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Postcolonial Indian English Fictions without the Exploration of Subaltern Conscious of Adivasi Culture and History

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Abstract

Postcolonial literature deals with the issues and identity of the suppressed culture during British Imperialism but it could not give exploration to the Adivasi issues of identity and existence. It is to be considered that postcolonialism observes history as a complete framework of knowledge, observations and investigations but it is also a moving account of historical senses with which individuals engaged it at different levels. We find our engagements with social, political, historical, cultural and literary issues which undermined during colonial rule. Adivasi-the very son of the soil in India misses their existence in the creative writing of postcolonial writers. Their fight with colonial imperialist remains in dark shadow because of the dominant hegemonical approach in literature writing. This research article tries to examine how the tribal issues of disposition and subjugation be neglected or overrated by the established stalwarts in Indian English writing. The present research article focuses on the issues of cultural and intellectual silence maintained by mainstream intelligentsia on the most debatable issues of Indigenous subjugation. Research article also throws light on the historical marginalization and double disposition of native tribals of India in postcolonial Indian English writings especially in the novel writings. This research article urges to mainstream writing to go beyond the aesthetic pleasure of creative writing and glorification of tribal writing and feel the pain of disposition and separation of their natural abode and way of free living without the shackles of modernity. This research focuses to view the indigenous life from the spectacles of neoliberalism, globalization and its drastic impact which was elope in mainstream Indian writings in English.

Keywords: Indigenous ethos, cultural hierarchy, marginality, culture of silence, aesthetics

Introduction

India was a colonial state from 1750 to 1947 under British Imperialism. This was nearly 250 years-a huge span of time, which was full of historical, political, economic and cultural exploitations along with humiliation of native Indian sensibilities. During this drastic period of colonialism, much of writing have done which presented a big panorama of the slavery in India and the degradation of Indian values. In English literature, novel writing, started during 1868 and *Rajmohan's Wife* is to be considered as first English novel written. R.K. Narayan, Mulkraj Anand and Raja Rao gave a massive strength to Indian English novel writings depicting Indian realities on the dawn of Indian Independence. We can rely upon their descriptions of India which can be called as the mirror on that particular time of struggle for Independence. This realism in writings continued by Khushwant Singh, Chaman Nahal and Anita Desai in Post-Independence period. The ancient tribal communities with their historical heritage never peep through their creative writings.

The novel writing in India of the above-mentioned stalwarts actually deals with socio-political, cultural, economic and cultural marginalization during the British period in India. These above writers dealt with East-West encounters and

cultural clashes between Eastern and Western ideologies. These writers have proved the fact that the colonialism has deeply rooted in the psychology of the people of that particular territory. They have presented the Indian ethos in the Indian literary writings and rejected the colonial slavery and Eurocentric literary canons. These Indian writers have rejected the dominance of one culture over another and dominance of one history over the others. But still, have scope to say that we do not get enough representation of subjugated communities like Dalit and Adivasi in postcolonial Indian literature.

These marginalized communities are still in the clutches of internal colonization. After Independence, the harms of this colonization have presented through the writings of the above writers. Certainly, a major portion of the common man's struggle against imperialism in India remained invisible in their writings. In this regards, critic Jaydeep Sarangi, opines, "Indian history is the stuff tragedies are made of. The history of the colonialism in India needs to be told and retold not from an ideological standpoint, as is the case with the official project of writing and then rewriting history valorizing religious or ideological constituents, but form a politically non-partisan point of view"(Sarangi: 2007:01)^[4].

Soon after the Indian Independence, our nation was struggling for development in every sphere of life. The nation was taking progressive steps in social, political, economic, historical and cultural areas. Soon after, globalization and its global policies started to create a threat to particular communities like Adivasi and Dalit. They are still struggling for their basic rights of food, shelter, education, and health. It is crystal clear that India is now an open market for the European and American Multinationals. Everything that is to be considered as pious, harmonious in Indian moral value system is now in the trap of multinational corporates which does not have gratitude for the moral heritage and sufferings of displacement of weaker communities. Adivasi in India are the most targeted victims of the policies of neo-liberalism. In this way, globalization has not erased, feudalism or casteism but it has increased the wide gap of socio-economic disparities in Indian society. Mainstream Indian English Novelist is very silent in the issues of all kind of disparities to which tribals are in co-relation with.

The subaltern historians have presented the discourses of marginalizing communities but they have not presented the role of colonialism in bringing marginalization to the tribal community. The branch of subaltern studies is nothing but the study area of those intellectuals who brought up and learned from foreign universities and gives their opinion about Indian subjugated communities through their Eurocentric points of views. On the surface level, it seems that they have decolonized their mind from Eurocentric social values but when we observe minutely, their decolonization of mind have not played any major role in the upliftment of tribal and other subjugated communities of India. It indirectly helped to strengthen the neo-colonization of weaker section of society. Theories of postcolonialism and subaltern studies in India played a vital role in diverting the attention of common masses of India from neocolonial policies of multinationals to popular themes. In contemporary literature, we notice the major theories of post globalization, cosmopolitanism and statism, but these theories with metanarratives are hardly efficient to depict the distortions and anguish of common masses of India. The tribal life has vanished from mainstream social pages of literary discourses. In the Indian literary context, the subaltern theory does not speak about the subjugations of Adivasi from literary points of view.

In the post-colonial period of India, particularly in postcolonial Indian English literature, the mainstream novelist could not give proper justice to the disorientation and deculturization of the tribal society. If postcolonial literature deals with the historical aspects like subaltern studies, marginalization, social-political and economic disparities of Indian society, then this postcolonial Indian observation seems very weak in the case of the Adivasi upliftment of post-independent India. About the historical sense of postcolonialism, critic Gregory Castle, in his encyclopedia

The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory, Foregrounds

The postcolonial refers to the unrepresentable in the colonial, racial difference, legal inequality, and subaltern, all of the submerged or suppressed contradictions within the colonial social order itself. In this sense, the postcolonial present itself in the colonial epoch, especially during the period of decolonization, when social contradictions are expressed in the intensified nationalist organization and anti-colonial struggle. (Castle: 2007:135)^[1]

Flourishing Indian English Novel Writings

Indian English fiction writings flourished after the ending period of Indian colonization. During this period, Mulkraj Anand's *The Private Life of an Indian Prince*, Kamala Markandeyas, *The Golden Honeycomb*, *The Coffin Dam*, Manohar Malgonkar's *The Princess*, Attia Hussain's, *Sunlight on a Broken Column* deal with the postcoloniality. Arun Joshi, *The Strenge Caste of Billy Biswas*, *The Foreigner* and *The last labyrinth* shows the postcolonial nexus which affected Indian socio-political, economic and cultural issues. Feudalism, racism, ethnicity, political victimization, hybridity, nation-narration and alienation became important themes in postcolonial writings of Indian English fictionist. Historical tragedies and memorization of past were most appealing literary materials for the novel writing of postcolonial Indian novelist. Therefore Ania Loomba says that history does not just provide a background to the study of text but forms an essential part of textual meaning. Most of the postcolonial fiction writers delved into the history of India and tried to fictionalize it according to their decolonized mind. In this regard Gregory Castle, in his *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory* points out:

Postcolonial study includes those social and cultural situations in which domination takes on specific characteristics of widespread social services, reaction of populations and suppression of native traditions, languages and cultural practices postcolonial studies is profoundly involved in a project of historical revisionism that makes possible the representation of historical subjects and conditions of existence that had been ignored or suppressed by European historians. (Castle: 2007:141)^[1].

Invisibility of Indigenous Ethos in Postcolonial Indian English Writing

The postcolonial literature of the third world became the voice of the protest of suppressed cultures from various colonized and marginalized countries. These countries strengthen their resisting voices, delivered the circumstances of exploitation and attempted to reassert their own past, visions, traditions and harsh realities of historical suppression. These things were later found out in fourth world literature of Indigenous communities including Africa, Native America, New Zealand, Australian Aboriginal and Adivasis of India. The Postcolonialism speaks about the internal colonialism, double colonialism, internal racial discriminations, cultural hegemonies, the dominance of power and language, but in the Indian context, a major part of the aboriginal population never became a part of this postcolonial resistance literature. Tribals comprise 9% population over the country and these 12 crores of the Tribal population is living with their varieties of customs, rituals, nature worships and continuously facing dehumanizing problems like poverty, political victimization, displacement cultural alienation and rapidly following physical and mental genocide due to capitalism. The postcolonial Indian English fictions show the little concern about tribal's struggle for survival. This major population of Adivasi is invisible in pre-postcolonial literary writings of Indian English Fiction writers. Regarding these issues, Dr. Ashok Mashale opines in *the postcolonial perspective In Indian English Novel*,

"The importance of nationalism plays a vital role in postcolonial literary outputs. The concept of the nation has become a curious debate in the postcolonial study. It broods on the concerns of gender, ethnicity, race, religion, caste, language, tribes, class, region and so on. But particularly, the

above factors are absent in some postcolonial writings” (Mashale: 2011: 34).

These postcolonial Indian English responses became more vibrant during the 1980s with the emergence of the new novelist in the history of Indian English Fictions. Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight Children*, *Satanic Verses*, *Moors Last Sigh*, Vikram Seth’s novel *The Golden Gate*, *An equal Music*, Joydeep Bhattacharya’s, *The Gabriel Club*, G. V. Dasanis, *All about a Hatter*, Amitav Ghosh, *The Circle of Reason*, *In an Antic Land*, *The Hungry Tides*, *The sea of Poppies* and *The Great Derangement* derive the impressions of postcolonialism to multiculturalism and universalized their approaches. The literary sensibilities and literary pedagogy of these writers were more globalized. Their literary maturity and observance qualities were more integrated with all the sources available in religion, decolonization, legends, mythology and symbol of global concerns. In this regards critic M.K. Naik comments, “Several strategies-linguistic, literary, cultural and even political have been employed in the attempt to prove the utter redundancy of Indian literature” (Naik: 2009:168).

Expectation from the Indian English Creative Writers

It was expected that the postcolonial senses of Indian English fiction writings will give justice to the issue of ethnicity, caste, marginality, subjugation and the disposition of weaker sections through their writings. These communities are very close to the agrarian society of the Indian village culture. Though India got emancipation in 1947, the East-West cultural encounters and caste-ridden mentalities were still flowing through the minds of the certain social strata of the Indian society. After independence, we find a narrative of the middle class where we do not find the comprehensive participation of marginal and broken communities of India. The postcolonial writings do not show it’s concern about tribal sections, which played the most important role to sustain ecological aspects and the biodiversity life. Our literature in English could not present the tribal’s contribution to ecological sustainability. They remain outside of the mainstream literary expressions. In postcolonial Indian English fiction writings, much effort was taken on political, cultural and economic shaping of India, leaving behind anthropological and ecological concerns of marginal communities. The mythology of the tribal community, oral culture, landscape and the ideologies are barely found expressions in the Indian context of postcolonialism. In this regards, Bijay Kumar Das, in his *Critical Essays on Postcolonial Literature*, observes:

Postcolonialism means something that has concern only with the national culture after the departure of imperial power. Like colonialism, postcolonialism is a “state of consciousness”, a crucial stage in the continuum of our cultural process and self-awareness. Colonialism involves two types of imperialism-political and cultural. Therefore, myth and history, language and landscape, self and the other are very important ingredients of postcolonialism. (Das: 2007:07)^[2]

The colonial subjugations of India which forcefully emerged in postcolonial writing after the Indian Independence gradually shifted its center from east-west encounter to social realism. The theme of hunger, poverty, drought, broken village culture were predominant themes in the writings of Bhubhani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandeya. The partition and partition holocaust became a major theme in later postcolonial novels of Khuswant Singh, Chaman Nahal and Salman Rushdie. The concepts of nation and nationalities

were discussed through their writings. During the 1980’s Amitav Ghosh, Vikram Seth, Shashi Tharoor, Shobha De, Bharati Mukharjee and Manju Kapoor tried to provide strength to postcolonial responses through the themes like migration, globalization, magic realism and imaginary communities. Certainly, they are the writers of great stature, but it was expected from them that they will give justice to native’s cultures through their international literary experiences but it seems that tribal and their tribalism remained alien to them. Tribals pain could never become their pains.

It is very strange that India has postcolonial history but America, Britain France and Russia have not postcolonial literature and histories. The colonized countries have fragmented histories and colonizers have not fragmented histories and literature. When we go through the fiction writings of Indian English novelist, it seems that Indian English Fiction writers have never thought about this westernized postcolonialism which was favorable for the neo-colonization of third world countries, especially the weaker section like tribal, Dalit, women and laborers. In the postcolonial literature of India, imperialism has entered in its new form and shape. Literature is not the exception to it, but this neo-colonization of literature could not identify properly by mainstream writers in India. In this new imperial era, shining is new but the weapons of destructions are old. In postcolonial literature of India, subaltern writers have written histories from a decolonized point of view. They are still writing the histories of tribals, Dalits, women and laborers including all those deprived sections of society who were never the center of mainstream literatures but still their writings about subaltern classes could not bring any improvements in the life of tribals and the native communities of India.

A big narrative of dispossession, political victimization and cultural subjugations of tribals have been excluded in postcolonial Indian English Fictions. It is to be said that history is the record of cunning passages and fragmented stories. Today we are the witness of the historical valor of mainstream society but the bravery of tribal community is not there in historical writings of India. This disadvantaged community is still at the margin in the contemporary scenario. In this regard, Hamid Ansari, in his *Marginalization of Tribals in India*, explains, “In comparison to other disadvantaged communities and groups, the Adivasis have been less effective in constituting themselves as pan-Indian interest groups and in articulating their grievances through the formal political system. This could partly be attributed to lack of national homogeneity in the context and mechanism that has to lead to the exclusion and oppression of the Adivasis” (Xaxa: 2012:21).

Conclusion

This is very interesting to know that what the starting point of postcolonialism or postcolonial studies is. The answer is very surprising. This study becomes a focus area of study in Third world nations where the intellectuals of the Third nations comes to the First world’s posh educational institutions and makes their opinions about the rest of the world. In this case, knowledge becomes marginal to power. This is a question before the whole literary world that what will be the validity of postcolonialism and for what time it will keep the colonialism in its background? Though after a few years colonialism and postcolonialism will disappear it can never be rooted out from the psychology of colonized and colonizers.

The western world might consider themselves as superior to other countries in a matter of racial superiority but the reality is that there is highly racism in such developed countries. Neoliberalism is controlling the life of common masses. Therefore it is considered that the opportunity of new historical writings is possible to only those countries like Africa, Asia and Latin America where colonization has shown its destructive phases and faces. In comparison with postcolonial responses of other countries like Africa, Native America, Australia and New Zealand, it was expected that Indian English writers will give voice to the Indian Adivasis, their struggle for land, forest and mountain will become a source of inspiration to the other postcolonial writers of Third World, but the aboriginal life with its severe pathos, suffering and cultural genocide could never achieve that height in our Indian literature as the Indigenous writing of Red-Indians and Maoris could be reached. In this regard, Felix Padel, on the cover page of his celebrated volume *Out of this Earth-East India Adivasi and the Aluminum Cartel*, comments:

Copping the biggest mountain in South Odessa; are some of the world's best deposits of bauxite. It was expected this aluminum-mineral will bring prosperity to one of Indians poorest state. But for the tribal people, who have lived around them since history began these mountains are scared not a resource to be exploited, but a source of life itself through the water they store and release in perennial streams. So metal factories, built-in tribal areas with a view to mining the mountain summits, are seen as a new colonial invasion, to be resisted. Thousands of Adivasis have already been displaced, in a process of cultural genocide. (Padel: 2010: Blurb) ^[5]

The Postcolonial Indian English literature primarily deals with mainstream society and their emancipation from colonial rule. The broken identities and sacrifices of tribal throughout their various pre-colonial revolts could not take a dignified place in mainstream Indian English writings even after so many years of Independence. It strengthens our assumptions that Adivasis are the victim of internal colonialism in contemporary India. The writers of India, writing in English belongs to the middle classes and upper-caste society, have not gone beyond their own limited scopes in writing about the Indian reality. If at all they have written about tribal, it is to romanticize them and their lives.

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