



Tribal's Resistance against Colonialism: A Postcolonial Understanding of Subaltern Historiography

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ARTICLE DETAILS

Research Paper

Keywords:

Colonialism, Historiography, Postcolonial Studies, Tribal Resistance

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the importance of tribal resistance against colonial domination. Colonial domination was a multifaceted process challenged by various social groups such as tribals, peasants, labourers, and so on. Resistance occurred under two broader categories, foreigners and indigenous, with different objectives. Therefore, the tribal resistance was against the Britishers and Indian moneylenders. Social scientists adopted various approaches to understanding nature and the causes of resistance. Postcolonial studies are based on studying colonialism and its impact on native countries which deals with the nature and characteristics of movements organised by various groups against their exploitation. Historical analysis is crucial to understanding the contribution of tribal resistance against colonialism. Subaltern Studies point out a different approach to studying the resistance of marginalised groups. The study of the subaltern social groups began in 1982 and was influenced by postcolonial studies. This study brought attention to the academic domain of South Asia. Subaltern studies emphasise that subaltern social groups are the maker of their own history. Postcolonial Studies include peasants, labourers, tribals, women and many other groups as subaltern social groups. Therefore, postcolonialism emphasises the particular classes those are excluded from the hegemonic power

structure. The present study describes the historical contribution of tribals in the freedom movement against colonial rule. The study is specific to the discourse of tribal resistance in postcolonial studies.

Introduction

In India, there is a long history of resistance against colonial exploitation. There were various tribal movements took place in different parts of the country against the colonial government and moneylenders. Tribal communities did not like the intervention of any outsiders in their areas and their resistances were against their economic exploitation. Tribal communities had different economic structures and colonialism was against their economic establishment. Therefore, the tribal movements began against colonialism as a response to colonial intervention in forests and hill regions. Major historiography or school of thoughts did not seriously study the tribal resistance against colonialism. Colonial historiography excludes the resistance of various social groups against the colonial government. Nationalist historiography emphasises all social groups in the united form and considers tribal resistance as a part of the nationalist movement. Marxist historiography studies history in two broader categorisations of classes, proletariat and bourgeoisie. Postcolonial studies challenge major branches of studies in social sciences and try to locate different social groups in their agency. Postcolonial studies theorise the nature of tribal resistance against colonialism and provide a wider context to study the historiography of tribal resistance.

Postcolonial Studies

Using Robert Young's definition of postcolonialism as a guide, Raja Masood defines postcolonial studies. In his view, the postcolonial is fundamentally nothing more than the outcome of human experience—albeit one that has not usually been documented or acknowledged by institutions. Different cultural and national origins specifically result in how your skin colour and the place and circumstances of your birth define the kind of life—privileged and enjoyable, or oppressed and exploited—that you will have in this world. The focus of postcolonialism is on densely populated areas that have mainly remained hidden but raise or involve questions about representation, emigration, immigration, refugees, and a host of other issues including poverty and wealth. It's also important to recognise the vitality, inventiveness, and dynamic cultural dynamics that arise from such difficult situations and are very beneficial. A language of and for those who are marginalised, do not seem to fit in, and whose

experiences are not valued is provided by post-colonialism. Preoccupation with the oppressed, the underprivileged classes, minorities in all societies, and issues affecting those who are foreign-born or reside abroad has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of postcolonial politics (Raja, 2019).

The study of postcolonial cultures has become more and more popular since the 1970s. Some claim that the emergence of Orientalism in the Western academic community began with the publication of Edward Said's seminal critique of Western conceptions of the Orient in his 1978 book *Orientalism*. The term "postcolonial" gained traction in the academic community after Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin published *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* in 1989. The terms "Commonwealth" and "Third World," which were formerly used to refer to the literature of Europe's former colonies, have become less common since then. While there is much debate about the exact meaning of the term "postcolonial," in general, it refers to the study of the interactions that European nations had with the societies they colonised during the modern period. After decades of expansion, it is estimated that the European empire had taken control of over 85% of the world's landmass by the time of the First World War. The European empire's size, duration, and eventual decline following World War II contributed to the current popularity of postcolonial literature and criticism (Bahri, 1996).

The emergence of anti-colonial nationalism and the different phases of the colony's establishment through diverse control mechanisms pique the interest of numerous scholars in the field. Furthermore, in certain cases, spatial factors supersede temporal ones (that is, attention is directed towards the postcolonial as a geographical area with a past predating or even existing outside of the experience of colonisation, rather than the postcolonial as a specific period), as the social formations and cultural output of the colony well before colonisation are utilised to shed light on the experience of colonisation. Furthermore, the word "postcolonial" is occasionally used to refer to countries that have not yet gained independence, minority groups within First World countries, or even independent colonies that are currently experiencing "neocolonial" forms of oppression as a result of expanding globalisation and capitalism. In all of these instances, the term "postcolonial" seems to apply more widely to the period that followed the height of colonialism in the second half of the 20th century than it does to a specific historical event. In a broader sense, "postcolonial" refers to resistance to both imperialism and Eurocentrism (Bahri, 1996).

Major Issues and Impacts of Postcolonial Studies

Despite concerns and disagreements, postcolonial critique has allowed for a thorough examination of power relations in a variety of contexts, which has led to an expansion of postcolonial studies research. The creation of the empire and the impact of colonisation on postcolonial history, the economy, science, and culture are among the more well-known subjects in the field. In addition, it covers the artistic output of colonised societies, postcolonialism and feminism, marginalised people's agency, and the postcolonial movement's current status in contemporary economic and cultural contexts. Market forces and capitalism, environmental issues, and the relationship between politics and aesthetics in literature (Bahri, 1996). Furthermore, postcolonial studies focus on the internal forms of colonialism that persist in postcolonial nation-states, encompassing, among other things, the misfortunes experienced by women, tribal groups, and minorities.

Because postcolonialism does not imply the abolition of all forms of colonialism and imperialism, it is rarely used as a chronological reference. Thus, it is insufficient to refer to a complex field of study as "postcolonialism." Although Robert Young proposed the term "tricontinentalism," which encompassed the Americas, Asia, and Africa, it was never widely accepted. But it's safe to say that postcolonial literature emphasises reading world literature critically to see how native writers represent their cultures, often in colonial languages, and address preconceived notions and cultural biases against them. Diverse approaches and focuses are used in postcolonial studies; some scholars adopt a Marxist perspective, while others adopt a culturalist or poststructuralist one. It is the plight of the formerly colonised, including their struggles, victories, histories, and stories, that is almost always at the centre of these questions, regardless of the philosopher's stance; all of these elements are retrieved and articulated to complicate the simple imperial and colonial narratives about those who live on the periphery of the world (Raja, 2019). Postcolonial studies emphasise the nature and significance of subaltern social groups and try to understand the relationship between colonial power and colonised countries. Colonialism produced power through two broader areas consent and coercion. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the various instruments of colonial power.

Instruments of Colonial Power

The colonial authority possessed a variety of weaponry. Ownership of land also entails ownership of certain social classes, such as tenants, labourers, and service castes (Kodoth, 2005, p. 195). Bernard S. Cohen elaborates on the relationship between colonial language and Indian knowledge. Complicated and complex knowledge created by Indians in the form of print and manuscript. Europeans codified and

transmitted it, and the conquest of India was also the conquest of knowledge (Cohn, 1985, p. 276). The way that the judiciary operated represented colonial power and was founded on the interpretation of colonial authority. Partha Chatterjee provides essential theoretical intervention to comprehend structural communalism in his study of the agrarian relationship and communalism in colonial Bengal. He makes the point that the Congress political organization allowed the Hindu upper caste, or Bhadrak, to maintain their Zamindari. Muslim leaders in Eastern Bengal are reliant on Muslim support and have defended their raiyat rights against the Congress. Political power could be divided into three categories: bourgeois, feudal, and communal. These could be present in a specific power relations structure. Peasants in agrarian societies were formally arranged into kingdoms or empires, which were larger political entities. When the state was formed, these two forms of power were combined (Chatterjee, 1982, pp: 9-14).

The British obsession with revenue extraction and law and order maintenance gave rise to the prison system that developed in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The prison served as a purely material add-on to a colonial system of political and economic domination (Arnold, 1994, p. 158). The relationships between subordinate and dominant groups within the bureaucracy, as well as between state subordinates and different social groups outside the state structure, were used by the Colonial State to hire and discipline its subordinate personnel (Arnold, 1985, p. 2). The methodical manner in which colonial administration operated gave rise to an ideological defense of it (Kaviraj, 1992, p. 27). The legitimacy of colonialism was based on the state's authority (Guha, 1992, p. 69). In India during the latter part of the 1800s, the elite's approval of science as a force for modernity and advancement and science's cultural authority established a long-lasting dominance (Prakash, 1996, p. 60).

Bhil rebels in 1907 destroyed British administrative headquarters' files in the Dangs at Ahwa. Daftar was a representation of colonial power and was connected to the British government's defense of their rule. It also contained information that was used to oppress them (Sakaria, 1996, p. 50). There is a long history of Indian magical realism in popular visual culture and its connection to the colonial state. Additionally, Trivandrum resident Ravi Varma had access to records of European paintings. He went to see the 1810 publication of Edward Moor's Hindu pantheon. Mass-produced visuals began to play a significant role in cow protection imagery in the early 1890s (Pinny, 1999, pp: 204-212). Colonial authority upholds hegemony over subordinate groups using its diverse sources of domination. It was

upheld under the cover of consent and coercion. Additional essays on gender subalternity can be found in the Subaltern Studies project.

Tribal Resistance in Colonial India

The Gudem-Rampa tribe has a lengthy history of rebellion, occurring in three stages between 1839 and 1924. David Arnold argues that the Gudem-Rampa tribal revolt should have received more attention in the historiography of modern India. The first Gudem uprising occurred in 1845–1848, while the Rampa revolt occurred in 1839–1840. Numerous historians have documented that this uprising occurred between 1922 and 1924. Tribal members rose in rebellion against outsiders they perceived as potential dangers to their homeland and way of life. From the coastal plain, there were different kinds of outsiders, different kinds of British colonial administrations, their Indian troops, police and civilian subordinates, Telugu traders and contractors (Arnold, 1982, pp: 89-102). Tribals destroyed several economic exploitation sites, with police stations being their primary target. Tribal people acknowledge that the police station gave the British authority to rule over and oppress their territory.

Mass tribal peasant resistance in South Gujarat during the Devi movement from 1922 to 1923 is depicted in David Hardiman's study. He discusses the relationships between tribes and various caste groups in this essay. This movement began in the Bassein coastal villages and quickly expanded throughout Gujarat's southern region. Traditional Indian villages with their hierarchies of Brahman priests, dominant castes, subordinate labouring castes, Vaniya shopkeepers, artisan castes, and untouchables found a market in the adivasi village (Hardiman, 1984, p. 200). A specific history shaped the relationship between the Bhils and the Shahukars. As a result, the hierarchical Shahukar society and the egalitarian Bhil society came into close economic relations. The internal social structure of either underwent significant changes (Hardiman, 1987, p. 5). Tribal movements opposed colonisation as well as Hinduization. Tribal people looked for dangers because it was part of their way of life. Bhils converged not only in terms of economic ties but also in terms of the caste system.

Adivasi politics in West Bengal's Midnapur district demonstrate widespread tribal opposition to colonial expansion. The expansion of *diku* (plains-people, tribal people considered them outsiders) intervention in adivasi life was a result of colonial rule dominance. Due to widespread land alienation and rural indebtedness, their incursion resulted in the collapse of the Mandali system's regulated operations. As Mahajan, they provided loans for agricultural settlements to adivasi peasants (Dasgupta, 1985, p. 106). Tanika Sarkar investigates the movements of the Jitu Santal in Malda. She contends that there was a

significant amount of tribal resistance to colonialism and landlords between 1924 and 1932. Many Santals were involved in the anti-landlord tenant agitation that erupted in Malda in 1924 (Sarkar, 1985, p. 136). The movement of the tribes was against foreigners' exploitation and meddling in their territory. Both Indians and British invaders are viewed as outsiders in their territory. Tribal movements opposed the exploitative chains of colonial authority in various parts of the continent.

Conclusion

The colonial government observed various independent tribal movements throughout the nation. The fundamental justification for intervention in their territory was shared by several movements opposing colonialism. Their contribution to the struggle against the colonial government was not taken into account by nationalist and colonialist historiography. Their contribution to the nationalist movement, spearheaded by certain charismatic leaders, is often overlooked by historians. Apart from that, different subaltern groups against colonialism are the crucial topic for the scholars associated with postcolonial studies. Postcolonial studies offered a historiography for tribal people that acknowledged their resistance against outsiders as well as insiders. According to the study, tribal resistance to colonialism had independent agency and was autonomous.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the organising committee of the national seminar which was held in Varanasi's Mahila Mahavidhyalaya, Banaras Hindu University on August 4 and 5, 2023. This paper is the outcome of comments and suggestions given by panel members.

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