



Colonial Struggle-Revolt of Adivasis against Corporate Policies and It's Invisibility in Modern Global Fictions of Indian English Literature

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Abstract

The treatment to the adivasi community in Postcolonial Indian English fiction lacks in many grounds. Tribal historical revolts, encroachments of British rule into tribal territories, grabbing lands of the tribals, exploitation of tribal women, cruel landlords, deforestation and degradation of tribal environmental values do not find realistic representation in Indian English fictions. In Gita Mehta's The River Sutra, tribal are shown as the worshipper of Narmada River and performing some ritual on the bank of River Narmada, but tribal religious concerns are not so much the limited and full of superstitions. They consider land, forest and water as godly gift to them. In fact these natural objects are itself Godlike for them but when British power and landlords took the illegal entry in their territories, they protested against them and became the epitome of valor and martyrdom in the history. This research article tries to examine the bias attitude of mainstreams literature writing regarding the adivasi heritage and glorious tradition of revolt and sacrifice.

The Adivasi communities have a glorious tradition of revolts and mass movements to save their identities. An epic journey of the freedom struggles have fought by tribal on this land, but pages of historical novels of India are blank towards these mass revolutions. Recurrent theme of partition, urban alienation, moll generation, cola generation and butterfly generation becomes the prominent themes for Indian English writers. Their hanging in two words became their core themes of literature writings. A massive history of bloodshed of tribals remained invisible because of mainstream writer's hedonistic attitude towards life inspiring from physical materialism. This loss of tribal sacrifices on this land could never be repaired, it's irreparable but small attempts of literary writings can explore the tribal sacrifices before the world. Indian English fiction writers must give justice to the cultural and psychological deprivations of the marginal, Dalits and Tribals in Indian scenario.

In the regional Bhasha literature, through the pen of regional writers, tribal problems of land deprivation was realistically portray in the novel like *Mother Forest* and *Kocharethi*. This core issue of land acquisition does not show a single sentence in the Indian English novel. A major warfare of tribal during colonial period remained untouched by mainstream English literature. It shows the neocolonization of the Indian English fiction writings. The postcolonial literature has broken the dominant Eurocentric racial monopoly of the white literature and gave high pitch voice of protest and resistance to native culture. In this regards, Mohit Ray, in his book, *Studies in Commonwealth Literature*, foregrounds:

Eurocentric definition of civilization refers to only those literates who understand the white man's burden, language and culture. Europeans have obliterated several native cultures all over the globe as a part of establishing

political, social and cultural hegemony. In today's postcolonial and multicultural societies, the issues of native identities have occupied most of the postmodern and postcolonial debates, as native of the colonies are the original inhabitants of the land. (Ray: 2003:76)

This is a new types of colonization to which our novelists, policy makers do not want to speak or analyze because corporate tycoons gives them economic benefits for maintaining literary silences. This is a culture of silence maintained by intelligentsia and victims are marginal tribals, dalits and labor classes. Because of this corporate globalization, common tribal man came on the edge of becoming new slaves of capitalistic world order. Though, on surface, it appears that because of cosmopolitanism and globalization, world is becoming more liberal, comprehensive and multicultural but in reality, the discussions and debates of intellectual writers upon neo-liberalism, militarization and postglobalization of the world are pushing to third world nations to neocolonization which our policy makers and politicians are unable to understand or probably pretends of not to be understand. This mode of cultural amnesia is taking place in the case of literary writing also, particularly in case of Indian English fictions.

The novelist must understand these realities that without local, they cannot be global. In Indian social hierarchy, we notice that ruling class is center in every spheres of national life including political terms, economic policies and the social circumstances. They have every authority that they makes dance to ruling class on their tunes because the ruled class has no voice in power structure or oppressive state apparatus. In this regard of subaltern concept, Dipesh Chakraverty opines, "Subalternity, the composite culture of resistance to and acceptance of domination and hierarchy is characteristic of class relations in our society, where the veneer of bourgeois equality barely marks the violent, feudal nature of much of our systems of power and authority" (Chakraverty: 1985:375).

Today, Indian English Literature is largely a postcolonial response to the mainstream European literary canons which were once the ruler on the colonies and the native cultures. The suppressed identities, slavery, economic, political and cultural marginalization became the theme of postcolonial literature. After Indian Independence, writers started to scrutinize the colonial impact on Indian social, political and cultural arena, that become the theme of postcolonial literature in India. Malnutrition, hunger, poverty, partition women suppression and political trauma became the themes for Indian novelists. But these subjects were never developed by them in connection with tribal

communities. During this period India has accepted the mix and market economy and the era of consumerism and industrialization, globalization and neoglobalisation have started which mostly affected the all marginalized societies of India especially tribals. The Adivasis were proved the hardcore victims of LPG policy and now in this neoliberal India, their situation is worsen. Commenting on tribal's pathetic situation in contemporary period, Felix Padel opines:

A psychic death of Adivasi that non-tribal people rarely understands. Underlying the cultural genocide is the invaders total lack of respect for tribal people's tradition. Mainstream culture ceased a long time ago to be rooted in the soil. As land prizes shoot up, collective attachment to the land that a village has worked over successive generations has no value in the incomes eyes which focus only on profits they hope to generate. (Padel: 2015:334)

The Adivasi community which was colonized in its every sphere could not take shape in mainstream novels. Tribal life is often discussed with naxal issues. They are shown as mercenary, violent, anti-national and anti-progressive in most of literary or social discourses in India. We must check the realities of these issues because after Independence, a mass genocide of tribal has been taking place in the name of naxal evacuation. Violence of any kind can never be justified but literature should investigate the mass killings of Adivasi under the false labeling of naxalism. This subject of novel writing can explore the realities of tribal heartland before the world.

Most of the regional novels of India are dealing with serious issues but Indian English mainstream literature could not give justice to the representation of Adivasis. In Chatterjee's novel *The English August*, he has shown a character of Reddy, considered as naxal head of that area, who demands for the tribal rights and to stop the forcibly land acquisition of the tribal by corporates. His characterization shows that he is not happy, the way bureaucracy is dealing with tribal issues, with tribal women, so his men cuts the hand of the Mohan Gandhi, who seduced a tribal women. Naxalism and their violence can never be justified any way, but its spreading in tribal territory can be a major subject of novel writing. After Independence we barely find their literature written in English but we will get repeated themes of poverty, partition, marital issues and alienation of elite class mentality of the mainstream society of India. It could happen because of the caste conscious mentality of novelist and their ignorance about

decolonization of third world nations and including native communities. About the systematic killing and tribal deprivation, Gladson Dungdung in his famous book *Mission Saranda: War for Natural Resources*, foregrounds:

The Corporate model of development which the Indian state has been promoting for decades are not only dominating the Adivasis, it has also become the cause of destruction of forest and biodiversity. Adivasis asking question to this development policies that what kind of development is this, where there is no place for them and even for their god. How can someone sell their land, water, hills and minerals without their consent? (Dungdung: 2015:233)

Even Upmanyu Chatterjee has not given the details of these issues in his novel. Novel doesn't give answer why the selective youth of indigenous communities are taking guns in their hands, in their own motherland for getting their own rights of education, employment and opportunities for living of a dignified life. Adivasi is a communal word, where hundreds of tribes comprise a whole family. The Postcolonial writing always shows it's continuous resistance towards the typical colonial nations in the mindset of native, aboriginal inlanders. The concept of nation is presented again through the point of view of colonized. Novelist has tried to depict the sordid life of postcolonial India from his point of view, when Augustya, an urban, western minded man posted in Madna, a small town of India, really unsettles, disturbs him, "Cigarette and paon dhabas, disreputable food stalls, both lead by fierce kerosene lamps felt as he was living someone else's life. Life in Delhi and life in Madana seems two extreme points of an unseal existence" (Chatterjee: 1988: 177). Novel deals with the exploration of tribal life which seems very limited in its scope because the posted area of Madna is tribal dominated territory but in the novel, we find bare existence of tribals in the novel. Their day to day struggle have not been presented with sufficient literary craft. Novel deals with globalization, western typical mentality, cultural complications but tribals are invisible in these global circumstances. Tribal as depicted in the novel are shown as struggler, poor, having deprived by the basic amenities of life. Draught stricken area, scarcity of food, exploitation of women by bureaucrats is the only meaning of tribal life in the novel. While depicting tribals in Jompana-Chipanthy, one of the characters opines:

There is no cast war or anything like that in the area. Its just economics and politics. The tribals have been ignored

for decades, primarily because of them, stayed in those inaccessible hill forests. The money that was pushed into Jopanna was directed by the politician to benefit the non-tribal population of the plains. Government should not blame for this. (Chatterjee: 1988:240)

In the novel, *The Coffer Dam* British Engineers team comes to southern part of India to build a big dam, this is the example how corporate works in tribal areas. The corporate projects, mineral project, big water reservoir, big forest reservoir and field firing ranges were built in tribal major territories after independence and for this purpose, the original inhabitants of the land was displaced from their villages. Same incident happens with the tribal village of *The Coffer Dam* but Clinton and his British Engineer team appeared unsympathetic towards them. After such a long gap of centuries, again corporate policies are destructing agrarian tribal economy in tribal regions of India. Kamala Markandeya's novel *The Coffer Dam* which setting is given in southern part of India but its appeal is universal. Just like in all her novels, Markandeya has dealt with the culture clash, psyche of westerner's and their outlook towards native culture. Colonialism still runs through the mind of Clinton, the Chief Engineer of dam. Various discussions, sentences of the British characters shows Eurocentric psychology while giving opinion about the tribal village and their cultures. Bashiam is an educated tribal technician, but Clinton's calling him as "Junliwallah" shows the empirical mentality' which has a historical sense, is not very easy to wipe out. We find critical dialogue about the displacement of tribal village in the making process of dam. Novelist could give a fine touch of indigenous culture, their struggle for land and forest, memories of tribal ancestor and their concern for natural objects. But this novel seems silence on these native – aboriginal themes, only marital failure of Helen and Clinton, love making and involvements of tribal Bashiam and Helen, runs throughout the novel.

The Coffer Dam deals with numerous issues like dying humanitarianism, superiority of West, a rational attitude towards ecology, colonial and anti-colonial mentalities. Novel shows dual reflection of colonialism of tribal community. Perhaps this novel is the first one, who claims double disposition of tribals. British engineers, Indian bureaucrats and officials also hates the local tribals, claiming that tribal are the obstacle's in the path of countries developmental policies. They want to dispose tribals elsewhere so they cannot interfere the construction site. Clinton is the chief of British Engineers team and boss of superior white mentality, who hates local from the bottom of his heart. His professional sense seems when comments, "My work, from mountain conviction, which loomed tall as

a mountain now. My dam, my business” (Joshi: 1969:127).The relationship of Clinton – Helen in the novel, seems not mutual. She wants to go further out of her marital responsibilities and wants to find illusory world of freedom. She tries to take interest in tribal life and in tribal man Bashiam. A lot of cultural discussions take place between them. As the Helen shows her interest in tribal life, Clinton seems far away from these cultural assimilations. He is ruthless, heartless symbol of white supremacy who wants to exploit the nature without showing any morality and ethics to the tribal landscape. Regarding sheer hatred of Clinton for tribals, Kamala Markandeya comments, “ Clinton has no trust in the Indian tribal as he consider them to be a people who worshipped birds and beasts and probably snakes, decking the forest with scuffy hutches which they knocked up out of driftwood and crammed with leaves and flowers for their delfies”(Markandeya: 1969:76).

The Indian officialdom as depicted by Upamanyu Chatterjee in his novel, *The English August* is the reality of modern Indian bureaucracy. Bureaucracy of India seems lethargic when the matter comes to provide basic amenities to the tribal. When August Sen, an Indian Administrative Officer, finds the distorted life of tribal in the village named Chipanthi, he feels miserable. He notices sheer corruption and nepotism works in tribal area where tribal are far away from the mainstream society. Augustya finds the opportunity to come out from his boring office and colleagues, so he want to go to Chipanthi, but he also is not serious about tribals problem as the Ramanna and Rao and the local non-tribal are. Red tappism, nepotism, corrupt political policies, dropout economic policies are very exact reasons for the backward, poor-unhealthy life and facilities in tribal areas. Tribals are migrating swiftly from small villages to metropolitan where along with employment problems, they are facing a number of survival issues. Regarding the issue of internal colonization, S. Armstrong in the book *Notion of Identity in the Indian Subcontinent* which is an edited book, *Exploring Fourth World Literature*, Raja Shekar Pateti opines:

The colonial, postcolonial and Indian histories distort and misrepresent facts of India. Tribal indigeneity in India have failed to take into account the facts of culture, anthropology, archaeology and ethnography. Colonialism suppressed indigeneity and created colonial or castiest categories with the unholy alliance of the local dominant groups.(Pateti:2011:418)

The Adivasi Community of India have gone through a long period of transformations. They are the

witnessed of colonial, feudal and caste system of the India. Postglobal scenario of Indian English writing has also not in favour of indigenous tribal. Novelists are busy with global and cosmopolitan policies which seems dominant on Indian English literature. Aboriginals are still in their territory with their broken culture and suppressed identities. Their sources of livelihood are terribly snatched away from them.

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