

# Budhan Theatre – A Voice for the Voiceless

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India is a diverse country with a number of languages, religions, customs and traditions. 'Adivasis' or 'Tribal' are one of the marginalized groups in India. Generally, Adivasi dance or songs are taken as a part of folk culture. There are some who do not even believe that there can be something called Adivasi literature or Tribal literature. Then, there is a difference among Scheduled Tribes and Nomadic Tribes. The question is whose literature should be taken as Adivasi literature - the literature produced by Scheduled Tribes or by Nomadic Tribes. Let us consider both as a part of Tribal literature.

The lack of education for over period of centuries has minimized the possibilities of writing, poetry, drama or novel by the tribal people. Thanks to the developments after independents that the tribals have moved beyond their limited sources of languages and learnt the major languages around them and we have Atmaram Rathod from Maharashtra, Alma Kabutari from the North and Dakxin

Bajrangi from Gujrat who write upon the issues related to the tribal people.(1)

Drama is one of the most neglected forms of literature in India, though we have some good examples of drama or theatre in regional languages like Marathi. It is a well-coming issue that Dakxin Bajrangi has taken up drama as his mode of expressions. Talking about this he says that, drama is in his 'blood'.(2) Dakxin Bajrangi belongs to the Chhara family of Nomadic Tribes. During the British rule the Chhara's were labelled as born criminals. This labeling has dehumanized the whole existence of the Chhara's. In 1871, the British government had created the Criminal Tribes Act according to which the Chhara's were habituated to the petty crimes like stealing and preparing illegal liquor.

The point that is to be taken into consideration is that even after 63 years of independence we have not been able to remove the social malice from the minds of the majority of Indians about this community. At outskirts of Ahmedabad we find Chhara Nagar. This locality is

infamous as the area of thieves. It is a general practice of the police to raid any house of this area at any point of time just on the basis of 'suspicion'.

Similar is the condition of 'Pardhis' in Maharashtra and Kheriasabar in West Bengal.(3) Dakxin Bajrangi has adopted Sufdar Hashmi's form of street plays to demonstrate the injustices done to the Chhara's and the likewise. He has been inspired by the writers like Mahashweta Devi and G.N. Devi to start the Budhan Theatre. The theatre has been named after Budhan Sabar of West Bengal. This man was picked up by the police on the basis of suspicion. He was beaten to death in the police station. The most striking fact is that the police had searched his house and there was no evidence of theft. This event inspired Dakxin Bajrangi to write the play 'Budhan Bolta hai'. Similarly, there was one Pinya Hari Kale from Maharashtra. He died in police custody at Baramati. Dakxin wrote the play 'Binare Kale ki maut'. These and three more plays related to similar issues have been published under the Title 'Budhan Bolta hai'(4).

One more important fact about the Budhan Theatre is that many of the performers are children. Dakxin Bajrangi has engaged the children of his community in the theatre activity to make them aware of their ignoble existence and to prepare

them to come out of it. Thus, this group of theatre is working towards the social change. Dakxin himself admits -

Budhan Theatre is struggling to make Chharanagar a cultural activity hub instead of a criminal tribe's hub. But it is an uphill task and I just hope our voice is heard and our struggle acknowledged. (2)

### References

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