

# Cultural Expressions among Tribal People Communities in Samidha by Sadhana Amte

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**Abstract**

Tribal communities are an integral part of India's cultural heritage. Tribal communities represent a variety of customs, artistic mediums and philosophical systems, constitute an essential component of India's cultural legacy representing diverse traditions, art forms and philosophies. *Samidha* by Sadhana Amte provides deep insights into the lives of tribal people by examining their cultural manifestations, relationships with nature and communal life. This paper examines the cultural narratives presented in *Samidha*, highlighting the richness of tribal traditions, their struggles, and the importance of preserving their unique identity in a rapidly modernizing world. The paper critically analyses the cultural tales presented in *Samidha*, emphasising the artistic manifestations, social conflicts, and tenacity of Maharashtra's tribal groups, especially in relation to Baba Amte's Anandwan. The autobiography is helpful to know that it is about her contributions to Anandwan's humanitarian activity among the tribal people. It is a reflection on the aspirations of humanity and their struggle in the natural surroundings to give them life. The study examines the mutually beneficial interaction among these communities and their surroundings through Sadhana Amte's firsthand evidence, highlighting the significance of maintaining their traditional identity in the face of modernization's demands. This study also examines Sadhana Amte's personal development, as she and her husband became trailblazing social workers in welfare of the tribe. *Samidha* highlights the distinctive cultural history of indigenous tribes and emphasises the value of preserving their customs in an increasingly industrialised world, in addition to being a monument to the Amte family's commitment to humanitarian work. *Samidha* is a constant supply of wisdom, experiences, inspiration and selfless dedication to people who live in the company of nature.

**Keywords:** Rehabilitation from leprosy, social change, Self-identity, Labour of love, Tribal communities, cultural expressions

**Introduction:**

The distinctive traditions, rituals, and artistic manifestations of India's tribal people reflect their historical, social and spiritual ties to the natural world, creating a rich cultural tapestry. Sadhana Amte provides a personal account of these tribal communities' life in her autobiography *Samidha*, especially as they relate to the Anandwan area of Maharashtra. Anandwan, which was established by Baba Amte, developed into a shelter for leprosy sufferers and a hub for tribal welfare. Compassion, respect, and social justice are fundamental to Sadhana and Baba Amte's work, which is devoted to the empowerment and rehabilitation of underprivileged populations. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the cultural manifestations of the Anandwan region's tribal people as portrayed in *Samidha*, looking at the concepts of struggle, identity and resiliency for societal acceptance. This study emphasises the value of maintaining tribal cultural heritage while negotiating the difficulties presented by modernity and societal change through a thorough examination of the autobiography.

Shobha Pawar translated Sadhana Amte's autobiography *Samidha* into English. A personal account of Sadhana Amte's life is given in the book, with special attention to her experiences working in social service among Indian tribal groups with her husband, Baba Amte. It provides insightful information about these tribes' cultural expressions. This autobiography's main focus is on Sadhanatai Amte, who chose to marry the passionate dreamer Baba Amte, a prominent Indian social worker. Born in 1918, Known as Murlidhar Devidas Amte, he was a well-known humanitarian and social reformer who worked with leprosy sufferers in Maharashtra, India. He devoted his life to helping underprivileged groups and his contributions have had a lasting impact on society. Baba Amte was a ground-breaking social activist renowned for his commitment to the empowerment and rehabilitation of leprosy patients. He established Anandwan, Anandwan means Forest of Happiness. It is located approximately five kilometres from Warora in the Chandrapur district of Maharashtra, with the goal of giving leprosy patients a safe place where they could get treatment and assistance in getting back into society. Maharashtra's Andawan region is well-known for its ties to tribal groups and their rich cultural legacy.

Anandwan's was founded (1949) by Baba Amte as a self-sufficient community for leprosy patients in the Chandrapur region of Maharashtra. Patients with leprosy receive specialized treatment and rehabilitation. Giving patients the skills they need to live independently through instruction in carpentry, weaving, agriculture, and other trades. For patients and their kids, schools and career training facilities are available. A setting free from stigma where people with leprosy can live with respect. Tribes that live in areas such as Andawan generally have specific customs, ways of life, and behaviours that are a reflection of their history, social and cultural growth and personal relationship with nature.

Andawan Tribal People are the main tribal groups of Maharashtra, including those in regions like Andawan: Bhils, Mahadeo Kolis, Warli, Katkari (Kathodi), Thakur, Pardhi, and Gond. Agriculture, forest products, and small-scale handicrafts have historically been the main sources of income for these tribes.

### Cultural Aspects of Tribal People

- i. Warli Art: The Warli tribe is well known for its wall paintings, which use basic geometric designs to portray nature, daily life, and ceremonies.
- ii. Handicrafts: Bamboo, wood, and other locally accessible natural materials are frequently used by tribes to make crafts.
- iii. Language: In Maharashtra, tribal populations frequently speak Marathi dialects mixed with their native tongues, which may differ from tribe to tribe.
- iv. Rituals and Festivals

**Harvest Festivals:** These events centre on the cycles of agriculture. These festivities revolve around dance and music.

The Maharogi Sewa Samiti was established in 1949 by Baba Amte. This organization oversees Anandwan and other projects. The group incorporates underserved communities into society at large and strives to eradicate leprosy. He sought to end the stigma attached to leprosy.

Environmental Conservation Baba Amte was a strong supporter of environmentally friendly living and conservation, and he supported groups like the Narmada Bachao Andolan that opposed major dam projects that uprooted indigenous populations. He increased his efforts to provide assistance to individuals with more disabilities, stressing independence and self-determination. Baba's ideology was based on empathy and the idea that everyone is deserving of respect and dignity. In addition to constantly working for helpless and poor people, he was a champion for equality in society. *Samidha* highlights her contributions to social work in Anandwan with Baba Amte. Once known by the name Indu Ghule, Sadhana Amte wed Baba Amte and joined him in social activity and life. She was instrumental in the founding and operation of Anandwan. Sadhanatai's journey highlights how she changed from a conventional housewife to a well-known social worker in her own right. This research paper examines themes of self-identity, social work, and memory within the context of Sadhanatai's narrative. Through this autobiography, Sadhanatai's contributions to both her family and the society as an example of how personal growth can lead to more significant social change. She advocates for extending qualities like service and compassion beyond their household boundaries to society.

The application of narratives by tribal societies in the surroundings of nature to transmit knowledge, values, and historical events is depicted in Cultural Expressions in *Samidha*. The strong bond that tribal people have with their surroundings and ancestors is reflected in these stories, which frequently combine myth and fact. *Samidha* talks about the tribes elaborate traditions of weaving, ceramics, and beadwork, among other arts and crafts. These artistic endeavours serve as a means of cultural expression in addition to being a source of income. Their crafts frequently feature patterns and motifs that have symbolic connotations that reflect their social structure, values, and respect for the natural world. The emotional and spiritual bond that these performances have within the community is captured in Amte's story. Tribal life revolves around festivals and rituals, which demonstrate their peaceful coexistence with nature. Amte outlines a number of tribal celebrations in *Samidha* that celebrate community occasions, seasons and agricultural cycles. These festivities are marked by group involvement and the performing of rituals and traditions to pay respect to their ancestors and deities.

Agriculture and cultivation are always changing. Many cultures gather forest products, such honey and medicinal herbs for trade or use. It is common to dress simply, with an emphasis on natural elements.

### Challenges Faced by Tribal People

The tribal people of Maharashtra, particularly those in Andawan, face challenges such land alienation and the loss of traditional methods of livelihood.

Social and economic marginalization; unable to access healthcare and education. Tribal Communities' Difficulties *Samidha* draws attention to the difficulties faced by native tribes while simultaneously praising their cultural diversity. Their traditional way of life is in danger due to the intrusion of modernity and urbanization. Their peaceful coexistence has been disturbed by problems including exploitation, displacement, and deforestation. The tenacity of these communities in the face

of hardship and the necessity of sustainable techniques to protect their legacy are highlighted in Amte's work. Amte promotes the acknowledgment and respect of indigenous tribes by giving a true account of their lives. Her writing inspires readers to appreciate these communities' cultural riches and wisdom, which are sometimes overlooked in popular discourse. The narrative depicts her evolution alongside Baba, whose presence inspired her to find her voice. She describes his support as transformative, likening it to emerging from a cocoon. Their social work commenced after their marriage, marked by a philosophy of "care and share" which transcended their personal lives to benefit marginalized communities, including lepers and the physically challenged. The couple's work extended beyond personal ambition, as they aimed to foster community and self-sufficiency among those they served. By 1954, Anandwan saw an increase in patients, and its barren landscape transformed into a thriving community. The educational initiatives were encouraging tribal children to engage in practical tasks alongside their studies. Sadhanatai emphasizes the unpredictable nature of human behaviour, highlighting the complexity of understanding individuals from marginalized groups.

Their philosophy encouraged collective living, sharing both joys and hardships. Sadhanatai notes that pivotal moments can alter one's life trajectory significantly and Baba's choices exemplified this transformative potential. The couple's work attracted interest from various institutions, demonstrating the broader impact of their initiatives. They all adopted a "care and share" mentality that placed a strong emphasis on helping one another and living in communities. Mutual respect and a shared dedication to humanitarian work defined their cooperation, which served as an inspiration to many others.

*Samidha's* portrayal of tribal groups cultural expressions demonstrates their inventiveness, tenacity, and close links to the natural world. Sadhana Amte's art not only honours the diversity of tribal culture but also draws attention to the difficulties they face in a world that is changing quickly. Tribal communities' cultural legacy must be preserved and promoted in order to prevent the loss of their customs and knowledge over time. We are reminded of the priceless contributions made by indigenous people to our common cultural mosaic through works of literature such as *Samidha*.

#### **Conclusion:**

Sadhana Amte's *Samidha* serves as a profound exploration of tribal communities cultural expressions and the relentless efforts of individuals like Sadhanatai and Baba Amte to preserve and uplift these marginalized groups. The autobiography highlights the value of compassion, communal life, and sustainable development in ensuring cultural preservation by depicting the lives, hardships, and customs of tribal people. It captures Sadhanatai's path of transformation from housewife to social reformer, demonstrating how individual development can spur more significant society change. The narrative serves as a reminder of how important it is to preserve tribal people's environmental and cultural heritage in the face of fast urbanization and industrialization. The heritage of the Amte family, which is based on the principles of compassion, respect and service, keeps motivating initiatives for social justice, healing and self-determination. In addition to serving as a reminder of the cultural diversity of tribal people, *Samidha* serves as a lighthouse for upcoming generations, promoting equality, compassion and respect for indigenous customs and knowledge.

Sadhanatai and Baba Amte made significant contributions to the fields of social work and humanitarianism. Baba Amte and Sadhana Amte left behind a legacy of social reform and compassion. Through projects like Hemalkasa, a project devoted to tribal welfare, his children, Dr. Vikas Amte and Prakash Amte, and their families carry on his work. Baba Amte's work is an evidence to selfless dedication and continues to inspire people who are dedicated to community development and social justice.

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