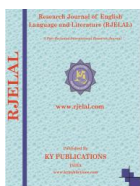




MODES OF RESISTANCE

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Abstract

The simmering unrest among the tribals against the injustice meted out to them in all spheres of their lives is found expression in the present paper. The outside forces and their interference in the lives of the tribals contaminated their value system and led to utter dissatisfaction and frustration among the tribal people. Another adverse effect of the outside influence on the day to day life of tribals is that there is a loss of feeling of fraternity among them due to which they work against each other. Neo colonialism in a very subtle manner is introduced in tribal culture. Criminalization of tribals is another sad outcome of tribal oppression and resistance.

Keywords: oppression, resistance, tyranny, gotis, depravity.

According to *Dictionary of Political Thought* Resistance is opposition which is denied legal recognition, either because all opposition is denied legal recognition or it is of such a character as to fall outside those categories of opposition recognized in law. Resistance must therefore be either clandestine or passive. (Roger,595). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* defines Resistance as refusal to obey or dislike or opposition to a plan, an idea etc; the act of using force to oppose somebody or something. It is the force that stops something moving or make it move very slowly; it is the impending effect exerted by one material thing on another. Resistance is the act of resisting, it is armed or violent, and it can be passive and subdued(Hornby,1292).

The Blackwell Dictionary of Sociology: A User's Guide to Sociological Language comments that a resistance movement is organized not to promote social change but rather to oppose it. In United States, for example, a resistance movement opposes changes in laws that guarantee women the right to abortion(Johnson,292).

The Resistance movement was a secret organization resisting political authority as an underground movement formed in France during the Second World War to fight the German occupying forces and the vichy government. During British rule Resistance Movements were organized to overthrow the British from the tribal areas in the form of Santhal Rebellion, (1855-56), the Kol Rebellion (1832) and were called the tribal freedom movement. Prior to the arrival of the British the tribal areas were relatively undisturbed. Of course there were Mughal and native rules prior to the British, but the presence of these administrations was not felt beyond the occasional loots from the rich farmers of the plains. "Imposition of regular taxation through the passage of the Bengal Permanent Settlement Act of 1793, marked the beginning of unrest and rebellions in all tribal areas of the country, depending on when the Act was operationalised"(Munda, 1). Widespread tribal resistance movements compelled the British administration to negotiate workable peace in the tribal areas of administration in British India.

The power to resist injustice and endure tragedies is the hallmark of tribal character. The tribals are tolerant to a limit and stand up to any injustice perpetuated on them by the money-lender and other non-tribal suppressors. The tribals put up their resistance against injustice and oppression. Any attack on their self-respect makes them strike back strongly. "A Tribal roused to fury is like a beast of the jungle" (31).

In *Paraja*, the modes of resistance include the resistance of tribals against the new laws of land, resistance to injustice of the powerful Sahukar by the tribals and above all the resistance of the Sahukar to the laws of land and his debt bound gotis.

Resistance is as much the theme as oppression in *Paraja*. The physical and mental endurance of the Parajas is tremendous. They indulge in day dreaming and wishful thinking even when they have become penniless and landless. They put heart and soul in their work with the hope that the day of deliverance will come one day, but they are helpless before the law enforcing agencies namely the Forest Guard, Revenue and Excise Officials.

In *Paraja* we find plenty of resistance by both the oppressed and the oppressors. The tribals being ignorant and simple do not know the importance of forests for ecological needs and they cut trees as it is the only means of their livelihood and sustenance. As cutting of trees is declared punishable by law, so the tribals secretly cut the trees in order to avoid fines and imprisonment. The tribals in order to sustain themselves bribe the Forest Officials who give them permission to fell the trees in lieu of huge bribes. For the tribals forests and its resources signify their survival. To resist the new Forest laws the tribals devise new astute tricks to fulfill their needs.

The Forest Guard, the protector of the Forests after taking bribe from tribals allow them to clear the Forests. The tribals bring offerings of chickens and eggs to the Forest Guard Jaman and succeed in getting their needs met. We find the tribals especially Kondhs, Dombs and Parajas, resisting the forest laws with the support and connivance of Forest Officials. Solomon and Istifan

of the Domb tribe clear more than ten acres of jungle in the Forest with the benign blessings of the Forest Guard Jaman.

Sukru Jani's resists the new Forest laws by giving bribe to the Forest Guard in the form of two fat hens, three big jack fruits and along with it two rupees in cash. With these services to the Forest Guard, he is permitted to clear the Reserved Forests on the Mali Damaka Hill. Thus we find that the tribals as they live under the new colonial rule have evolved dishonest means of resisting the suppressive state laws.

Sukru Jani bribes the Forest Guard in the presence of whole village and gets the permission for clearing a patch of Forest on the hill so as to make huts for his sons who in future would get married as in Paraja tribe it is a custom that married sons cannot live with their parents in the same abode. Sukru Jani being a simple tribal fails to comprehend why the Forests have to be protected why should it be punishable by law. In his limited consciousness, he just thinks to enjoy the bounties of nature and find the new laws of land as an encroachment upon his fundamental right to use the forest to meet his needs. When the Forest Guard and the Forest Officials put a fine on Sukru Jani for cutting the Reserved Forests having lot of commercial value he vehemently protests against the charge of illegal felling of trees.

I am not guilty great lords, I have committed no crime. I will swear by your Book of Sections that I am innocent. I will swear by the man eating tiger's skin and take the oath. Give me any oath you like and I will swear at my innocence. (36)

But Sukru Jani's resistance is futile as his fellow tribesmen, give evidence against him about the illegitimate act. Sukru Jani questions Dhepu Chalan as why he and others gave witness against him when they all knew that it was in their presence that Forest Guard gave the permission for the clearing off Forest on the Mali Dhamaka Hill.

You were all witness when he accepted money from me and told me that I could clear the jungle. You all heard him say so. Then

how could you deny it when the officials asked you? No you did more you gave evidence against me and made it look as if I were the liar, you who are my brethren, you did that to me! But I won't judge you. God will judge between you and me, he sees all. You have done your part and ruined me and now my four children will be destitute, let it be so and let God judge. (38)

Sukru Jani is a firm believer in divine justice and he strongly protests the morally wrong actions of his fellow tribals in helping the officials to prosecute him. The seeds of misfortune of Sukru Jani is sown with Sukru Jani's refusal to comply with the wishes of lecherous Forest Guard. Kau Paraja's revelation that the Forest Guard want Jili for the night make Sukru Jani furious like an animal and he gives slaps and blows on Kau Paraja with choicest abuses to both Kau Paraja and the Forest guard. Sukru knows the repercussions of saying no to the Forest Guard but for himself respect comes before everything else. He like a rock is firm and says "I'll break every bone in your body, Just wait, and I'll skin you alive, you scum" (32). Sukru Jani tells Kau Paraja, the pimp, to deliver to the dirty dog of Forest Guard the message that:

Paraja women were not for sale. He can have our chickens and our millets, but not nothing more. (31)

Sukru Jani knows that the Forest Guard is powerful and he can destroy them but equally great are his tribal values of honour and self respect and to defend it he is ready to do anything. He in fear turns towards his Gods for their blessings and benevolence. A systematic chain of torture follows and the Forest Guard takes his revenge by bringing Forest Officials who impose a fine of Rs. 50 on Sukru Jani for the illegal act. But we know that this was done with the prior approval of the Forest Guard which he lately refused before the government officials. The revenge of the Forest Guard is thus complete and the dream of Sukru Jani of more lands, huts, brides for his sons, suitable bridegrooms for Jili and Bili are shattered.

The tribal society is by and large a gregarious society living in harmony amongst

themselves. But the changed socio-economic scenario, the tribals start resisting (opposing) each other to suit their own selfish interests. Sukru Jani and his fellow tribals are in awe and mortal fear of law and police. In order to resist jail and imprisonment he agrees to the suggestion of his fellow tribesman of borrowing money from the money-lender Ramchandra Bishoi. The fellow brethren of Sukru Jani who come to accompany him for the loan resist from the original plan of giving the actual fine to the Forest Officials. They in fact divide Rupees thirty amongst themselves and pay Rupees fifteen as fine and Rupees five as bribe to the Forest Guard on behalf of Sukru Jani.

Not only Sukru Jani but his daughters Jili and Bili display resistance to the injustice and exploitation of the Forest Guard and the fellow tribals. Jili strongly spurns the advances of lecherous Forest Guard Jaman. Thus we find that the notion of tribal women easily accessible is falsified in this case. Even though the tribal society is by and large open and restriction free but the tribals respect this freedom and disloyalty is opposed by them. The concept of dormitories for men and women amply demonstrate the freedom enjoyed by young men and women. In most of the tribal societies free mixing of opposite sex is permitted. But in this instant case not only resistance is shown by father of the girl but by the girl herself. Jili shows her displeasure to the Forest Guard when he tries to embrace her. Jili with her big dark eyes stares the lecherous fellow and immediately leaves the place as she thinks it shameful to be courted by the evil Forest Guard. Although afraid for a moment she displays enough guts to spurn the advances of the Forest Guard.

Bili, Sukru Jani's younger daughter is more emphatic and aggressive in putting her anger and protest against those who insult and hurt her sister Jili. After Sukru and his son's departure to Thodaguda, as Sahukar's gotis, the two sisters are made to fend for themselves. Facing the insults and ill will of the fellow tribals such as Shiba Paraja and Kambala, it is Bili who shows her resistance by invoking the justice of God:

How can anyone insult us just because our father and brothers are away. May the gods turn anyone who insults us blind in both eyes, and may the evil planet Saturn fall upon him and destroy all his children and all his cattle, and may he himself be burnt to ashes! The evil tongue that insults helpless women should be torn out by the roots. (188)

Writers on tribal affairs have time and again shown that the tribals are not helpless and fools to be taken for granted. They stand up against their oppressors to seek justice for themselves. Mahasweta Devi a famous writer on Tribal Affairs in her various works vehemently brings out the resistance of the tribals against their oppressors. Susan Chacko in her article "Outcastes and Oppression" puts forth the tribal resistance in the following words:

Mahasweta Devi's famous story Draupadi or Dopdi as her name appears in dialect "is a rebel hunted down by the government in their attempt to subjugate these groups. The government uses all forces available to them, including kidnapping, murder and rape, and any tribal deaths in custody are invariably accidents. But Dopdi is not easily cowed. After continuous days of rape and abuse, deprived of food and water, the story ends with a magnificent final scene in which she faces her abusers, naked and bloody but fiercely strong.(Chako,2)

Ramchandra Bishai, the money-lender being the major oppressor in *Paraja* has to face resistance from the tribals in general and his debt bound gotis in particular. But the Sahukar is the winner in majority of the cases. Initially Sukru Jani showed resistance to borrow money from the money-lender but he gives in to the advice of village elders led by its headman Salingi Paraja that this is the only option to avoid arrest, social boycott and stigma attached to the arrest. Sukru's resistance is replaced by the quick decision to get money from the money-lender in lieu of he and his son Tikra becoming gotis of the Sahukar with the hope that the money of the later will be paid in due course and they will become free to lead a peaceful life as before little visualizing that

this is the beginning of the violent end of their dream of peaceful life.

The blissful life at Sarsapudar and Thodaguda where the money-lender Bishoi live is all toil, exploitation and inhuman treatment is meted out to one and all. Resistance of any type by anyone is met by rebuff, abuse and physical torture. Work, work and work is the order of the day under Sahukar's empire. He is a sadist who likes to shout and nag at his gotis using obscene language. Sukru Jani grumbles and retort back saying:

Is it my fault if you keep on moving me from one job to another? You never give me time to finish anything. One day it's Sukru Jani clear the weeds from the paddy fields; the next day it's Sukru Jani, go and bring firewood from the jungle or 'Go' and plough the fields! I have to attend to everything, and on the top of that, I must build the new barn. How do you expect me to finish so soon.? (104)

Sukru Jani, at times feels that the Sahukar's humiliation and injustice on him and others is something which is beyond his endurance. "Sukru Jani realized that his endurance of the injustices—which he represented to himself as magnanimity towards his tormentor—was nothing but weakness" (200).

Another tribe namely Kondhs also stand up against the powerful money-lender Ramchandra Bishoi to save their land from going into the hands of the Sahukar. With the help of one Garaja Sundara, the Revenue Inspector, the money-lender succeeds in manipulating revenue entries. He is so powerful that no one dares to question his action. Ultimately the land fall into the hands of Sahukar with the muscle power. The panchayat convened by Kondhs can not help.

They claimed that the Sahukar had occupied their lands forcibly...The kondhs, as was their custom swore an oath and said The earth goddess is our witness, and the sacred kadingamali mountain is our witness. May our hands wither away and all our cattle and children die if we speak a falsehood: the land is ours. (198).

Thus the resistance of Kondhs to injustice done to them becomes futile before the untied forces of Sahukar and unscrupulous officials of the government. Honest officials surprisingly are transferred from the tribal areas.

Back home, Mandia Jani, the elder son of Sukru Jani is in command, protector and bread earner of the family of his grown up sisters Jili and Bili. Mandia Jani is a typical adamant tribal with violent temperament and perhaps the believer in survival of the fittest and end achiever without bothering about the means. His resistance to the laws of the state, its officials and the money-lender is dangerously contemptuous and rebellious Mandia in one sense surpasses his father Sukru Jani in offering resistance to defend his lawful activities like illicit distillation of liquor in the ravine.

It is a well-known fact that liquor is an important part of the tribal custom and culture. A tribesman would rather forgo a meal than a bottle of pungent mahua wine. The tribals since time immemorial had been brewing liquor made of fresh mahua flowers. But with the imposition of colonial laws a ban was imposed on the distillation of liquor by the government. It was illegal to brew liquor in the hills without a licence from the revenue authority. Since the tribesmen were too poor to pay the money for the license most of them distilled the liquor clandestinely from the eyes of law. It is a resistant tactic by the tribals to evade the revenue authorities.

Mandia Jani decides to brew liquor although he knows that it is an offence against law. But his need is greater than his fear of law. In the absence of his father and brother he needs labourers to help to reap paddy and since he has no money so he decides to pay in kind to the Dombs who are ready to help Mandia Jani in lieu of liquor. Unfortunately an informer leaks the information and Mandia Jani is caught red-handed by the dreaded Saltu and Excise Officials. Like his father and brother he too has to become a goti to the Sahukar.

During his stay as goti Mandia Jani opposes the unjust orders of the Sahukar. At more than one time he harbours the dangerous feeling of killing the Sahukar. Such is the extent of his resistance that he

even looks as a modern terrorist and possesses criminal tendencies. After the incident of Dasru Paraja's brother Sania Paraja being killed by the man-eating tiger, Mandia Jani has a fierce argument with the Sahukar. In spite of Sahukar's curses and shouts Mandia Jani remains firm in his demand for company in the forest to tend to the herd. Ultimately the Sahukar has to yield. The resistance of gotis bears fruit.

Unlike other 'gotis' the trio Sukru Jani and his sons, show resistance to the mighty Sahukar when he is too much on their nerves. The Sahukar, in the back of his mind knows that these three Parajas are different from other 'gotis' and he is cautious in his dealings with them.

Sukru Jani forced by circumstances is made to mortgage his land to the Sahukar to look after his daughters Jili and Bili who have been working as labourers on the highway construction site. The Supervisor of the highway construction offers to find work for Sukru Jani to allow his daughter to continue working there but Sukru Jani resists the idea. When he is unrelenting in his attitude to allow his daughters to work there and instead offers himself as labourer Sukru Jani is insulted by the Supervisor to which he retort back and says "I may look old, because I haven't been getting enough to eat. But which of your young men could match me for work? (239).

Rukun Advani, in her article, 'Hedgehogs into Foxes' compares resistance in three important works—Tirthankar Roy's *Artisans and Industrialization*, an essay entitled "lifestyle as Resistance" by Veena Oldenburg and Gopinath Mohanty's *Paraja*. She is of the opinion that individuals evolve subconscious and work a day methods of evading or resisting the power of the corrupt state in which we live. She further says:

The economic operations that effect the daily emotional, cultural and lived experience of characters in *Paraja* are analogous to those described with social science elegance by Tirthankar Roy and literary panache by Veena Oldenburg. The oppressive money-lenders in

Mohanty's novel stand in for the colonial state in Roy's monograph and male patrons in Oldenburg's essay, while the oppressed tribes resemble the resisting courtesans and artisans. The chief interest in these diverse works by Roy, Oldenburg and Mohanty lies in showing how human beings work out politically limited yet personally meaningful methods to evade despotism. Individuals carve out spaces for themselves wherein restricted and transient forms of happiness become human assertions to social imperial and cosmic power. (1-5)

Sukru Jani when comes to know that Sahukar is planning to plant orange trees on his land and may never leave his land he confronts the Sahukar and says 'But the orange trees will suck, all the juice out of the soil and leave my land barren' (294). On Sakukar's demand for money of the mortgaged land Sukru Jani is full of rage and protests 'You know I can't repay your debt now' (295). Though helpless and without any succor, Sukru Jani shows his resistance to the Sahukar if in case the latter is harboring any bad intention to grab his 'dear possession'.

The unscrupulous Sahukar assures Sukru Jani that he can pay his debts and get his lands back alongwith the orange trees on it. Sukru Jani is helpless but in his heart and mind he thinks of throwing the money on Sahukar's face "Count it up! And take your cursed orange trees and go! Off my land!" (296). Knowing the wickedness of the Sahukar Sukru Jani is full of apprehension.

Sukru Jani's sons Tikra and Mandia living the life as gotis never give up the hope of their freedom. They have three options before them. First to take to crime; they know about a gang of Dombs whom they can join and find the money to pay the Sahukar. But as the Parajas are self-respecting and cannot do such a low deed, they cannot take to this path. The second option for them is to flee to the Assam tea plantation but this suggestion is not acceptable to Mandia who is too distressed at this ignoble act. The third option is to brew liquor secretly and to raise the

money. The tribals resistance is never ending like the limitless suppression of the oppressor. They are ready to play hide and seek with the law. Cherenga Paraja tells Mandia and Tikra about the raids of officials of the Excise Department when they are selling liquor. Cleverly they destroy all proofs of their work and continue with their present job of looking after the herd.

A notable form of resistance which the Parajas demonstrate towards the Sakukar who apart from an oppression has also done the crime of entrapping Jili, the daughter of Sukru Jani is that they do not recognize Sakukar as the legitimate husband of Jili. Sukru Jani feels his blood begin to boil and retort to Sahukar:

You Cheat ! You Liar! You have stolen my daughter, you devil. (270)!

Sukru Jani and his sons do not even think it proper to demand bride price from him to formalize the marriage. Instead, they think that one day they will be able to recover Jili back from the clutches of the Sahukar and marry her to a suitable husband. Mandia Jani at one point of time even think of killing the Sahukar on this issue of Jili. "Tikra remembered Mandia's rage when he had first heard about Jili and the Sahukar. He had wanted to go after them with his axe at once and only been restrained with difficulty (325).

Getting the land back from the Sahukar is the burning desire in the hearts of the trio. Day and night they think of their land and ultimately succeeds in pooling the resources (money) for repaying the debt. When they confront the Sahukar for getting their land back by paying the loaned money he is furious and surprised and shows his real intentions. He first tries to scare them by saying that it is stolen money. But Sukru Jani is fearless and retorts back that the money is not stolen but arranged from various persons. He shows grit in facing the wicked Sahukar:

What is there to report to the police? Well, do as you please, but first let us settle the matter of the debt of my land. (336)

The Sahukar is now their enemy number one and they would not allow him to grab their lands

"Sukru Jani would never find peace, living or dead, unless he recovered his land from the Sahukar' (347). When Mandia and Tikra try to persuade Sukru Jani to file a case against the Sahukar, to claim bride price for Jili Sukru Jani protests emphatically. "I couldn't touch that dirty money" (347). In spite of the refusal of Sahukar to give their land back, Sukru Jani is not defeated and goes to the court for justice.

Optimism comes naturally to the tribesman, he is never cured of it. (106)

The Sahukar's manipulations with court officials fails the 'Parajas' and their plea is dismissed in default. This is the last blow they receive at the hands of the Sahukar and his helpers in the government and the courts. They are crestfallen. But the tribal in them do not allow them to take it a final verdict, they still hope against hope that the Sahukar may yield to their request. But their final plea is dismissed by the Sahukar with kicks on the old Sukru Jani. The wicked Sahukar crosses all limits and says 'You sons of whores aren't you ashamed to come blubbering here like women ? Go, go...' (372). Mandia Jani cannot tolerate the insult and the simmering volcano in him bursts and he roars like a wild beast saying:

You've cheated us out of the land, Sahukar, but you won't enjoy it! You won't enjoy it. (373)

The trio kill the demon and save their land from being enjoyed by the treacherous fellow. They know the repercussions of this murder, but they are ready to face any consequences for it. The tribal resistance to injustice is delayed initially but finally they succeed in putting an end to their oppressor for once and all.

The treacherous Sahukar resists tribal laws by his crafty manipulations. When Sukru Jani and the whole village come to the Sahukar to question him about Jili, he try to terrorize them and says 'Well, be careful what you say or I will go to the police station and report you to the sub-Inspector.... (314). He further say that since Sukru Jani has not demanded the bride price for Jili, he will give what he thinks fair and will not listen to any protest. Despite his villainy

he makes a pretence of righteousness and justice to resist tribal laws.

What wrong have I done? I have helped the people of this village in a thousand ways and this is how they repay me. They call a meeting of the panchayat and threaten me! It's a regular rebellion! Very well, I'll go to the police station tomorrow and file a report. I will get a petition written, put a stamp on it and present it to the authorities. (315)

Thus we find how the Sahukar through his wit and manipulations succeed in resisting tribal laws. Even today it has been found that the non-tribals through clever manoeuvrings marry tribal girls to possess the rich tribal lands. They resist the government laws which forbid the non-tribals to become owner of the tribals lands.

Resistance in *Paraja*, repeatedly shows helplessness of the tribal against the tyranny of the well-entrenched Sahukar and the State Officials. The tribals have to yield to the will of their oppressors, whatever resistance they offer against the injustice and fraudulent practices. Even in the tragic end we find that when Sahukar is put to death by Sukru Jani and his sons, they come to their senses and perhaps brood over what wrong they have done. Helplessness is writ large on their faces when they put their arms around each other and weep, their tears mingling with the blood of the slain Sahukar. This is the outcome of their helplessness. When all efforts failed, they resorted to the lost option and in the process become murderers, in a sense become oppressors of the worst type themselves. The final victory of Sukru Jani and his sons is perhaps their biggest defeat.

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