

The Peasant Insurgency in “*Kusumabale*”.

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to explore and portray the Peasant Insurgency in Devanoora Mahadeva’s Kusumabale (1988). It is assumed that the novel explicitly underlines the characteristics of Subaltern approach and the elements of Peasant Insurgency . Therefore the current study concentrates on a brief discussion of Ranajit Guha’s Subaltern approach and the Peasant Insurgency. It is a known fact that Devanoora Mahadeva depicts the condition of the oppressed and the Dalits in his works especially in “ Kusumabale”. This study further explores the elements of peasant insurgency like negation, ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality in the novel. There is an attempt to understand the repression of the subaltern and hegemonizing the subaltern . This study aims at gaining insights into the subaltern condition and mull over on the subaltern issues.

Keywords: *Insurgency, Subaltern, Peasant, Negation , ambiguity, modality, solidarity, transmission and territoriality.*

Devanoora Mahadeva is a renowned writer in Karnataka. He was born in Chikka Kalavande village in Nanjangudu taluk of Mysuru district in 1948 in Karnataka. Since 1970’s, Mahadeva emerged as a prominent Dalit writer. His glaring works are "DYAVANURU" in the year 1973, it's a collection of short stories which depicts the life of Dalits. "ODALAALA" is a 1981 novella which illustrates the concern towards the Dalit life and it is successful in creating humour and a language which draws upon the poetic possibilities of a living dialect of an oral tradition. "Kusumabale" published in 1988, is a landmark narrative that weaves together many tales and odes which speaks of love, irony, and compassion. This

novel was originally written in Kannada and later translated into English by Susan Daniel, who is a well-known freelance translator which became her first full-length translation. Devanoora Mahadeva was awarded the Sahitya Akademi award for *Kusumabale* in 1990 and he was also a recipient of the Padmashri award in 2010. He is also known for having rejecting Nrupatunga Award in 2010. Despite Kannada being the official language of state, it was not the primary language in schools and colleges.

Mahadeva's '*Kusumabale*' falls under the category of Dalit literature and it overshadows the Subaltern theory in novel. This novel takes us to the depth of subaltern issues like class, economic, social, gender and political and mental conflict and also we come across the unique language of typical Nanjangudu and stories and rituals followed by people.

The critical study of Subaltern studies is the subdivision of Postcolonial theory which reflects the people who are socially, politically and economically outside the hegemonic power structure. This theory was popularized after the twentieth century. The Subaltern identity is conceptually derived from the cultural hegemonic work of the Italian Marxist and intellect Antonio Gramsci and it was popularized by the Indian Historian Ranajit Guha. Gramsci in his article, "*Notes of Italian History*" which was published in the "Prison Notebooks". In 1986, awareness on the Subaltern was augmented among the readers. It had launched a unique school of research and the advocates came to be called 'Subalternists' or 'Subalterns'. Their influential essays characterized in Paperback as selected subaltern studies published by 'Oxford University Press' in New York and Oxford in 1988 and edited by Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak with a foreword by Edward Said. By 1990's the famous contemporary American Historian Burton Stein hailed the Subaltern studies as of great interest and declared it as 'a decade of historical efflorescence' in South Asian studies. In the 1980's, a group of eminent Indian Scholars made it popular. The three predominant thinkers with whom it was essentially associated in the context of Indian Literature are Ranajit Guha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Dipesh Chakravorty.

The aim is to bring out Ranjit Guha's Peasant Insurgency in Devanoora Mahadeva's novel "*Kusumabale*".

Peasant Insurgency is a sub-division under the canopy of subaltern studies which projects the struggle not as an encounter to hegemonic power. It comes from the long history of the peasants' subaltern positions and its efforts to end certain elements in general ideas in the insurgency consciousness which points to the structural similarity between insurgence

through various movements. In the novel, we come across elements such as **Negation**, **Ambiguity**, **Modality**, **Solidarity**, **Transmission and Territoriality**.

Negation means the characters envying the negative identity. In this novel there are three incidents where characters imply negative identity "to claim a share of the property". Akkamadevi, great grandmother of Kusuma came back to her husband's house after her husband's death to claim her share of the property but when her brother-in-law questions her position in the house she replied "it's me brother-in-law.... The dust of your feet". In this incident, the woman is depicted as the lower section of the society. Even though Akkamadevi is from the upper class, she was not permitted to claim her right because she is a woman. She admits herself as the weaker section and chose the identity of the foot dust. Then the higher caste Brahmin teacher Madhvacharya's daughter just stepped into puberty and she was asked not to be outside of the home because of the norms of the village so she felt "for these three days, this one-here am an outcaste. That one over there is an out caste. The two beings outcastes anyway, uncleanness meeting with cleanness".

Ambiguity draws on the basic difference between crime and insurgency. The crime committed by one insurgent is considered a mass crime publicly. These two actions are the outcome of violence and they are similar in nature and a part of insurgency. In this novel, Garesidda, the uncle of the protagonist was caught when he stole the tender coconuts from the upper class people's farm. He was brought to the Panchayat and tied to a tree and was whipped by warning that either Madigas should live in the village or Upper caste people will go out and the lower class people were made to pay one hundred and one rupees penalty. Though the lower class educated people protested against it, it all went in vain. We come across the murder of protagonist Channa in the novel, because he dared to love upper class Kusuma. Here the upper class people wanted to wipe off the Madiga community from their village. They were rebelling against them frequently and the rebellion went to the extent of killing Channa and damaging Garesidda severely.

Modality Ranjith Guha propounded this element on the basis of 'Pubnna riot' in 1873. The Deccan Riot too brought it out by the search for alternative sources of authority through elected representatives. In the novel, there are two persons who wanted to agitate against the hegemonical power so Kisnappa from the beginning of the novel played a dominant role in building the Dalitha sangha and Channa wanted his community to show that they are equal. The character of Kuriyaiah provokes the gathering to revolt against the hegemonic power

and Kuriyaiah and Kishnaappa were successful in creating the Dalit Sangha. People from Dalit area gathered in front of Mari temple, Kuriyaiha was possessed by one of the Johahmmas spirits and started to frown at the higher class people. He frivolously said it's not their fault it is our ancestors who started to do all the works of higher class and by making their wives slaves and accepted works which were pointed out by the foot of the hegemonies.(Their every command was followed). Our ancestors were good but their next generation started to treat us grossly. Next morning, the Head of the Dalit Sangha presided over the meeting and they were successful in marching against the upper class. Finally they formed daily sangha under the supervision of Kishnappa. They were confident enough to fight against hegemonic power.

Solidarity the stage of separation of insurgence's own identity from that of its enemies. This element is seen only with the character of Channa in the novel. Channa is the protagonist of the novel, he was adrift without a degree. Channa changes his name as 'Chenna rasa' because the quality of class consciousness changes from the phrase of Madiga to another. Channa rasa means 'Channa the king'. He wanted to rise his mustache up, because it was the pride of higher class people so he wanted to rise his mustache like the upper class. In this novel, Solidarity arose through religion. When they gathered in front of the Mari temple, they forced Kuriyaiah to wear 'Male Madhadeswara' costume. He lay covered with tattered blanket, piles of bidi stubs and ashes as in some rite lying over and under it. Through Kuriyaiah's attire the idea of revolution ushered in the novel.

Transmission is an important element of the peasant insurgency in which insurgency spreads through iconic signs. The iconic symbol is the portrait of Dr.B.R. Ambedkar. Before they began the march against the hegemonies, Kuriyah bowed in front of the portrait of Dr.B.R .Ambedkar which symbolizes Ambedkar's victory over all the obstacles as a Dalit and it inspired them to triumph over the hegemonic exploitation.

Territoriality: In this novel a lot of incidents of territoriality can be witnessed. When Garasidda was caught and punished by the hegemonic power, Kishnappa rushes first and they all unite together and they combat for their freedom. Through religion, the territoriality was discerned in the novel. When they were celebrating the festival, Kuriyaiha who was in 'Male Madahdeswra' ignited the spirit of mutiny and all of them ceaselessly contested in front of the temple and organized the march .

Finally we come across the subaltern struggles under the hegemonic power in the novel "Kusumabale". This novel is unlike "Untouchable" where the protagonist found content and discovered a new way to deal with discrimination. Here the protagonist is killed unknowingly by the hegemonic power and it was not brought to the light and remained a mystery. Channa's parents and Kusuma await his return, but only fisherwoman Jothama knows how his life was taken by the Hegemonies. Devanoora Mahadeva has beautifully endeavoured the portrayal of mental conflict, gender inequality and social conflict. Hence this novel is a quintessential precedent of Peasant Insurgency and Subaltern studies.

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