



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

NARAYAN'S KOCHARETHI IN THE LIGHT OF POST- COLONIALISM

Hardik Udeshi

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Christ College, Rajkot

Dr. Paresh Joshi

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Christ College, Rajkot



VIDHYAYANA



VIDHYAYANA

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

ABSTRACT

British people have colonized almost whole world. Colonies were made and those people were convicted in different ways. The present paper proceeds from the conviction that post colonialism and ecocriticism have a great deal to gain from one another. The paper attempts to see with the perspective of how Adivasis, tribes in general are colonized not only with other people but with the people of themselves. The changes associated with globalization have led to the rapid extension and intensification of capital along with an acceleration of the destruction of the environment and a growing gap between the rich and the poor. Narayan in his novel *Kocharethi* shows how Malayaras are colonized with their land, customs, and traditions and with their identities. The paper will focus on the reading of novel with post-colonial perspective.

Keywords: Colonization, Post Colonialism, Forest, Adivasis



VIDHYAYANA



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

History notes that the world has made into colonies by British people. They had made colonies not only with the perspective of land but they had handicapped the mindset, the class system and the ethnographic context too. The changes attached to the world have made constant change in the monetary gain with an acceleration of creating destruction in forest region. The destruction has also created a major line between the elite and the laymen. This has marked into the colonial modernity, language, education, nationalism, gendered subalternity, cultural history and ecopolitics which are examined within the framework of post colonialism, thereby indicating the moral urgency for a fruitful alliance. The rapid growth in the context of geographical area and intellectual identity has an impact on the terrain in which postcolonial theory blooms. This paper proceeds in the conventions of reading Narayan's novel Kocharethi in the light of postcolonial approach. How the mindset of elite people hampers the land, identity and culture of Advasis in the novel. Narayan points out vital questions regarding the plight of Kerala's (the southernmost state of India) indigenous people in a postcolonial nation.

Postcolonial theory has frequently asserted the value of positionality in order to foreground the politics of discursive authority. Positionality has generally been thought to include race, gender, sexuality, and class but has more recently come to include geographical and biotic space. In an era of increasing ecological degradation, the mutually constitutive relationship between social inequity and environmental problems has become more stark and vivid.

To know that geographical areas are not only the mere a place but it's an image of a whole story in which human beings project with other forms, ecocritical conceptions of the world which inclines to the privilege of presenting the non-urban settings, in which those other life forms predominate. Subaltern Studies as history from the lower rungs of society is marked by a freedom from the restrictions imposed by the nation state. Postcolonial theory marks the approach with the urban perspective. It has the roots into the history as one explores it. It marks a huge difference in the Third world i.e. marginalized marking a centripetal point in the First world. Tribal groups have their own language, cultural upbringing, social and political movements which has been different from main stream cultural heritage. Since ages tribal literature has been oral and has kept alive throughout the ages and in the modern generation also. But this group has been marginalized due to the establishment of cruel hierarchy by the main stream society. This hierarchy is based on social discrimination of class, race, gender, language and the way of living.



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Gramsci speaks of the subaltern's incapability to think of the nation. Once it becomes possible for the subaltern to imagine the state, he transcends the conditions of subalternity. A consciousness of subject positions and voices can re-empower languages, deconstruct histories, and create new texts of denser dialogical accomplishment. Part of the project of postcolonial theory would be to push literary texts into this shifting arena of discursiveness, thus enabling new stands of counter narratives and counter contexts to shape themselves and complicate binarist histories. But polysomic, anticolonial subjectivities and their energies, which defy the definitions of the colonizer, are muted and translated into a monolithic national identity, articulated in the rhetoric of "Nationalism" in Kocharethi, a Malayalam novel on the Malayaraya tribe by Narayan (1998).

Various conceptualization of individual marks a different way of getting the relationship between the local and the global. Postcolonialism also recognizes interplay between the local and the global, but in a more cautious, indirect way. Suspicious of the ideological and material repercussions of globalizing impulses, postcolonialism admits the force of the global in a way that explicitly prohibits its healing into a formula that confirms the place of the individual in a universal order, either of nature or culture. The global and the local come together, not by the way of simple synecdoche, or the relationship between macrocosm and microcosm, but in a way such that each interrupts and distorts the other, thereby refusing the possibility of concrete platial or abstract global belonging (O'Brien 142).

The tribals of Kerala are never marked as "Malayalis". Unique in itself-their lifestyles and languages are significantly different from that of the dominant mainstream. Narayan's Kocharethi, the first novel in Malayalam by an Adivasi, is an historical intervention where, far from being the objects of history, the Adivasis now become its new subjects.

Postcolonial criticism, despite what might still be seen as an unduly anthropocentric bias, offers a valuable corrective to a variety of universalist ecological claims-the unexamined claim of equivalence among all "ecological beings", irrespective of material circumstances and the peremptory conviction, itself historically conditioned, that global ethical considerations should override local cultural concerns (Huggan 720).

Narayan, himself a Malayaraya, does not attempt to depict the historical or mythical spheres of the tribal experience. Instead, he unravels, fifty or sixty years entwined with his own life situations. He deftly challenges the incorrect representations of the Adivasis in contemporary cinema, television and publications. The life



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

described in the novel, with all rituals, ceremonies, customs, faith, institutions of marriage, food, clothing and shelter, recall the period prior to the Renaissance in Kerala. Man's raw encounter with the forces of nature is vividly portrayed. The forest is not only life-generating but also life-consuming.

If pressing environmental crises have spurred the development of environmental criticism in literary studies, the increasing awareness of how such crises have been and will continue to disproportionately impact the vulnerable populations of the postcolonial world have made the nexus of postcolonialism and ecocriticism a particularly urgent area of study. Yet, this intersection is fraught with danger.

Kocharethi brilliantly accounts of the life and nature of the Malayaraya tribe. Marriages occurred between cousins. Women always carried sickles and axe unafraid to kill anyone who molested them. If unable to do that, the very same sickle ended their lives. They were in charge of their sexuality.

The arrival of colonial modernity converted forests into reserved forests and plantations. Destruction of the old order, and the onset of a new one created identity crises. Kochuraman, the "medicine-man", had always used animal fat; but he later resorts to soda-water and moves to the medical college for treatment. The tinges of this transition in the life of the Malayaraya tribe are poignantly captured by Narayan.

The feudal landlord, the king and the British Raj are symbols of the various stages of this transition. The oppressive power of nascent laws and authority perplex and terrify the tribals. Apart from nature, "humans" also torture them. The Malayarayas were cheated in prices and weights of their forest products when the currencies and measures changed into the British system. This cancerous exploitation by "civil society" forced them to search for education. Kochupillai the teacher leads them into the light of letters. The dream of a government job, migration into the city, love-marriages all follow. Christian preaching also occur, creating a hybrid of "New Christians"- always prefixed by the term "arayan".

Language is a fundamental site of struggle in subaltern discourses resisting translation, because colonization begins in language. The evident pull towards colonial modernity and nationalist themes in Kocharethi is found in its language too, which is very near to standard Malayalam, the disjunctions being minimal. There is no attempt to capture the linguistic and cultural ethos of the language of the Malayaraya tribe (Pillai par 23). The subaltern community in Kocharethi, having lost its language, having been translated and co-opted into the dominant discourse, has also lost the power to name. Parvathi, Madhavan, Narayanan -



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

all names of upper caste Hindu gods, speak of the silencing a culture. A community devoid of its language is a community devoid of dignity.

Kocharethi takes place at the far end of this phase, in the early half of the twentieth century. It encloses a space of transition from the colonial to the post-colonial within the imagined boundaries of the nation state. Thus, situated in a later milieu of Indian history, Kocharethi in a way addresses the questions of acculturation and education of the subaltern, in short of the subaltern's translation as "appropriation". Education as a necessary ploy for moulding homogenous identities came packaged with the label promising equality and liberty. But the subaltern aspires for education in order to be liberated from the land and its woes. Kocharethi is filled with the new subaltern dream of a government job. Narayan makes a feeble attempt to parody this process of "modernizing" the tribal. But the novel fails in demarcating a political position opposing colonial modernity (Pillai par13).

Kocharethi reveals the slow acculturation of the native into the economy, culture and politics of the nation state. The native in Kocharethi falls prey to the project of colonial modernity, which the new Indian state sets out to continue in order to prove its capability to self-rule. Kocharethi depicts the plight of the native subaltern caught in the regulative politics of the infallible nation state, and betrayed by the promise of the participatory citizenship, struggling to find voice amidst the homogenized Babel of nationalist discourses. State hegemony, nationalist ideology, dominant language and cultural interpellation - all collude to construct the native of Kocharethi as a passive subject (Pillai par16).

Kocharethi embraces and enhances the task of colonial modernity to instill middle class values and bourgeois virtues into the gendered "national" subaltern subject. The new woman, conscious of her identity, is at the same time out of her roots. As Parvathy, the educated subaltern migrates to the city, the narrative, in an allegorical twist leaves Kochuraman and Kunjipennu stranded in a government hospital, at the mercy of state welfare aids. Thus one sees the articulation of gender being translated into a different idiom by the interventions of the modern state. Narayan assumes a nationalist identity by which he sees education of subaltern women as necessary but not at the cost of losing the essence of their "femininity" and "culture". The women of Kocharethi have no role in the struggle for independence. As Parvathy inhabits the secure space of her home, Madhavan and his comrades go out into the public domain to free the nation, thus lending their subaltern identities to structure the hegemony of a patriarchal nationalist culture.



VIDHYAYANA

ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

Meena T. Pillai points out that a close reading of Kocharethi reveals the nuances through which gender and ethnic relations become inextricably linked to the formation of the Indian state (par 22). The novel provides a framework to picture the formation of India as a sovereign, socialist, democratic, republic, where native and gender identities are subsumed and tokenized to strengthen the unifying logic of the nation.

Kocharethi is a giving in, a passive surrender to the larger history of the nation state (Pillai par 26). In postcolonial parlance to have a history is to have a legitimate existence but the text denies itself in this legitimacy of being, in Kocharethi the subaltern is deftly muted by the dominant discourse. The paper tussles with discourse of the colonial modernity and the nation state that one finds in Kocharethi co-opts the native and re-fashions according to the norms of the dominant culture. Subaltern translations of the lingo of the nation and nationalism thus become acts of cultural displacement. Claiming the nation in the language also means being claimed by the nation.

"no one knows the forest like we do, the forest is mother to us, more than a mother because she never abandons us" (Bhaskaran 5).



VIDHYAYANA



VIDHYAYANA

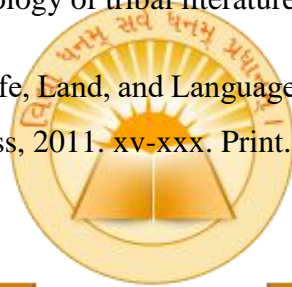
ISSN 2454-8596

www.vidhyayanaejournal.org

An International Multidisciplinary Research e-Journal

References

1. Narayan. (2011). Kocharethi. (Catherine Thankamma, Trans.). New Delhi: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 1988).
2. Parry, B. (2004). Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique. London: Routledge.
3. Propp, Vladimir. (1968). Morphology of the Folktale. Austin: University of Texas Press.
4. Trimmer, Joseph and Tilly Warnock. (1992). Understanding Others: Cultural and Cross-Cultural Studies and the Teaching of Literature. Urbana, 111: National Council Teachers of English.
5. Anderson, Benedict. (1991). Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism. London: Versos.
6. Devy, G N. Painted words: an anthology of tribal literature. New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2002. Print.
7. Jayasree, G.S. "Adivasi Rachna: Life, Land, and Language" Kocharethi: The Araya Woman. Narayan. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011. xv-xxx. Print.



VIDHYAYANA