tribes need social inclusion. World Bank defines, social inclusion is the process of improving the terms on which individuals and groups take part in society—improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of those disadvantaged on the basis of their identity. Social inclusion is the necessity of time.

Though the Tribal writers are accepted in digital world, it is not the real situation. Sometimes, Tribal writers are being avoided by the mainstream people. It is high time to think about whether we need a difference between Tribal literature and Mainstream literature.

### Analysis of Objective 2

The second objective of the study is to examine the usage of Social media among the Tribal writers. All the samples of this study have Facebook accounts for the last five years or more. They use Facebook mainly to showcase their literature works. Four respondents rarely post their own pictures and images of their family and friends in their Facebook accounts. Sample B is not interested to post his photograph, but likes to posts the images of his family members occasionally. Two of samples use their own name (with the name of their tribe as second name) as Facebook ID, while the others use their birth place as second name. When Sample D joined Facebook, his ID consisted of a name of a female. He told that, at that time, his posts received huge likes. At the same time, he had to face so many issues then. He confronted several other problems due to his ID which reveals that he is a tribe. Apart from Facebook, all the samples have access to Whatsapp. Two of them use Instagram and Club house, while the others don't.

All of the samples write their own literature works, especially poems in Facebook. They do translations (from tribal language to Malayalam) and write articles as well. For these posts, four samples receive good reactions through comments and phone calls. These people have enormous readers across the world. Their readers contact them after a thorough reading and analysis of the literature works in Facebook. This support and good reactions provide encouragement to write more. But for one sample, he gets mixed reactions from his followers and friends. He believes that self-encouragement is the motivational factor for his writings.

All the samples are receiving venues to showcase their talents across the state, sometimes outside the state. Two of them responded that they have participated in Afro-American Poets conference and International Poets Conference. Except a sample, all other samples strongly believe that it is the Social media which provides them various venues. All of them received online venues during the pandemic and it continues now. Reading and presentation of poems and discussions are being conducted in online venues. Facebook Live and Clubhouse are the major online venues for Tribal writers.

All of the respondents have published their works in print publications and independent publications of their own. Mainstream magazines and other publications are eagerly waiting to receive and publish Tribal literature. Earlier, it was not the situation. Online portals like athma online, wpt live, the marga etc also publish the Tribal literature and conduct diverse discussions and debates.

### Conclusion

Though the Tribal literature is mostly oral in nature, it has changed in the modern days. It is written in nature now. Print publication and social media have been assisting Tribal writers to achieve more in their own way. They wanted to expose themselves. The interest, network facility, advanced devices etc made nearness towards social media. Their effort has been resulted in their success.

### Recommendations

Provide more attention to Tribal literature

Need special focus on Tribal writers

Offer more venues to Tribal writers

Policies of social inclusion is necessary

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