

## Portrayal of Tribal Women in Narayan's Kocharethi: The Araya Woman

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### Abstract

*This paper examines the portrayal of tribal women in Narayan's Kocharethi: The Araya Woman, one of the earliest Malayalam novels written from within an Adivasi community. The study explores how the novel represents the everyday life, struggles, roles, and resilience of Araya tribal women through the experiences of Kochurani and other female characters. By focusing on social customs, familial responsibilities, hardships, and gender-based marginalization, the paper highlights how tribal women negotiate identity within a patriarchal tribal structure and an oppressive external society. The analysis shows that while tribal women face exploitation, displacement, and cultural disruption, they also exhibit strength, emotional depth, and agency. The novel thus becomes an important cultural document that brings the voices of marginalized tribal women into mainstream literary discourse.*

**Keywords:** Social Custom, Voice, Women, Tribal and Represent

### Introduction

Literature emerging from marginalized communities often serves as a crucial counter-narrative to dominant cultural discourses. In India, Adivasi or tribal literature has historically remained outside the mainstream literary sphere, largely overshadowed by upper-caste, urban, or elite voices. Within this context, *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* (2011), written by Narayan one of the first tribal novelists from Kerala stands as an important milestone. The novel offers an insider's perspective on the lived realities of the Araya tribe in Kerala's Western Ghats. What makes the text particularly significant is its deep sensitivity toward the position of women within this indigenous community. Tribal women, like other marginalized women across the world, occupy a space shaped by multilayered systems of power: patriarchy, caste structures, social exclusion, economic instability, and the encroachment of modern institutions. Narayan's narrative, written from within the cultural world it describes, allows readers to encounter these complexities through authentic experiences rather than stereotypical portrayals.

The representation of tribal women in Indian literature has often been problematic. Mainstream writers, especially during colonial and early postcolonial periods, tended to romanticize Adivasi women as exotic, primitive, hypersexualized, or simplistic figures. Others depicted them only through the lens of victimhood, ignoring their agency and cultural depth.

Few literary works have been able to capture the nuanced realities of indigenous womanhood—its hardships, its resilience, and its intimate connection to land, community, and tradition. *Kocharethi* disrupts this pattern by offering a narrative rooted in everyday tribal life. The central character, Kochurani, grows from a young girl into a mature woman who experiences love, labor, motherhood, loss, and social change. Her journey reflects both the vulnerabilities and strengths of Araya women who navigate oppressive structures while sustaining their families and cultural heritage.

The study of tribal women in literature is not merely an exploration of gender roles; it is also an examination of identity, survival, and cultural continuity. Tribal women often function as bearers of community memory, transmitters of rituals, and custodians of ecological knowledge. In *Kocharethi*, these roles are evident in how women participate in agricultural work, healing practices, child-rearing, and collective decision-making. They maintain an intimate relationship with the forest, which sustains their livelihoods and forms the backbone of their cultural identity. At the same time, they face threats from settlers, government officials, and missionary activities that seek to disrupt their traditional systems. Women bear the heaviest burden of these disruptions because they are central to both domestic and community life.

Another important aspect of *Kocharethi* is its realistic portrayal of the challenges faced by tribal women due to patriarchal customs within their own community. While the Araya tribe values collective life and communal ties, patriarchal norms still influence gendered expectations and constraints. Women perform physically demanding labor, care for children, and manage the household, often without recognition of their contributions. Arranged marriages, early motherhood, and restrictions on mobility shape their daily existence. Yet Narayan does not present these women as silent victims. Instead, he shows how they negotiate their positions—sometimes through quiet endurance, sometimes through assertive decisions. Kochurani, for instance, repeatedly demonstrates courage in confronting personal loss, managing conflicts, and balancing her duties with her own desires. Furthermore, the novel's portrayal of modernity introduces another layer of complexity to the lives of tribal women. As roads, schools, religious institutions, and government policies penetrate the tribal region, they bring both opportunities and dangers. Modernization promises education and medical care, but it also threatens displacement, land loss, and cultural erosion. Tribal women stand at the intersection of these changes. While some women welcome new possibilities, others suffer because the new systems often misunderstand or exploit tribal identities. Narayan uses the narrative to highlight how development—often celebrated in mainstream discourse—can become a source of violence against indigenous women who lack institutional support or representation. The significance of Narayan's authorship must also be acknowledged. As a writer belonging to the Malayarayan tribe, his storytelling carries an authenticity that distinguishes *Kocharethi* from outsider representations. His perspective allows readers to see tribal women not as subjects of anthropological curiosity but as complex human beings living within a coherent social system.

The intimate descriptions of cultural practices—marriage rituals, festivals, childbirth customs, agricultural activities—reflect lived experience rather than constructed imagination. This insider perspective enriches the portrayal of tribal women, making it more credible and empathetic. Another reason for studying the portrayal of tribal women in *Kocharethi* is the broader academic and social relevance of the topic. In contemporary India, issues related to tribal rights, gender justice, land protection, and cultural preservation remain urgent. Literature becomes an important medium to understand these concerns at a deeper emotional and social level. Examining the narrative representation of tribal women helps illuminate the structural inequalities they face as well as their contributions to community survival. It also challenges dominant stereotypes that either oversimplify or misrepresent tribal identities. By bringing attention to the realities of Adivasi women's lives, this research contributes to ongoing conversations about social inclusion, intersectional feminism, and indigenous rights.

From a literary perspective, *Kocharethi* offers a compelling blend of ethnographic detail and emotional storytelling. The novel's use of simple, direct language, along with its focus on everyday scenes, allows readers to engage closely with the characters' lives. Kochurani, the central figure, is written not as a heroic ideal but as a relatable woman facing realistic struggles. Through her experiences, Narayan depicts the emotional world of tribal women—their joys, sorrows, friendships, fears, and hopes. This makes the novel a powerful text for analyzing women's roles within indigenous communities, particularly when compared to mainstream representations.

This research paper, therefore, aims to analyze how *Kocharethi* portrays tribal women with respect to their social roles, challenges, identity formation, and agency. It examines the narrative strategies used by Narayan to convey the complexities of Adivasi womanhood and the pressures these women face from both internal patriarchal norms and external forces of exploitation and modernization. The study further explores how the novel contributes to the broader field of tribal literature and feminist discourse by offering a rare and authentic view of women's lives in a marginalized community. By focusing on the representation of tribal women, the paper seeks to highlight the importance of indigenous voices in literature and the need to recognize the cultural, social, and emotional dimensions of their existence. Overall, the novel's portrayal of tribal women moves beyond stereotypes and offers a nuanced, layered, and empathetic depiction of their lived realities. Through Kochurani and other female characters, Narayan shows that tribal women, though marginalized by multiple systems of power, possess strength, resilience, and agency. Their lives, marked by hardship as well as deep cultural meaning, reflect the larger struggle of indigenous communities in India. The introduction establishes the foundation for a detailed exploration of these elements in the subsequent sections of the research paper.

**Literature review:**

The study of tribal literature in India has gradually gained attention over the past few decades, especially as marginalized communities have begun producing their own literary voices. Scholarly interest in Adivasi narratives emphasizes issues of identity, social exclusion, land, culture, and gender. However, the portrayal of tribal women has received comparatively less academic exploration. This literature review examines major scholarly concerns related to tribal literature, Adivasi women's representation, and previous critical work on *Kocharethi*, situating the present research within the wider academic discourse. Early studies on tribal representation in Indian literature often highlighted how Adivasi life was depicted predominantly by non-tribal writers. Critics such as G.N. Devy, in his works on subaltern and tribal aesthetics, emphasize that mainstream literature tends to portray tribal characters through stereotypes—either as noble savages, exotic figures, or helpless victims. These portrayals frequently lacked authenticity because they were produced through an outsider's gaze. Devy argues that tribal stories must be understood within their oral traditions, ecological ties, and community-centered values, which differ significantly from the mainstream literary ethos. Such critiques open the space for works like *Kocharethi*, which present tribal life from within the culture itself rather than from an external viewpoint.

Scholarly discussions on gender in tribal communities often challenge the assumption that tribal women experience the same forms of patriarchy as caste-bound women in mainstream society. Anthropologists like Verrier Elwin and B.K. Roy Burman note that tribal women historically enjoyed greater mobility, economic participation, and communal support. However, they also faced unique vulnerabilities related to displacement, poverty, exploitation by outsiders, and cultural marginalization. Feminist scholars, especially those working in intersectional and indigenous feminism, argue that tribal women inhabit a multi-layered identity shaped by class, tribe, gender, and geographical isolation. Their experiences cannot be fully understood through the frameworks used to study mainstream Indian women. This shift in feminist scholarship emphasizes recognizing tribal women's agency, resilience, and cultural knowledge, while also acknowledging their socio-political struggles.

In literary studies, researchers highlight the scarcity of texts authored by tribal writers, especially women. As academic attention turns toward Adivasi narratives, emphasis is placed on the need for "insider perspectives" that challenge dominant stereotypes and document tribal epistemologies. Narayan's *Kocharethi* stands out in this context as a significant contribution to Indian tribal literature. Scholars praise the novel for its ethnographic accuracy, narrative simplicity, and emotional depth. Because Narayan belonged to the Malayarayan tribe, his writing carries a reliability often missing in earlier representations of tribal life. Critical work specifically on *Kocharethi* has focused on a number of themes: tribal identity, land relations, cultural continuity, and modernization. Some scholars read the text as an ethnographic novel that preserves the oral traditions, rituals, and social customs of the Araya community.

Others view it as a subaltern narrative that exposes the structural injustices faced by tribal communities in Kerala. A recurring observation in the criticism is that *Kocharethi* resists romanticizing or idealizing tribal life, instead presenting its struggles, conflicts, and harsh realities honestly. However, despite the increasing scholarly attention on the novel, the specific portrayal of tribal women remains underexplored. Most academic studies briefly mention women's roles in discussing social customs or family structures, but few provide a focused analysis of Adivasi womanhood. This gap positions the present research as a necessary contribution to the field, addressing how *Kocharethi* depicts the everyday lives and identities of tribal women. A key aspect discussed by some researchers is the central role of Kochurani, the protagonist. Critics note that her character represents the life cycle of an Adivasi woman—from childhood to adulthood, marriage, motherhood, and eventual maturity. Through Kochurani, the novel presents the challenges women face: physically demanding labor, limited access to education, social expectations within patriarchal tribal structures, and emotional burdens caused by loss and social change. Scholars also observe that unlike many mainstream literary heroines, Kochurani is portrayed through a realistic and culturally grounded lens. She is not idealized; instead, she is presented as a complex, resilient, and emotionally rich character.

Another strand of existing scholarship deals with the impact of modernization and state policies on tribal communities. Studies show that Adivasi women are disproportionately affected by social disruptions such as land alienation, missionary activities, and developmental interventions. *Kocharethi* is frequently cited as a literary text that captures these changes at a personal level. The introduction of new institutions—schools, churches, health centers, government officials—ushers both opportunities and threats. Academic discussions suggest that tribal women face anxieties due to cultural displacement, shifts in traditional roles, and exploitation by non-tribal settlers. The novel's portrayal of these issues aligns with sociological research documenting the vulnerability of indigenous women to state and market forces. Some scholars draw attention to the narrative style of *Kocharethi*, which blends oral storytelling traditions with realistic fiction. This narrative mode is significant for analyzing women's representation, because oral traditions often center domestic life, communal values, and women's shared experiences. The novel's simple language and descriptive detail help preserve cultural memory while also conveying women's emotional worlds. Critics argue that this narrative authenticity allows readers to understand tribal women not merely through thematic representation but through intimate portrayals of their relationships, conflicts, and daily routines.

Translations of *Kocharethi* have also generated scholarly discussion. Catherine Thankamma's English translation made the novel accessible to a wide readership, attracting critical interest at the national and international levels. Some critics consider how translation shapes the portrayal of tribal women, especially in conveying culturally specific terms, emotional nuances, and social practices. While translations may alter certain linguistic elements, they also expand the visibility of tribal narratives in larger literary spaces.



Broader feminist scholarship provides additional context for understanding the portrayal of tribal women in literature. Indian feminist researchers such as Sharmila Rege, Nivedita Menon, and Uma Chakravarti highlight the importance of intersectionality in studying women's experiences. Although their work focuses primarily on caste and gender, their frameworks are useful for examining tribal women's positions within intersecting systems of oppression. These scholars emphasize that marginalized women are often invisible in mainstream discourse, and that literature can play a central role in recovering their voices. Research in indigenous feminisms, particularly scholarship from Australia, Canada, and Latin America, also contributes relevant insights. These studies argue that indigenous women must be understood in relation to land, community, and cultural memory. They resist both patriarchal oppression within the community and external domination by state structures. Such international scholarship helps contextualize the portrayal of tribal women in *Kocharethi* as part of a global struggle faced by indigenous women everywhere. Despite the growing body of research on tribal literature and feminist readings of marginalized communities, a clear gap remains: the need for detailed analysis of tribal women's representation in Narayan's novel. The few scholarly studies that touch upon female characters often focus on broader themes of identity or cultural change rather than examining gendered experiences specifically. This makes a focused study on the portrayal of tribal women both relevant and necessary.

In summary, existing scholarship recognizes *Kocharethi* as an important text in Adivasi literature, but the literary representation of tribal women within it has not received sufficient academic attention. The current research aims to fill this gap by analyzing how Narayan depicts the roles, struggles, resilience, and identities of tribal women, especially through the character of Kochurani. Grounded in feminist and indigenous literary perspectives, this study contributes to ongoing discussions about gender, culture, and marginalization in tribal narratives.

### **The portrayal of tribal women in Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman*:**

The portrayal of tribal women in Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* gains significance from the way the narrative documents the everyday responsibilities that define women's social roles within the Araya community. Tribal women assume a wide range of duties that extend far beyond domestic spaces, forming the backbone of the community's survival. From a young age, girls like Kochurani are socialized into collective responsibility through participation in household chores, gathering forest produce, assisting elders, and contributing to agricultural work. These activities are not merely labor-related tasks but expressions of cultural continuity that link each generation to the land and to community traditions. Narayan's descriptions of women working in the fields, collecting honey, preparing food, or participating in rituals reveal the deep interconnectedness between women's labor and the ecological environment. Their work sustains both family and community, grounding their lives in shared values of cooperation and interdependence. These scenes dismantle stereotypes that tribal women lead idle or simplistic lives; instead, they highlight women's centrality to the functioning of tribal society.

A crucial aspect of women's roles in the Araya community is their involvement in the social and emotional well-being of the family. Women mediate conflicts, maintain harmony among relatives, and ensure the continuity of kinship ties. Kochurani's mother and other older women in the novel are depicted as guiding figures whose wisdom shapes community relations. This emotional labor is an important cultural function, although it often goes unrecognized within patriarchal structures. Narayan portrays tribal women as guardians of cultural memory, as they transmit oral stories, rituals, and customs to younger generations. This practice of cultural education through oral tradition situates women as the primary agents of socialization and cultural preservation. Thus, the representation of tribal women in *Kocharethi* emphasizes their multifaceted identity, where productive labor, emotional care, and cultural responsibility merge into a single continuum.

Marriage and motherhood also shape the social roles of tribal women, often setting the trajectory of their lives. Narayan presents these institutions with cultural specificity but also acknowledges the limitations they impose. Marriage in the Araya community is not solely a personal choice it is intertwined with family expectations, alliances, and communal norms. Women are expected to contribute to their husbands' households while continuing their traditional responsibilities. Motherhood further intensifies these duties, as women nurture children, manage households, and ensure the continuity of tribal life. Kochurani, whose life transforms after marriage, must balance her affection, her responsibilities, and her emotional burdens. Through her journey, Narayan reveals the tension between personal desires and societal expectations that shape indigenous womanhood. This nuanced portrayal contradicts the often-romanticized narratives of tribal life by demonstrating the real, labor-intensive, and emotionally demanding responsibilities placed upon women.

The novel also brings attention to the ritual and spiritual dimensions of women's roles in the community. Tribal women participate actively in festivals, healing ceremonies, and rites of passage, contributing to the spiritual life of the tribe. These practices highlight women's cultural authority and their intimate understanding of tradition. While men may hold formal ritual positions, women sustain the rituals through preparation, participation, and transmission. Their involvement shows that spiritual life in the tribe depends on their collective contributions and sustained cultural engagement. Narayan's narrative positions women as essential carriers of indigenous identity, grounding the tribe's continuity in their lived knowledge, emotional strength, and cultural agency. Although tribal women in *Kocharethi* possess significant cultural importance, they also face a range of social difficulties that reflect their marginal position within both the tribal and the external world. The hardships experienced by women arise from structural inequalities, patriarchal customs, economic vulnerabilities, and the disruptions caused by modernization. From the beginning of the novel, girls are exposed to gender expectations that limit their opportunities. Kochurani and other young women confront early responsibilities that restrict their education and personal freedom. These limitations are not born out of deliberate oppression but rather from traditional norms that shape women's lives within a patriarchal tribal framework.

However, these norms create unequal burdens, situating women within labor-intensive roles while limiting their involvement in decision-making. The tension between respect for tradition and critique of gender roles is carefully balanced in Narayan's narrative, which neither idealizes nor condemns tribal customs but presents them as lived realities. The hardships of tribal women intensify when the external world enters the tribal region. Encroachment by settlers, missionaries, government officials, and profit-driven agents disrupts the economic and cultural stability of the community. Women frequently bear the brunt of these disruptions because of their dependence on forest resources and their custodial role within families. When agricultural land is taken away or forest access becomes restricted, women must work longer hours, travel farther, and endure greater physical strain to procure resources for their families. Narayan situates these difficulties within a broader socio-political context, showing how development policies and modernization often work against indigenous livelihoods. Tribal women, already managing substantial labor responsibilities, are forced into increased vulnerability when traditional ecological systems break down.

One of the most painful challenges depicted in the novel is the emotional suffering experienced by tribal women due to loss, displacement, and social instability. Narratives of death, illness, and separation recur throughout the novel, emphasizing the fragile conditions under which the community survives. Kochurani's personal losses—particularly the deaths of loved ones—shape her emotional world and highlight the psychological burdens carried by tribal women. They are expected to handle grief silently while continuing to fulfill their duties. Narayan portrays these emotional responsibilities as a defining aspect of indigenous womanhood, revealing the invisible labor that goes beyond physical tasks. Women are rarely allowed space to express despair; instead, they are expected to uphold resilience for the sake of their families.

Modernization introduces new social problems that affect women directly. The arrival of schools and medical facilities brings some advantages but also creates cultural tensions. Girls may gain access to education, but the clash between tribal customs and mainstream values places them in difficult positions. Religious conversion efforts undermine community unity, and women are often targeted as entry points for missionary influence. Furthermore, increased contact with the outside world exposes women to exploitation, harassment, and discriminatory treatment. Their unfamiliarity with legal systems and institutional power places them at further risk. Narayan's narrative suggests that while modernization is often celebrated in public discourse, it destabilizes indigenous communities and disproportionately harms women. Thus, the novel brings attention to the intersectional nature of tribal women's oppression, shaped by gender, class, tribal identity, and systemic marginalization. Despite the numerous hardships faced by tribal women, *Kocharethi* also presents them as figures of agency, resilience, and inner strength. One of the novel's most important contributions is its refusal to depict tribal women solely as victims. Instead, Narayan emphasizes their capacity to adapt, resist, and negotiate the circumstances that surround them. Kochurani embodies this resilience throughout her life. Although she endures poverty, loss, and social pressures, she continues to make decisions based on her sense of responsibility and emotional conviction.



Her strength does not manifest in grand or dramatic acts but in the quiet endurance that defines her daily life. This representation aligns with indigenous feminist ideas that frame resilience not as defiance of tradition but as the ability to navigate challenges while maintaining cultural rootedness.

Tribal women's agency also emerges through their connection to nature and land. Their intimate knowledge of forest resources, healing plants, and ecological rhythms provides them with a form of authority that is often overlooked by patriarchal structures. Women use this knowledge to sustain their families, heal illnesses, and maintain ecological balance. Narayan portrays these abilities as vital forms of power that contribute to community survival. In this way, the novel challenges mainstream notions of power and agency, which often focus on political or economic control. Instead, it highlights indigenous forms of agency rooted in ecological wisdom, emotional resilience, and collective responsibility. Another important dimension of women's agency is their role in preserving cultural traditions during periods of rapid change. As modernization threatens to erode tribal customs, women become the custodians of cultural identity. They continue rituals, oral storytelling, and community gatherings, ensuring that younger generations remain connected to their heritage. Kochurani, even when facing personal suffering, participates in ceremonies and upholds cultural values. Her actions demonstrate that resilience is not merely personal but communal, contributing to the survival of the tribe as a whole.

Women's relationships with each other further strengthen their capacity to endure challenges. Narayan depicts bonds between mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends as central sources of support and emotional survival. These relationships form informal networks of solidarity that help women navigate hardships. Through shared labor, collective rituals, and mutual emotional care, women build a communal resilience that counters the isolation imposed by structural oppression. These depictions challenge individualistic portrayals of agency and instead frame it as embedded within supportive social bonds. Finally, the novel suggests that women's resilience extends to negotiating change and adapting to shifting realities. Although modernization brings difficulties, women find ways to incorporate new knowledge without abandoning their cultural roots. This adaptive capacity is central to indigenous ways of survival. Narayan does not romanticize this resilience; rather, he presents it as a necessary response to social conditions that tribal women cannot control. The nuanced portrayal of agency in *Kocharethi* thus contributes to a broader understanding of indigenous womanhood—one that acknowledges both the structural constraints and the culturally rooted strength that define women's lives. In sum, the portrayal of tribal women in *Kocharethi* is multidimensional and deeply grounded in cultural authenticity. Women serve as laborers, emotional anchors, cultural transmitters, and ecological guardians. They endure systemic hardships caused by patriarchy and modernization but respond with resilience, solidarity, and quiet forms of agency. Through these depictions, the novel challenges simplistic representations of tribal women and offers a nuanced understanding of their lived experiences. Narayan's narrative contributes meaningfully to the field of tribal literature by giving voice to women who have long been marginalized in both literature and society.

The analysis of *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* reveals that Narayan offers one of the most authentic and nuanced portrayals of tribal women in Indian literature. A primary finding of this study is that tribal women occupy a central role in sustaining the social, cultural, and economic framework of the Araya community. Unlike stereotypical depictions of Adivasi women as passive or primitive, the novel shows them as active contributors whose labor, emotional resilience, and cultural knowledge are indispensable. Their responsibilities extend from agriculture and forest work to child-rearing, ritual participation, and the preservation of oral traditions, demonstrating that their contributions support both family and community structures.

Another important finding is the complex nature of the challenges facing tribal women. Their struggles arise from both internal patriarchal practices and external pressures such as land alienation, modernization, religious conversion, and exploitation by outsiders. These hardships reveal how tribal women experience layered marginalization, shaped by gender, economic vulnerability, and the socio-political forces that encroach upon tribal life. Yet, despite these adversities, the novel does not reduce tribal women to victims. Instead, it highlights their agency in navigating oppressive circumstances through emotional endurance, ecological knowledge, and collective solidarity.

The study further finds that women like Kochurani function as cultural anchors during periods of rapid change. Their commitment to rituals, storytelling, and communal responsibilities ensures the survival of tribal identity amidst external threats. Additionally, the emotional bonds between women mothers, daughters, sisters, and friends serve as powerful networks of support, reinforcing the communal resilience of the tribe. Overall, the findings indicate that Narayan's portrayal challenges mainstream misconceptions and brings forth a rich, layered, and empowering understanding of tribal womanhood.

### Conclusion:

This research concludes that Narayan's *Kocharethi: The Araya Woman* serves as a landmark text in Indian tribal literature, particularly in its representation of tribal women. Through Kochurani and other female characters, the novel provides an intimate view of the everyday realities of Araya women, highlighting their central role in sustaining community life. Their lives are shaped by labor-intensive responsibilities, emotional strength, and cultural commitment, making them pivotal figures in the continuity of tribal traditions. Narayan's insider perspective enriches this portrayal by presenting experiences drawn from lived reality rather than through external assumptions or romanticized archetypes. The study further argues that while tribal women endure multiple forms of hardship—from patriarchal expectations within the community to socio-economic pressures generated by modernization and external exploitation—they exhibit remarkable resilience and adaptability. Their struggles are not depicted merely as personal difficulties but as reflections of the broader structural forces impacting indigenous communities. By portraying women's resistance, care, and cultural knowledge, the novel challenges dominant narratives that either victimize or exoticize Adivasi women.

*Kocharethi* positions tribal women as agents of cultural survival. Their roles in ritual practices, ecological understanding, and oral traditions reflect a form of indigenous agency often overlooked in mainstream literature. Kochurani's journey embodies both the vulnerabilities and strengths of tribal womanhood, making her a representative figure for understanding the intersection of gender, tribal identity, and cultural persistence.

In short, this study offers a meaningful contribution to feminist and indigenous literary studies by giving voice to marginalized women and illuminating the cultural richness of their lives. The novel not only preserves tribal memory but also invites readers to recognize the dignity, strength, and complexity of tribal women's experiences.

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