



Colonialism and Tribal Women

Sadaf Yasmin.

Ph. D Scholar

Dept. of English

YBN University, Ranchi

Dr. Arti Gupta

Asst. Professor Cum HOD

Dept. of English

YBN University, Ranchi

Abstract:

Post colonialism can provide an outlet for citizens to discuss various experience from the colonial period, these include : migration, slavery, oppression, resistance, gender, race, etc. post colonial feminist sees parallel between nation once under the rule of coloniser and the condition of women under patriarchal rule. We see many points of similarity between the relation of the colonizer and the colonized and that between a man and his woman. The main idea behind the paper is to represent the atrocities faced by tribal women in the name of marriage and how their state is that of a colonized entity in the hands of brutal colonizers in the name of an institution called “Marriage”.

Keywords: Feminism, Post Colonialism, Tribal women, Marriage

Post-colonial, as the term refers to resistance to colonial power and its discourse that continues to shape the culture even of those who have forsaken all sorts of bonds with the colonizer. Thus, post-colonial theory focuses on

overturning the colonizer's discourse which tries to deform the actual truth. It also concentrates on the literature of the colonized people who through their writing tried to articulate their existence and individuality. It is according to Ritu Tyagi "the task of a post colonial theorist to insert the absent colonized subject into the dominant discourse in a way that it subverts the authority of the colonizer."

Post-colonial feminism is a form of feminism which developed as a response to the fact that feminism seemed to focus solely on the experience of women in western cultures. That is to say, post colonial feminist theory tries to represent the condition of women in one's colonised country and in western location. It concentrates on the gender difference in colonial and anti-colonial discourses, representation of women in anti-colonial and post colonial discourse with particular reference to the work of women writers. The post colonial feminist critics raise a number of conceptual, methodological and political problems involve in the study of representation of gender.

Atrocities against women are a growing source of worry nowadays. Domestic violence, including rape in marriages, female infanticide/foeticide, and other crimes against them are on the rise. Patriarchal oppression, violence, gender discrimination, a lack of chances, extreme poverty, etc. are other issues that still affect women. Thus, it is crucial that we discuss topics like women's liberation/emancipation and women's empowerment. We frequently overlook the hardships of tribal women while discussing such topics. Generally speaking, tribal communities have been described as egalitarian societies, particularly in comparison to the caste system's hierarchical structure. Regarding the status of women, it cannot be said. In various societies, women have varied statuses. According to kinship, sexuality, employment, marriage, and age, all civilizations present to their children the existence of two genders and corresponding duties. It also provides a set of attitudes, requirements, metaphors, and myths that serve as general guidelines for performing these jobs. The goal of the current study is to describe the position of women in four ecologically distinct geographic areas with diverse socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Any social group's standing is based on its level of wellbeing, literacy, education, and standard of life.

Tribal women are given a higher status than women in many non-tribal societies according to traditional anthropological and sociological literature. The broad perspective put forth for this perception includes tribal

women's greater participation in subsistence and market economies, their ability to own some landed resources for economic activities, the existence of the bride-price (or bride-wealth) system, the ability to choose one's own life partner, and relatively free venture in male-dominated domains.

These conventional criteria for assessing tribal women's status have been questioned by present day anthropologists and social scientists while they find that under the umbrella concept of "higher status", the tribal women's life is not so pleasant. They are dominated by men's dominant paradigm of gender system in various social, economic and political fronts. Women are deprived of the right to inherit valuable resources, if at all they are official heirs; in practice the men control those resources. Despite their greater involvement in work-role performance, the tribal women mostly lack power to control the benefits of their labor, production and reproduction. In terms of health, education, decision making and political participation etc the tribal women are mostly found to be lagging behind their men counterparts. Thus an analysis of the situation of tribal women through gender perspective promises a better and unbiased depiction of life of tribal women.

The main idea behind the paper is to represent the status of a married tribal woman as depicted by a renowned writer Jacinta Kerketta. Her works vividly describe the pain, anguish and intense emotions of the tribal women. *Angor* is one such work of Jacinta Kerketta where in many of her poems she deals with the theme of marriage where, in many instances, we see the relation between the couple is quite similar to that between the colonizer and colonized. In the poems we see a clear distinction of two different strata of people residing in the same family depending on their gender.

In the article "*First Thing First*": *Problem of a feministic approach to African literature* by **Kristen Holst Deterson** that even for women belonging to different countries, caste, creed or race, the problems faced by them are quite similar.

As per **Ania Loomba** in her "*Colonial and Post Colonial identities*", points out that "*From the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond) female bodies symbolize the conquered land.*" This metaphoric use of the female body varies according to the exigencies and history of particular colonial situations. Like we see in a famous 6th century picture where half naked America and closed Vespucci is shown. Again Asia is always clothed

riding a canal showing her surplus wealth. **Gayatri Spivak's** *'In Other Worlds'* echoes the same sentiment when she writes, "India is a mother-by-hire. All classes of people, the post-war rich, the ideologies, the indigenous bureaucracy, the diasporic, the people who are sworn to protect the new state, abuse and exploit her." This is evidently seen in the poem "THE HERO IN YOU" where Jacinta says "O Sanwari, you swarthy beauty, what be this scar on your forehead? A mark so deeply red as if blood, now congealed, Adorns your brow, A wound of many centuries, Refusing to mend and heal." The lines depict the pain endured by women which has become an inevitable part of their life. Further she questions the symbols women put on them which gives testimony of their marital status but ironically none could be seen on men. Talking about not just the mental but physical abuses they suffer she further says "O Sanwari, Whyever did you learn to hide in the fold of your silken clothes the countless marks of his blows, criss crossing your naked skin? Drops of blood oozing from your sores..."

Another instance where we see the depiction of females in the poems being treated as 'subaltern' is when we talk about the concept of 'gaze.' As per **Spivak**, "*A basic technique of representing the sub altered as such (of either sect) is as the objects of gaze from above.*" When we talk about the code of intimacy or the sexual relation of patriarchal relation we see how in such society women are split subjects who watch themselves being watched by men. They make an object of themselves subjugating to the laws of femininity which is defined by being gazed upon by men. This could be seen in another poem from the collection Angor, "THE VERMILLION BOND" where the women even though deeply unhappy in their marriage everyday tend to perform the duty of a compliant wife. "Every morning she leaves the bed and picks out from the folds of the spread shards of broken relationship." The concept of "Gaze" could be seen in another poem "JAMUNI, WHO ARE YOU AFTER ALL?" where the pain, suffering and anguish of women are displayed and are used by people in power for their benefits. "O, Jamuni! The anguish and despair of the day Are now on the dailies market display. From local to international Your agonies and pains are all on sale!" the poems talks about the trauma a woman goes through in the form of physical violence by husbands, sexual assault by neighbors, "the unwanted seed of love" in their wombs, endurance of oppression, torture and abuse all "Ingredients for spicy, sensational news of your pain, to be packed and sold."

When we see the theme of economic dependency of one subject on another, it hints on how post colonialism and feminism are oppressed to Marxism. According to Marxist theory, *the ruling class constructs the minds of the working class*. The ruling class for post colonialism is Europe and for feminism is Men. However, the working class, as a result of the material condition of its exploitation and oppression, will fight against the ruling class by producing its own ideas. The same concept has been depicted in the poem “COMPASSION” where a woman is seen preparing tea for someone who adorns the woman for everything she does. He lauds her struggle and resilience and her responsibilities towards her family but later it is the poetess who tries to show the mirror to the woman by saying “O Chamu! That man who feigns admiration For your trials and tribulations, He swindles from you with such ease Those precious few saved rupees.

Under colonial rule, the image of nation or culture as a mother worked to evoke both female power and female helplessness. As mothers to the nation, real women were granted limited agency. As per **Ania Loomba** “*arguments for women’s education in metropolitan as well as colonial contexts rely on the logic that educated women will make better wives and mother.*” But ironically at the same time a constant eye is kept on a woman so that she does not cross the boundary as prescribed by the society and usurp the authority from men. Humanists writing during renaissance Europe were careful about the lines of distinction between a learned woman and “*a virago*” who might usurp male authority.” They on one hand wanted women as companion and helpmate and on the other hand wanted someone completely subservient to the male head.

This is something similar to the conditions of women in this novel, a careful reading of **Spivak’s** “*Can the Subaltern Speak?*” results in the emergence of so many questions in one’s mind. Can the subaltern actually speak? Have they been completely silenced? It is from here we get the knowledge of power relation of a pen and a penis phallus : This could be evidently seen in many of her poems depicting plights of women as they are compelled to get away with their dreams and aspiration and are forced to become mere mother of someone or wife of someone completely losing their own identity. At times they are not even known by their own names but by names of either their husband or children.

The concept of marital adjustment refers essentially to the art of living effectively and

wholesomely within the framework of responsibilities, relations and expectancies that constitute the state of marriage. It means the ability to meet the day-to-day demands, vicissitudes, and responsibilities of marriage with whatever degree of emotional equanimity and efficiency is required at the time. It involves getting along with the activities of the family group, accepting additional responsibilities as they arise, and changing one's style of life to correspond with changes in family life.

Thus we see how in different societies women like colonized subjects have been relegated to the position of "other". Colonized by various forms of patriarchal domination. They share with colonized races and cultures and intimate experience of politics of oppression and depression. It is not surprising therefore, that the history and concerns of feminist theory have parallel development in pos colonial theory.

Bibliography:

Anil Kumar Mohapatra, PhD Theory of Feminism and Tribal Women: An Empirical Study of Koraput

Ashcroft, Bill. Post colonial reader. Routledge publications Ashcroft, Print2005.

Ashcroft, Bill Post-Colonial studies: The Key Concepts . 2012. Print

Dr. Veena Bhasin, Status of Tribal Women, Department of Anthropology University of Delhi Delhi 110 007, India

Kosambi. Meera. Women writing gender. Permanent black publications. 2012. Print.

Gandhi, Leela. Post colonial theory. Oxford University Press. 1999. Print.

Kerketta Jacinta, Angor. Published by Adivaani 2016

Loomba, Ania. Colonialism post colonialism. Routledge Publications. 2007. Print.