

***He Who Rides a Tiger* by Bhabani Bhattacharya: Narrating Oppressed Voices and Resisting the Establishment**

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Abstract:

Postcolonial Indian English novels have made a significant contribution to Indian English literature and world literature. They captivated new readers throughout the globe. The Indian novelist expanded the scope of their depiction of the Indian scene from the viewpoint of the new India. They investigate the new issues and trends of Indian society, including the issues of Subaltern voices, marginality, regionalism, and confrontation concerning the Indian archetypal myth, Political issues through the Magic realism, the discourses of cosmopolitan narrative, and the issues of the nostalgic memories of displacement. In fact, they dealt with colonial, decolonization, matrimonial, sexuality, gender, and hybridization of languages and ideological discourses issues.

The subaltern is nothing more than the discourse of those who have been harmed by the lack of economic, political, and social stability in society. They suffered from a sense of colonisation and inferiority complex brought on by hunger. In addition, they appear ethnically insecure and less socially active. In contrast to the elite, they have no access to technology and are therefore far removed from the scientific community. Being subaltern man or women seem powerless. They are powerless against the dominant forces. Subalterns are now excluded from prosperity and a high standard of living. Subaltern status is a stain on human society.

*This paper examines the subaltern voices and resistance in Bhabani Bhattacharya's 1954 novel *He Who Rides a Tiger*, which depicts the Bengal famine and the Quit India Movement. Through the novel's protagonist, Kalo, and his daughter, Chandralekha, Bhattacharya presents the issues of Bengal famine. They endure poverty, starvation, persecution, oppression, and injustice at the hands of the dominant social order and businessmen. Bhattacharya focuses on narrative subaltern voices and their struggle for survival in a society dominated by powerful political and businessmen. Kalo and Chandralekha oppose capitalist Motichand and other political figures such as Mangal Adhikari, Sir Abalabandu, and Biten. Bhattacharya describes post-independence India and its new subaltern society challenges. The narrative will investigate using a postcolonial theoretical framework.*

Keywords: *Subaltern, Voice, Narrative, Starvation, Poverty, Society*

Bhabani Bhattacharya in his novel, *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1954) focuses on the insensitive reality of the Bengal in India. The caste system destroys the life of subaltern people. The poor become the victim of the caste at the grass root level in the Society. The Bengal famine and The Quit India Movement reflects resistance against the muddled political governance (Saleem 122). Bhattacharya exposes the facts of the post-independence Indian world. The novel depicted discourse of the subaltern protagonist and his resistance against dominating forces. He gets the rude insults, anguish, and gets beaten up on his body. According to K.R.S Iyengar, the novel is:

the tempo of life in this most populous of Indian cities- the complex of urban vices and the thin veneer of urban sophistication, the pressure of mass movements and mass hysteria, the reign of superstitions and mumbo-jumbo gives the novel an eerie and piquant quality all its own (qtd in Patel 70).

The novel runs by the subaltern protagonist Kalo who tries to survive by working as a blacksmith in the rural area. Kalo suffers from the castism and tries to resist but being deprived and powerless his resistance seems futile. He belongs to Brahmin caste. His wife passes away at the earlier time. His daughter, Chandralekha also squabbles to maintain her life in the society. The novel focuses on the circumstances that how the subaltern Kalo and his daughter dealt with the atrocious social reality (Patel 70). Kalo revolted against upper caste businessman while he forcefully oppressed his daughter. She works at some houses where her body gets trapped by the rich people. She helplessly endures her pain without resisting sometimes she tries but gets threaten from the rich householders (Sinha 18). "The way of struggle is the true way. The struggle, first of all, against fear" (Bhattacharya 169). Moreover, Kalo sentenced to imprison in case of pilfering the banana from the shop kipper's shop. He wants to have it and thrust the hunger but unfortunately, he gets the punishment for three-month jail. When he comes out of jail, finds difficulties in running life, there is nothing to work, food, oppressed by the worse tortured in jail only for stealing a banana. His life becomes more tragic when he lost his daughter.

The world was completely after the incident. He was a poor and subaltern that's why he suffered from a sense of marginalization and nothingness in life (Sharma 30). According to John Berger and et al. Subaltern is such as, "a people or a class which is cut off from its own past is far less free to choose and act as a people or class than one that has been able to situate itself in history" (qtd in Ireland 164).

Furthermore, Chandralekha narrates the subaltern voice of her old aunt, that how they get thrown from their home. Her family extremely suffered from the regime of capitalism and bourgeoisie violence during the Bengal famine:

What evil destiny had broken up their homes? Old Aunt had tried to avert it by puja and prayer. She rose long before, sunrise, sat cross-legged on a little carpet of scented Kusa grass and spoke the prayers, all her spirit crying for mercy to the gods in heaven, she had even brought incense at the price of the day's meal, for the gods would readily bless a home where the sweet smiling sticks were burned (Bhattacharya 58).

Here Bhattacharya gives a glimpse of homeless subaltern and their pathetic circumstances as well. Even they prayed to god but nobody listens to their narrative voices of the distress. Furthermore, Bhattacharya stalwartly condemns the circumstances and those who were culpable to devastate the home of poor and subaltern communities.

Furthermore, the chaotic situation emerges because of Kalo and his family move everywhere to save their lives. "Out of that song the temple grew and the battle began a new phase, not a battle of survival but attack, hard-hitting" (Bhattacharya 112). Kalo revolted against existing perilous political system as well as the caste system. The mediator does not reinforcement to the poor people during the scarceness of food. Chandralekha also demonstrated that the subversion against the agent who markdown or hiding the food from the famished people of the Bengal and Calcutta. Here the resistance of both father and daughter seem painful and destructive of own individual life. In addition, Kalo makes aware to Chandralekha from Vishwanath keeping watch on her "We stand on the edge of a cliff. A hundred eyes keep watch on us, waiting to see if we slip and fall. We have to be wary and also the counterfeit coin needed more glitter than the real" (Bhattacharya 122). Here the resistance of Kalo seems against the dominance of governance and political interference in the Bengal's subaltern life of people. How they get torture keeping them under the surveillance of authority and powerful violent forces of the society. Bhattacharya explores the myth of oppression and discrimination of subaltern mass. Also, he proved his Indianness by taking the favor of subaltern community. According to Gramsci, Subaltern people are such as:

The subaltern classes, by definition, are not united and cannot unite until they are able to become a state...The history of subaltern social groups is necessary fragmented and episodic. There undoubtedly does exist a tendency to at least stage of unification in the historical activity of these groups, but this tendency is continually interrupted by the activity of the ruling groups... in reality, even when they appear triumphant, the subaltern groups are merely anxious to defend themselves (qtd in Chaturvedi 274).

Kalo begins the resistance against the political, social disorder, and the chaotic circumstances within Bengal due to lack of food. "A small rebel was born when he sold his tool and set off for the big city. The rebel grew eyes and ears in ears in court and prison, with the help of B-10, gave it a mouth and a protest, Out of that protest he had acted mutinously, challenging man and god" (Bhattacharya 195). Here Both Kalo and Chandralekha resist against those authorities of Bengal and Calcutta who were obligated for the starvation and hungry dying of the subaltern people. Chitrakleha heard the voices of subaltern people who ask for the food "Food! Food! We demand food for the hungry" (qtd in Rani 466). Here the narrative of subaltern people comes out from the rally for the food demand. Similarly in Bhattacharya's *Shadow from Ladakh*, Satyajit revolt against the government to resolve the issues of famine strike and the quest of starvation of the destitute people (Singh 176). According to Gramsci, Subaltern is such as,

it is always the case that a spontaneous movement of the subaltern classes is matched by a reactionary movement of the right wing of the dominant class, on one hand, discontent among the subaltern classes and spontaneous mass movements and, on the other, conspiracies by reactionary groups, who take advantage of the objective enfeeblement of the government to attempt coups d'etat (qtd in Ayers 270).

Moreover, the prosperous people like Motichand and Abalabandhu who immensely exploited the subaltern people of the village using money power. Biten is also a crucial character who is the mentor of Kalo, Kalo becomes the victim of Biten's politics where he orders to Kalo revolt against a business man who does not offer money to build the temple in the village. Being naïve Kalo trapped the politics of everyone and struggle for the own existence in the society (Bhatnagar 77). Biten advice him that "there was in the fraud no purpose larger than filling your own belly and your purse" (Bhattacharya 191). Here Bhattacharya focuses on the corrupted regional political scenario of India. The politician used the temple as a source of the income. They used the subaltern people to construct the temple where they get fewer wage and exploited them. According to Guha, Subaltern is such as, "the demographic difference between the total Indian population and all those whom we have described as the elite" (qtd in Louai 6).

Furthermore, Sir Abalabandhu sold the daughter of Kalo for the sake of money saying that she has a pious soul and possessed the magical power. So Motichand wants to marry her only for his increasing business. "A partnership of her divine role and continue it together." (Bhattacharya 235) Moreover, Mangal Adhikari also exploited the subaltern people those who were suffered from lack of food and prosperous life; including Kalo and his daughter (Bhatnagar 78) being lower caste Kalo mesmerized in hands of Mangal Adhikari. Kalo tries to resist against the old norms of oppression by rich people and tradition as well, "the centuries-old tradition from which had come the inner climate of his being" (Bhattacharya 71). Here Bhattacharya stresses on the serious issues of the subaltern people who become the victims of social disorder of the society due to the capitalist perspective. Abalabandhu sells Chandralekha. Bhattacharya focuses on the selling of poor, subaltern women during the post-independence time, It was extremely shameful and stigma for the humanity. It was a business to sell the subaltern man and women to other well-to-do people to work at their home, farm, and factories. They treated as animals as Kalo and his daughter suffer from food and existence in the critical circumstances. Chandralekha is brilliant but she still was known as a "still a Kamar's daughter" (Bhattacharya 5). According to Ranjeet Guha Subaltern can be recognized as "a name for the general attribute of subordination...whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender, and office or any other way" (qtd in Beverley 26).

Moreover, Chandralekha resists against the injustice or caste discrimination created by Biten, Chitralekha recognized that "Instead of understanding society by challenging the age-old system of caste- stratification, he had become part of it" (Bhattacharya 221). Here Chandralekha strongly resists to the old conventional concern of the caste system which demoralized and oppressed the mentality of the subaltern society even if they suffered for the own existence without food, home and lack of other necessary things to run the life. Bhattacharya also conveys his grief over the bad circumstance in Bengal and Calcutta where subaltern mass extremely suffered from the dominating order of business men, upper caste, and other dominating groups. Henceforth, Bhattacharya introduces a lower class blacksmith Kalo and his daughter Chandralekha as a representative of subaltern people not only of Bengal but also the entire nation India. According to Mohammed Ayoob, Subaltern is such as "Subaltern denotes those that are weak and of inferior rank" (qtd in Robins and Johns 9).

At the end of the novel, Motichand wants to marry her but she rejected his proposal even though he is a wealthy businessman. Chandralekha denied his offer of marriage, "In spite of it Lekha would not accept defeat. She steeled herself in her decision...Life stood before her- not death. There was a new strength in her, new awareness, with which to face the challenges of an unknown future" (qtd in Sharma 32). Here Chandralekha supposes to be strong by her decision denying the marriage proposal of a wealthy person. She wants to be run her life without the support of anybody. Both father and daughter strongly revolt against the bad forces of the society. Who subjugated, pester, agonized, and considered them the subaltern part of the society. Their resistance is nothing but the narrative voice of the entire subaltern Indian who wants to be run their life amicably from the ideological perspective of greetings. According to Guha, Subaltern is a sort of history, "an entity whose will and reason constitute the praxis called rebellion" (qtd in Beverley 27).

Conclusion

Bhattacharya in his novel depicted the subaltern characters like Kalo and Chandralekha. Throughout the novel, Kalo and Chandralekha suffered for their existent and resistance against the dominating social forces. Bhattacharya explores that how the poor situation of man realizes his or her existence in the world. He represents the Indian scenario of the subaltern voices of resistance against, government and starvation. He presents the horrible scenario of the post-independence India.

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