



Research Paper-Education

'Chotti Munda and his Arrow' by Mahasweta Devi as an example of Tribal Oppression and the consciousness that follows

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Abstract:

The present paper deals with Mahasweta Devi's 'Chotti Munda and his Arrow' which is one of the most outstanding novels originally written in Bengali as 'Chotti Munda o tar tree' in 1980 and it is a very good example of the rising tribal consciousness. Chotti Munda is a kind of anti-hero of the novel 'Chotti Munda and his Arrow'. The novelist has tried to show the reality of the tribal people and their condition in this novel and it is done with a feeling and sensitivity on her part as she is well aware of this situation. The novel is a very good example of the tribal consciousness and at the same time it also the oppression and the bonded labors. However, the other hidden these are also important like the upper caste age, the politics, corruption, the problem faced by the tribal people etc. The characters are portrayed in the realistic manner where we can see constant sense of survival problem and the encounter between village people and urban people as it has been portrayed in the comparative light which makes it even more interesting. Let us try to get the ideas of all these elements in the following argument in the light of the topic.

Keywords: *Tribal consciousness, Forest, Arrow, police, Munda, Education, Mahajan, Village, Labors, dikus*

Mahasweta Devi's 'Chotti Munda and his Arrow' is one of the most outstanding novels originally written in Bengali as 'Chotti Munda o tar tree' in 1980 and it is a very good example of the rising tribal consciousness. The English translation is done by Gayatri Spivak in the year 2002. The novel has dealt with the reality of the society and the issues of the contemporary interests have been included by the novelist with utmost care. The character of Chotti Munda is very popular and it is considered as one of the symbolic characters as far as tribal literature is concerned. The condition of the tribal people is very difficult and the forests are being demolished in huge amount which makes their lives even more difficult but if the consciousness is raised, then these difficulties can be solved or may be fight against. There is a growing tribal consciousness which can certainly help in coping up this big issue. The novelist has tried to show exactly this in this novel and it is done with a feeling and sensitivity on her part as she is well aware of this situation.

Chotti Munda is a kind of anti-hero of the novel 'Chotti Munda and his Arrow'. He approaches Dhani in order to learn the art of shooting arrows successfully. However, Dhani acquaints him with the forest only to ensure that Munda will not die of starvation. He has said to Munda that he has taken part in many agitations in order to make sure that the people of Munda will find a village to do farming and other tribal will follow them (19). Dhani just wants Chotti Munda to decide that he will take back the land owned by money-landers- Diku-police in order to assert the Tribals right on the forest.

Munda is a name of a tribe and the members of this tribe are simple, straightforward, honest and trustworthy. Dukhiya is from Munda tribe and he kills Gumasta by cutting his hand because Gumasta abuses him and also knocks off his basket full of chilies. It really makes Dukhiya angry and he ultimately kills him. However, the main thing to notice here is the fact that Dukhiya surrenders himself to police, unlike urban people, he admits his crime without regret that he has killed Gumasta, although his lawyers advises him not to do so. He says,

Why should I say I have not killed? I killed before hundreds of people...

In the city, the people of other castes run away after killing someone.

No, not even one Munda is seen escaping after murdering someone

However, it should be noticed that the Mahajans are the masters of Mundas as these tribal people work hard for Mahajans as bonded laborers. The fact here is that this tribe is truthful, hard-working and the very reliable people but they are not free. They work for others and they are quite unfortunate. Bharat Munda says,

No house to live, not even a piece of land-all is bound...

Even after ten generation,

No Munda has anything to claim it as his own

Education is the only thing that can change the condition of this tribe but education is not available to Munda people as they do not get chance to go to school. If any how he goes to school, the teachers demotivate them. They say,

Go graze the cattle... education is not for

Munda, only the children of Brahmin,

Lala and Kayastha will study

Chotti Munda has not been worried by the plight of the tribal. The level of understanding that he has is extra-ordinary and he is full of consciousness. He is the one who put Mundas, Pusaadhs and Ganjus together so that they all can face the famine and other challenges together which are posed by dikus. He also knows the reality of society and understands that the exploitations and oppressions are the part and parcel of the society as they are rooted deeply into social system. He also believes that the government is not ready to accept the normal relationship between the official class and the oppressed people. The dikus are the ones who do not even consider the tribal as Indians. Chotti Munda even finds that the tribal zones exist as ‘‘Island of slavery’. The tribal development officers under the tribal welfare schemes are also useless and unrealistic as far as Chotti’s opinion is concerned. Chotti rightly says that the tribal people hardly manage to get food for two times a day and they are struggling hard to get out of the grip of the greedy and profit monger landlords and contractors. He also questions that how can these people have aptitude and time for handicraft?

The culture of the rise of thugs, murderers and the activists of the ruling party under the banner of youth organization have risen and are found to be a kind of different political culture by Chotti Munda. Here there is a character of Romeo is talked about as he roams around the Gundas and attack a tribal village. Villagers run away in order to save their lives. Romeo too extorts money from the Mahajanas and industrialists. Thus, he is a terror to everyone on the other hand Chotti Munda is of the opinion that the decision of the government to abolish bonded labour is meaningless because it will not to be understood by these tribal people for so many reason. However, the landlords and the money landers take the help of youth leaders like Romeo in order to pay low wages to the tribal laborers. Eventually Chotti Munda emerges as a voice of the tribal consciousness. However, he is the supporter if the non-violence and he too saves the lives of Daroga. He does not support violence because he advocates the things like the safety, security and

the survival of the tribals and untouchables. He also supports the needs of the women honour and therefor he shoots arrow towards Romeo and also kills Pahalwan because of the honour of the women. Upon killing them Chotti Munda surrenders himself to S.D.O. When people come to know this, the thousands of them shout 'No'. The protest is also supported by the people who belong to non-tribal community and they also raise their hand in protest. They do not like or do not want Chotti Munda to surrender. However, the last time of the novel is very suggestive and also prophetic, "between Chotti and the S.D.O, the vacuum was filled by the thousands of raised bows, still more thousands of raised hands seemed to proclaim beware.

However, the word 'beware' has its own significance as it is warning to the police man, money-landers and the upper-caste people.

Thus, the novel is a very good example of the tribal consciousness and at the same time it also the oppression and the bonded labors. However, the other hidden these are also important like the upper caste age, the politics, corruption, the problem faced by the tribal people etc. However, the novel is very popular because of these aspects.

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