

Dehumanization, Agony and Pain of the Tribal Masses: An analysis of the novels '*The Storyteller*' by Mario Vargas Llosa, '*Chotti Munda and His arrow*' by Mahasweta Devi and '*Things Fall Apart*' by Chinua Achebe

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Abstract: The pains and agonies of tribal masses are always ignored by civilized people. They are always sidelined and subdued. God has created human beings equal. The moment one child is born he/she hardly has any consciousness of being one among or the other. Reason behind God made us equal. Forgetting the core reality a few civilized masses in the name of development try to exploit the worshiper of Mother Nature. These people have possess any knowledge about the mantra of survival. Ignoring human value and morality if one keeps on devastating the natural resources as well as tortures the tribes than one day will come when Prakriti (nature) itself will punish us for the exploitation. However, development forces us to act like Dhritarastra therefore; wearing the proud crown of governance one is giving only negative output. Now the time comes to offer justice to those suffered masses who experienced such inhuman conditions.

Key Words: Exploitation, Trauma, Devastation, Agony.

A tribe is considered as a group of people dependent on their land for livelihood and not integrated into society. It is again supposed to be a clan-based social structure under a recognized leader who is still in uncivilized phase of development. Generally a tribe contains similar culture, language and dialect along with common ancestors. The term tribal person is mainly used to refer to the group of people who are recognized on the basis of their social structure, clan and kinship. As we know that a tribe consists of a number of families and clans and also a unit of socio political association in which they share a common ancestry and culture therefore, they don't follow a formal or permanent leadership. Etymologically, the word "tribe" comes from old French word *tribu* or from Latin word *tribus* one of the three political/ethnic divisions of the original Roman state (Tites, Ramnes and Luceres, possibly subsequent to the Latins, Sabines and Etruscans). The word 'tribe' also occurs in 12th century Middle English Literature. The Latin word 'tribus' is also used in the bible, it translates as Greek phyla "race, tribe, clan" and "tribe", "race and clan" can be used interchangeably in their historical sense. Stephen Corry, director of *Survival International*, (the world's only organization dedicated to indigenous rights), has defined tribal people as

"Those which have followed ways of life for many generations that are largely self-sufficient, and are clearly different from the mainstream and dominant society"

Historical background of the tribal people gives the idea of their love towards Mother Nature. Generally, their lives centered in the lap of nature. Alienating themselves from the luxuries of city life a tribe creates its own circle of life proving themselves both as the nature-users as well as nature-protector. Pathetically, these people are victimized in the name of civilization as well as social development. Even the so called political reformers also take no place unturned to disturb the life circle of these people for their personal benefits. Regrettably, these people become the victim of exploitation, marginalization, discrimination and oppression. Therefore, The United Nations has raised an avowal on the rights of aboriginal people to legalize their collective rights such as- culture, identity, language and access to employment, health, education and natural resources. In particular Article 33, it is comprehended by many national law makers to state tribal rights based on:

- 1) Tribal/indigenous people have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and tradition. This does not impair the rights of indigenous individuals to obtain citizenship of the states where they live.
- 2) Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the structure, membership and procedures of their institutions.

“Convention No.169 is a legally binding international instrument open to ratification, which deals specifically with the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples. Today, it has been ratified by 20 countries. Once it ratifies the Convention, a country has one year to align legislation, policies and programmes to the Convention before it becomes legally binding.”

(ILO 1)

Even the basic principles of the convention discussed about several critical issues like **Non-discrimination, Taking Special Measures etc.** The Article 3 of the Convention mentions about the right of indigenous people to enjoy the fundamental human rights without any obstacle and discrimination. In Article 4, the Convention guarantees enjoyment of the general rights of citizenship without discrimination. Another principle in the Convention concerns the application of all its provisions to male and female indigenous persons without discrimination (Article 3). Article 20 provides the scope of prevention towards the discrimination against aboriginal workers.

Again, Article 7 of Convention No. 169 states that indigenous and tribal peoples have the right to “Decide their own priorities for the process of development as it affects their lives, beliefs, institutions and spiritual well-being and the lands they occupy or otherwise use, and to exercise control over their economic, social and cultural development”.

The indigenous people have the **Right to equality**, including equality before law, prohibition of discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, gender or place of birth, and equality of opportunity in matters of employment, eradication of untouchability and abolition of titles. They even have the **Right to freedom** which includes speech and expression, assembly, association.

Right to life and liberty, Right to education, protection, Right against exploitation, prohibiting all forms of forced labour, child labour and traffic in human beings as well as Right to freedom of religion, including freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion, freedom to manage religious affairs, freedom from certain taxes and freedom from religious instructions in certain educational institutes.

The Constitution of India recognizes Scheduled Tribes as a group of historically disadvantaged people. Even, during the British rule in Indian these were considered as Depressed Class and from 1850s they were titled as Depressed Classes, or Adivasis (original inhabitants). According to the census report of 2011, “Scheduled Tribes” comprise about 8.6% of India’s population. Therefore, since independence, the Schedule Tribes are given reservation in India. Thus, several positive measures have taken by the government of India for the betterment of Schedule Tribes.

India is considered and admired as a democratic country with versatile culture. Here, we have maximum freedom to breath in fresh air. Competing the world culture Indians even proved themselves as one of the best in world wide. The proud Indians even bestowed themselves as the aficionado of freedom. Even though, various steps have been taken by the government for the upliftment of tribal people still they are deprived from their basic/ fundamental rights which are clearly portrayed in the novels of Mahashweta Devi and Mario Vargas Losa i.e. *Rights over the Forests ChottiMunda & His Arrow*, and *The Storyteller*.

Mahashweta Devi, the notable writer as well as activist writes against social injustice, inequity and paucity, especially against tribal and indigenous people in India. After Gopinath Mohanty Mahasweta Devi is the one who dedicated her life to the tribal cause. She has been writing about them more than three decades. Mahasweta Devi, the Bengali fiction writer and social activist supports the cause of the 25 million tribal people in India, who belong to approximately 150 different tribes. Her writing reflects the malice, nastiness and desolation in the lives of the tribal people and indicts Indian society for the indignity it heaps on its most oppressed constituents. Mahashweta Devi involved deeply with the tribal life in Chotanagpur region and has written various novels, short stories and articles pertaining to the tribal issues. Mahashweta Devi through her writings tries to give bring a pride place for these indigenous people. She mostly discussed about the rich history and culture of the tribes of Chotanagpur region. As indigenous people are always sidelined from the mainstream therefore, to bring back them into the central position she vigorously discussed the life history of the tribal masses. She has also criticized the government for purchasing agricultural fertile land from farmers and then selling those lands to the industrialists at dust cheap rates. She has strongly criticized the commercialization of Santiniketan of Rabindranath Tagore. She supports Budhan theatre-the theatre group of Tribal’s in Gujarat.

In an interview with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Mahasweta Devi explains why she thought of writing about tribal history:

"Once a tribal girl asked me,

'When we go to school, we read about Mahatma Gandhi. Did we have no heroes? Did we always suffer like this?'

That is why I started writing about the Tribal Movements and the Tribal heroes"

(Devi, *Imaginary* iii).

Even though, like Gandhiji various tribal leaders contributed a lot in their own freedom movements but they were always sidelined from the main root. Very few of us might know about the Birsa Munda Movement (1874-1901) or about the leader Birsa Munda. Therefore, through her writings Mahasweta Devi urges to distinguish the importance and greatness of tribal life and culture. Similarly, Mario Vargas Llosa in his novel *The Storyteller* introduces the traumas, degradation and alienation of tribal people. He was born on March 8, 1936 in Peru. In 2010 he won the Nobel Prize in Literature. Most of his writings contain historical material along with his personal experience. He tried to throw light on the corruption in the Peruvian society. He also challenged the political power that created inadequacies in society, oppression and marginalization. His writings have shown an individual's struggle for freedom.

In the novel *The Storyteller* Mario Vargas Llosa has given the microcosmic representation of the macrocosm through the character of Saul Zuratas. Saul Zuratas is Jew by birth. He experiences the severe pain of alienation because of his community as well as his look. Jews are always considered as the other within Christian community. Moreover, the birthmark of Saul Zuratas forced him to live like other with a new identity i.e. Mascarita.

SAUL ZURATAS had a dark birthmark, the color of wine dregs, that covered the entire right side of his face, and unruly red hair as stiff as the bristles of a scrub brush. The birthmark spared neither his ears nor his lips nor his nose...but he was also a likable and exceptionally good person. I never met anyone who showed such simplicity and heart, no matter what the circumstances. (3)

Mascarita doesn't belong to any tribal community but the alienation and pain of tribal people always fascinates him because both Mascarita and tribal clan experience same trauma of alienation.

In the name of enjoyment very often people rush towards the jungle carrying all the modern accessories to capture the lifestyle of tribes without giving a single thought that how their visit can be a matter of disturbance for the tribal clan. As we know that these tribal people are the worshiper of nature. They live in the lap of Mother Nature and earn their bread and butter from the same. Initially without experiencing any sophisticated culture of Modernism these people simply lead their lives according to their own way, following their own culture but so called modern people time and again not only disturb their life circle but also make fun of their life style, their way of dressing and of their culture forgetting the

fact that all human beings have experienced the law of evolution. Sometimes for their own development these people try to uproot the tribes from their native places. In the novel *The Storyteller* Mascarita discusses about the similar condition of tribes with the narrator:

No, pal. As a matter of fact, I'm understanding. I swear. What's being done in the Amazon is a crime. There's no justification for it, whatever way you look at it. Believe me man. It's no laughing matter. Put yourself in their place, if only for a second. Where do they have left to go? They've been driven out of their lands for centuries, pushed farther into the interior each time, farther and farther. (20)

From times immemorial till present era if one looks at the tribal history one will hardly find any note of appreciation about the culture, society of tribes whereas like normal human being these people too have their own culture, well structured society with a rich heritage. But one hardly cares about these people they are subordinate, they are not literature, they are not less than the animals of zoo as one goes to zoo to watch the animals similarly, one goes to jungle to watch the tribes. Moreover, they are the alienated other. Mascarita experienced the similar condition and was able to empathize with Machiguenga people. He loved to live among them and became the storyteller who depicted the stories about the rich culture of Machiguenga People.

But that's the way they are and we should respect them. Being that way has played them to live in harmony with their forests for hundreds of years. Though we don't understand their beliefs and some of their customs offend us, we have no right to kill them off. (26)

Saul loves the harmonious life of Machiguenga people. He even opines that instead of alienating the tribes in the name of civilization one should understand and learn from them that how to live. He always speaks against the ongoing inhuman practices in Amazon Jungles. For Saul these people are the idols of tolerance, piety, sacrifice and leave fragrance of inspiration to him. But in the name of civilization and for their benefits these people are tortured by the white people.

He spoke to me at length of the practices of the Viracochas and the mountain people who has come down from the Andes to conquest the jungle and clear the woods with fires that burn over enormous areas of land, which after one or two crops become barren because of the lack of humus and the corrosion caused by rain. Not to mention, pal, the extermination of animals, the frantic greed for hides and skins...had made of jaguars, lizards, pumas, snakes and dozens of other species biological rarities on the point of vanishing. (24)

The novel *Chotti Munda and His Arrow* by Mahasweta Devi also discusses about tribal identity, human rights, violent resistance. In this novel, author vigorously talks about the conversion of Munda tribe to Christianity. In the name of development missionaries tries to hack the psychology of tribal people and creates a new path of exploitation in the name of conversion.

One of the landowner's functionaries, most delighted at the manager's misfortunes, says, What can you do? The Tomaru Mission sahib is buddies with the Gormen at Ranchi. They make people Christian by force, and in this case so many people are begging to become Christian. (72)

Mahasweta Devi even depicts about the alienation of the tribes through the character of Chotti Munda, the protagonist of the novel. In the novel itself Chotti Munda realizes that till the other i.e. Bihari, Britishers have come to their land their culture was untouched and pure but the moment these people entered into the land they blemished the land and people altogether. In order to fulfill their hunger the non-tribal people started destroying all the natural resources as well as huts of tribes ignoring the cries of women and children. Similar situation is depicted in the novel *The Storyteller*. Here, Vargas Losa depicted the devastating inhuman act of British People who arrived in the village to establish a mission. Chinua Achebe one of the famous African writers in his novel *Things Fall Apart* mentioned about the same brutality of British People which resulted with the unexpected death of the hero Okonkwo. In the novel *The Storyteller* we have reference like this:

Those apostolic linguists of yours are the worst of all. They work their way into the tribes to destroy them within, just like chiggers. Into their spirit, their beliefs, their subconscious, the roots of their way being. The others steal their vital space and exploit them or push them father into their interior. At worst, they kill them physically. Your linguists are more refined. They want to kill them in another. Translating the Bible into Machiguenga...(95-96)

Thus, the harmonious lives of tribes are disturbed by the civilized people forcing them to migrate to the city life leaving the lap of Mother Nature. Yet a few tribes are making an ongoing struggle for survival in the deep forest. But the question arise why did the civilized masses force these indigenous people to leave their land? Why did they uproot their home? Why did devastation make in the forests? Why did these people consider as other? Why are their histories ignored? We might hardly have any answer to all these questions. In reality we need only our benefits. We hardly pay attention to other's problem. We need development stepping feet in other. Sometimes we forget of being human. We even forget that laptop and mobile phone can only give happiness for few minutes but actual happiness can only be derived from nature. Even the luxuries have an end and at that time we have to rush back to nature therefore, one should not interrupt the circle of nature as well as the worshiper of it. The capitalist even deprived the tribal people from getting proper education. Time and again various politicians visit and make promises for the development of these people but everything is just null and void. Today, forgetting the actual cause of reservation policy or being unaware about the actual cause behind the same youngsters make a lot of hue and cry but, if we walk few steps back we will realize the enormous brutality experienced by these tribal masses much larger than the facilities they are being provided now.

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