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ECO-SPIRITUALISM PERSPECTIVE OF SAURA TRIBE

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Abstract: The paper addresses the sacredness of woods, hills, rivers, trees, animals and natural forces among the Saura people as holy beings inhabited by spiritual energies and ancestral spirits. Their religious beliefs and social traditions advocate the balance between people and the environment, the sustainable use of natural resources and the preservation of biodiversity. The study also talks about the symbolic portrayal of nature in Saura art and rituals especially in traditional wall murals and agricultural celebrations.

The thesis also further analyses the current issues faced by the Saura tribe such as deforestation, relocation, modernization, cultural erosion and climate change, which pose a danger to their ecological traditions and cultural identity. The research suggests that the eco-spiritual worldview of the Saura tribe has important lessons for current environmental ethics, sustainable development and ecological conservation.

The study indicates that the eco-spiritual traditions of the Saura tribe are an important indigenous ecological philosophy based on appreciation for nature, coexistence and collective environmental responsibility. They are vital for the promotion of ecological harmony and cultural variety in the present-day society via the preservation of their cultural legacy and traditional ecological knowledge.

Keywords: Eco-Spirituality, Saura Tribe, Nature Worship, Environmental Ethics, Indigenous Knowledge, Sacred Groves, Tribal Religion, Ecological Conservation, Sustainable Living, Ancestral Spirits, Tribal Culture, Human, Nature Relationship.

I. INTRODUCTION

Saura Tribe is one of the oldest tribal clans of India mostly occupying the Odisha and Andhra Pradesh areas. The tribe has a strong eco-spiritual heritage that reveals a profound connection of human beings with environment and spirituality. The present research aims to analyze the eco-spiritual viewpoint of the Saura tribe via the study of their beliefs, rituals, environmental ethics, nature worship, sacred groves, ancestral traditions and indigenous ecological knowledge. The Saura Tribe (also known as Sora or Savara) is one of the ancient tribes of India, mostly occupying the mountainous areas of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. Their existence is closely interwoven with nature, woods, hills, rivers, animals and ancestral spirits. The eco-spiritual worldview of the Saura tribe is a reflection of the harmony of human beings with the natural environment. To them nature is not only a resource but a sacred living reality” This thesis studies the ecological knowledge, spiritual beliefs, rituals and environmental ethics of the Saura tribe and their relevance to modern ecological issues.

Chapter 1: The Concept of Eco-spirituality

Eco-spirituality is the link between spirituality and ecological. For Saura Tribe, nature is holy and heavenly. Their religious beliefs, rituals and everyday existence are closely related to woods, hills, rivers, trees, animals and ancestral spirits. Nature is not just seen as a material resource, but as a living spiritual force that supports human existence. The Saura people believe that all things in nature have a spiritual force. Forests are places where ghosts and deities are believed to live. Hills and mountains are considered holy places where supernatural entities dwell. Rivers and streams are revered for their gift of water, fertility and life to the people. Trees are a major part of Saura eco-spirituality. Some trees are considered holy and are spared from destruction. Such trees are not cut without the ceremonial authorization, because to do so is seen to be wicked and harmful, disturbing the spirits that live in them. This notion indirectly aids in protection of forests and ecological equilibrium. The Saura tribe worships the ancestral spirits which are strongly related with nature. They think that the community is still guided and protected by natural forces via ancestors. Rituals and celebrations are typically held in holy forests, fields or village borders to promote peace between people, spirits and the environment. The Saura people's agricultural techniques also demonstrate the reverence of nature. Before seeds are sown and harvests are harvested prayers and sacrifices are offered to the earth's deities and to the spirits of nature. Rain, sunshine, soil and woods are gifts from heavenly power, not things to be exploited. This holy bond with nature is expressed metaphorically in traditional Saura paintings. Animals, birds, plants and cosmic symbols are shown along with human people, indicating the interrelationship of all forms of life. Thus, the notion of sacredness of nature in the Saura tribe is a comprehensive ecological philosophy based on respect, cohabitation and spiritual union with the environment. Their eco-spiritual worldview reminds us that people are not the masters of nature, but an intrinsic part of it.

Through its beliefs, traditions, lifestyle and traditional ecological practices, the Saura Tribe has a deep connection with and harmony with the environment. Their culture emphasizes that man and environment rely on each other and must live together in harmony if all living things are to survive. The Saura do not see nature as an object to be dominated or exploited. Sacred are the forests, hills, rivers, trees, animals, and the soil, which are living beings. They think that natural elements have spiritual force and should be treated with reverence. This concept generates a feeling of responsibility for the conservation of the environment. The Saura tribe is very cautious in its utilization of the natural resources and only as per the requirement. They gather forest products, grow crops, and utilize water resources without over-exploitation. Their ancient way of living produces little waste and helps to keep the ecology in balance. These methods assist to conserve biodiversity and natural habitats. Some woodlands and trees are holy for the Saura people. Such sites are said to be the homes of ghosts and ancestors. It is socially and religiously forbidden to cut trees or to harm these holy forests. This religious concept indirectly helps in: Forest conservation, Soil protection and Wildlife preservation, Ecological sustainability

Agriculture of the Saura tribe is associated with natural cycles. They rely on seasonal rainfall, soil fertility and traditional ecological knowledge. Rituals and prayers are conducted before planting and harvest to seek blessings of the soil spirits and nature deities. Respect for land, Dependence on natural cycles and Gratitude for nature are part of their agricultural practices. Saura social structure emphasizes communal responsibility for the conservation of natural resources. The community's choices about the forest, water and land eschew environmental devastation. Their ethical ideals are: sharing resources collectively, avoiding greed and overconsumption, respecting all living creatures, and keeping balance between humans and environment. The Saura people believe that ancestors continue to exist via natural forces and defend the community. Rituals celebrating ancestors are commonly associated with woods, fields and holy locations. This conviction develops the emotional and spiritual relationship to the surroundings. Respect for all forms of life and Sustainable living practices. Eco-spirituality holds that nature contains divine force and spiritual significance. Worship woods, hills, rivers and trees. Think of nature as mother. Use natural resources in a sustainable way. Keep ecological equilibrium via traditions and ritual. One such powerful example of these eco-spiritual traditions is the Saura tribe.

Chapter 2 Nature Worship in Saura Faith

The religion of the Saura Tribe is having nature worship as its soul. The Saura people believe in the divinity of nature and that woods, hills, rivers, trees, animals and celestial bodies have a spiritual influence. Their religious system shows a deep interaction between people, nature and ancestral spirits. Saura eco-spirituality is based on nature worship which is embedded in their rituals, festivals, social conventions and everyday life. In Saura religion, forests are a holy place. Forests provide a source of food, medicine, fuel, shelter and livelihood for the Saura people. They think that ghosts and protecting deities populate woodlands at the same time. Sacred groves are conserved as sacred spaces where rituals and sacrifices are conducted. It is forbidden to cut trees in these holy places because it is thought that the ghosts that live there would be disturbed.

Forest Worship results in Conservation of biodiversity, Protection of species and Ecological balance. Hills and mountains are believed to be the holy dwelling sites of supernatural forces and the spirits of ancestors. Most of the Saura rites happen near a hill or high site. The tribe believes these natural structures safeguard the settlement and provide wealth, rain and agricultural fertility. Water is seen as the source of life and cleanliness. Hence, rivers, streams and springs are venerated. Water spirits are usually prayed to before water is used for ceremonial or agricultural purposes. The Saura people protect water sources and do not pollute them. It points to their sustainability & environmental awareness. In Saura religion trees are emblems of life, fertility and spiritual power. Some trees are venerated since they are thought to contain ghosts and ancestors. Tree worship comprises Ritual gifts, Sacred rites and Protection of ancient trees, Community meetings under trees. This approach also indirectly helps in forest protection and ecological preservation. The veneration of ancestors plays an essential element in the Saura religion. The Saura believe that the ancestors continue to advise and defend the current community via the powers of nature. Rituals in honour of ancestors are commonly related with: Agricultural practices, Festivals of the seasons and Sacred sites in nature. The renowned Saura wall murals called Idital are typically produced during ceremonies to converse with ancestor spirits. Sowing of seeds and Harvesting crops Rituals carried out by the Saura people include Rainfall ceremonies and Hunting celebrations. These rituals are in appreciation of nature and to invoke blessings for fertility, prosperity and safety from natural disasters.

The symbols signify the connectivity of all living entities and the spiritual oneness of life. The Saura Tribe religion worships nature and has a comprehensive eco-spiritual world view based on respect, living together and ecological responsibility. They have enormous regard for the natural environment, shown by their reverence for woods, rivers, hills, trees and ancestral spirits. The Saura religious tradition says that nature is holy and that human people must live in peace with the environment. Such native ecological knowledge is very significant for the present period of environmental crises and ecological deterioration. Nature is believed to be a living spiritual entity. Saura religion believes in: Nature spirits, Protective village deities, Ancestor spirits. Their spiritual approach teaches to live with the powers of nature. Important rituals include animal and bird symbolism, agricultural festivals, rain-invoking rites and harvest worship. These rituals create the ecological consciousness in the society.

Chapter 3. Environmental Ethics of the Saura Tribe

The Saura Tribe has a strong legacy of environmental ethic centered on respect for nature, sustainable living and spiritual harmony with environment. The system of ethics is linked to religion, culture, conventions and everyday actions. The Saura worldview emphasizes that people are part of nature and have the duty to maintain ecological balance for the well-being of current and future generations. Environmental ethics is the moral interaction between human beings and the natural environment. It underlines: The traditional beliefs, traditions and lifestyle of the Saura tribe reflects the environmental ethics. The Saura people worship woods, rivers, hills, plants, animals and the earth. For nature is not a private possession but a common spiritual reality that nourishes life.

Their ethical system of beliefs tells us that Nature should not be overused, Humans should live in harmony with the environment and Every living object has worth and importance. This approach cultivates ecological consciousness in the society. The Saura tribe utilizes natural resources sparingly and just as much as needed. Their traditional economy is based on agriculture, forestry and local ecological expertise. Their sustainable practices include: Limited use of forest products; Avoidance of needless destruction of

trees; and Traditional agricultural techniques; Protection of water sources; Collective sharing of resource. These measures are helping to preserve ecological and biological balance. One of the major environmental ethics of the Saura tribe is the safeguarding of holy woods. Some woodlands and trees are thought to be inhabited by ghosts and ancestors. Sacred trees are not to be cut. Hunting in sacred regions is not allowed. Forest damage is socially frowned upon. This spiritual belief indirectly aids to: Biodiversity conservation. Soil preservation. Climate balance. Wildlife protection. The Saura social system is based on the common responsibility for protection of natural resources. Community-level choices are regularly made about the environment. This joint approach enhances the preservation of the environment. Agriculture is the basis of the Saura economy and is intimately related to nature. Rituals and prayers are performed to soil deities and ancestor spirits before planting and harvesting crops.

Their agricultural ethics are based on Gratitude to nature, Respect for soil fertility, Dependence on seasonal cycles and Avoidance of wasteful activities. The tribe believes that altering nature too much may bring natural calamity or spiritual disfavor. In Saura culture, animals and birds are commonly mystical symbols. Some animals are valued due to the tales, rituals and beliefs of the ancestors. The Saura ethical attitude emphasizes Respect for living things and Controlled hunting tactics, Harmony between people and nature. The Saura tribe hold rich traditional ecological expertise on Herbal treatments, Forest management and Weather patterns, Agricultural cycles and Wildlife behaviour. This local knowledge contributes to environmental sustainability and is a manifestation of pragmatic ecological wisdom.

Current Issues

Modern development has altered the biological life of the Saura through: Deforestation and Mining activities, Industrialization and Loss of traditional land. Challenges include: Decline of ancient rituals and Influence of contemporary consumer culture; Migration and displacement and Loss of indigenous knowledge; Irregular rainfall and environmental degradation affect: Agriculture and Water resources, Forest-based livelihoods

Conclusion

The eco-spiritual viewpoint of the Saura Tribe signifies a comprehensive outlook on life, ecology and spirituality. Their traditions show a strong ecological conscience, based on respect for woods, rivers, hills, ancestors and natural forces. In the era of ecological crises, the Saura worldview provides essential insights for sustainable living and the establishment of ecological harmony. The research indicates that tribal eco-spiritual traditions are complex ecological ideologies and not primitive beliefs and that they need respect, preservation and incorporation into current environmental debate.

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