

The Lives Scenario Of Marginalized People In The Novel Khorar Pratibedon Of Devesh Roy

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ABSTRACT: The background of most of the creations of Debesh Roy was brought into existence keeping an affinity with the act of fixing on fate pertaining to life of Bengalees of the 20th century. The very milieu of the literary realm of the novelist has been lying hidden in the radical change of the agrarian system. There occurred radical change in the agricultural life in sync with Permanent Settlement System, and the utmost effort for emancipation caused by that change led to repeated flow of sprightliness amongst the Bengalees who were about to cease to exist. Although life of the Bengalees got a relief from it under the display of outward refulgence, yet lots of untold agonies did remain out of sight in the light of victory. It was exactly at that very moment the novelist Debesh created an electrifying atmosphere in the domain of literature by means of his own creations and in this respect the writer's novel named " Khorar Pratibedan" is a glaring example , where the novelist with the stroke of his pen has reached message of the village Bijkura belonging to the district of Sorguja of Madhya Pradesh to the people of entire world; but it may be certainly a matter of doubt as how much the people of the world have been able to feel and realise the story of the life of the inhabitants of Bijkura. The novelist has spotlighted that much the story of the life of these people in his Khorar Pratibedan as much as it could be captured in the wordy picture. The interview as contained in the first chapter of Pratibedan gives its identifying particulars, where there exists neither assortment nor complexity but just the humble desire of simple mind---" I will return to Bijkura"

Key words: Drought, death, water, starvation.

Multifarious novels, stories and narratives are being fabricated with the admixture of some facts gathered from real life plus the prevailing political policy of the time and behind the shadow of which there remains hidden the denuded nature of time and society. The litterateur Debesh Roy was moved by perceiving directly the naked nature of society; hence the lower class stricken with poverty, oppression and deprivation has time and again come up in his literary realm. Probably that's why he has gained familiarity in the literary domain as a writer compassionate to masses. Events like refugee problem, farmer's agitation, mass movement, naxalite movement and what note could not bypass his lens of observation. On the other hand, it has to be added to say that he did not at all lose elegance of writing in all of these matters. The gracefulness of Tista sometimes begins to appear in his state forward writing and again now and then in difference of disinterested nature, the philosopher Debesh never make his world of reality dreary and dull sometimes through his mysterious ghost stories, sometimes through autobiography of lonely life. The readers get astonished only then when they find after discussion and consideration that he did not ultimately hobble forward along the path of literature leaving aside any aspect of it.

We cannot but mention a comment of Purnendu Pariee regarding Debesh Roy in this regard- "*Debesh did have his majestic mastery over those areas of modern Bengali novels where they have been marked with weakness and ineffectiveness*".¹

We will get the authenticity of the give comment only after dissertation of the narrative of novelist Debesh.

The backgrounds of most of the writings of the novelist in question have been shaped in connection with developing fortune of the life of the bengalees of 20th century, that is, the base of the literary domain of Debesh Roy was latent in the

radical change of the agrarian system itself. There occurs a chance root and branch in the agriculture life along with Permanent Settlement System.

The repeated outbursts of the extremely peeved life of bengalees come to light in the outmost efforts in order to get rid of that change. Though the life of Bengalees got rid of that by means of external pompous display, yet many untold agonies remained hidden in the light of victory. It was exactly at that very point of moment when Debesh created a stirring atmosphere in literature by virtue of his own creations. Although a plethora of movements and lows were launched and framed in the favour of the farmers, but in the long-run the farmers and laborers who work strenuously were exploited. The lower class farmers and laborers losing all their landed properties became resource less and there after base politics entered into the classified peasantry. Mean while, the economic crisis and devastating famine appeared and breakout in consequence of the first and second world war worse respectively. A part from that, refugee problems and communal riots headed up. The lower class people were exploited by the canker of problems mentioned above which were created by the bourgeois class itself; or the fact may be stated in a more clear way, the said problems were created with the sole purpose of exploiting the lower class. The philosopher Debesh was able to perceive the tit bits of the distress of lower class, which naturally have come-up in his literary world. Speculum was created in the stories and novels of Debesh Roy pertaining to the neglected and harassed life caused by the mixture of sufficiency at the approach of fundamental truth. He dedicated the books to the neglected ones and they even happen to be the protagonists of his stories and novels.

Debesh Roy all the time wanted to fabricate his fictional world on the basis of off-screen background. The act of adopting any artificialness and overmuchness was foreign to his habit and nature. The structures of those stories and novels by means of which he glorified the literary realm were constructed on the basis of scathing innuendo sarcasm unpleasant reality plus some simple characters belonging to off-screen background. Even the writing originating from two pairs of narratives of the novelist is not centralized to a different selfhood. He even choosing carefully ten to fifteen crores of beings of the upper class from the world of beings living in India made them go out from his literary domain, moreover he made the remaining large number of beings central character of his novels. These characters might not have thought that they would be some day central characters of any narrative, and the matter of becoming central character was not knowable to them, as because the way of their life is bound by the lows of nature. Those who were not coloured by any artificiality were not able to feel the essence of dreaming such a monumental dream, nor do they even want to realize. In actual sense, it is not possible on the part of bourgeois class numbering ten to fifteen crores to form even a minimum idea regarding their expression and struggle for life and what can't be made to feel in black and white; as because penmanship can't perceive the totality of the expression of that pain. So Debesh Roy said in his "Tistaparer Britanta"-

*"Those who in India are versed in the art of writing do not know as by which symbolic letters the tales of the poorest people of India numbering sex to seven crores can be jotted down."*²

The novelist by means of his writing pertaining to "Khorar Pratibedon" has reached the massage of the village Beejkuda belonging to district of Sorgooja, Modhya Pradesh, to the people of the entire world but it may certainly be a matter of reservation as how far the people of the world were able to realize the tale of life of people residing in Beejkuda. The novelist delineated the stories of life of all those people that much in "Khorar Pratibedon" as much as it is possible with the stroke of pen. Its identifying mark goes with an interview of the first chapter of narrative; where there lies neither any blending nor any complexity except littlest need of the simple mind of Ribai Pando.

"Aami Beejkuday Firbo"³

The very start of narrative portrays the coming of monsoon and it is conjectured from the knowledgeable fact concerning its impact in Beejkuda that the place faces scarcity of water. The change of the course of climate in this region from beginning of 90's has particularly being noticed. As a result of which, the condition of the areas marked off as drought-hit of India starts deteriorating from the summer season of 1992. Both state and central governments at that were as much indifferent to the inhabitants of those areas as much as they (inhabitants) had been trapped in a pathetic condition. It is of course not so that the information of their tearful condition did not reach then the years of educated and upper class people, as because those educated circles right after retiring from bed in the morning take news paper in their hand, that is, Sunday observer, The Hindustan Times, the Times of India, India Today, Front Line etc. focus light on those neglected sections. Now let us have a lookover a brief scenario as how the government did have an idea about the inhabitants of Beejkuda during their distressful condition –

"The government has started making various excuses to avoid responsibility of providing water food and grass to lacs of people, cattle and buffaloes of so many places- would we call it drought for scanty rainfall, would we all it a famine for a little shortage of food for people?"⁴

So it is found that many lives of the inhabitant of the Beejkuda stricken with poverty not only became victims of famine but also the resources of the indifferent state machinery failed cent percent to play an effective role here. The condition of the inhabitants appears to be like that of "Padha Nadeer Majhi" (1936) lots of innocent, poverty stricken and helpless

people get pulverized in between two hills namely nature and upper class members. While they have been at the last gasp in regard to their utmost effort of protecting themselves from the dreadful grip of nature, it is exactly at that very moment the political octopus wrings them spirally and from which it is by no means possible to get rid of; what very explicitly comes to our notice from the introduction to “Khorar Pratibedon”. The production of rabi crop throughout India in 1991-92 roughly appeared to be a best standard. Even cultivation of sugarcane was fine. The central government taking everything into consideration felt that the condition grossly looked well and good, so it declared a change in its action plan-

“Let the subsidy on food grains be stopped, people are to buy food items paying the asking price. Let the subsidy on manure be stopped, cultivators are to cultivate purchasing manure giving its price. All those plans to be closed what make people dependent an aid. Let all those factories be shut where there is no profit at all. All the hassles be removed, for which the foreign traders do not want to be engaged in any trade in India. As a result of which some people may not have any means of lifting crops of their own lands. Some people may go without food. Some people may give-up taking food. Some people may be thrown out of employment. Although they constitute a larger part in comparison to nearly 100 crores of people of entire India, yet those 50 to 60 crores of people do not mould and develop the economy of India”⁵

The complete agricultural system received a terrible bludgeoning at this decision of the central government. One third population of India, that is farmers losing all the ray of hopes found themselves to fall in a sea of danger. The government was then not concerned about these ordinary people, rather the government had been very busy regarding foreign relationship, what the novelist has ridiculed with a line from Rabindranath’s poem – “India would again gain the principal berth in the global community.” Hence it is not only the Natural Calamities which worked behind the creation of the novel “Khorar Pratibedon”, on the contrary, when these hard times through political yashmak push people at the last gasp, there comes the flow of creation in the form of “Khorar Pratibedon”.

Before entering into “Khorar Pratibedon”, the writer has certainly made the inner sense of the word “Khora” clear before the reading circle. The causes of “Khora” (Drought) are generally latent in the rainy season itself. The water level in the earth is measured with a machine at the end of rainy season, that is, at the end of August or the at the start of September to know whether it contains at least fifty millimeters in place of one hundred millimeters. If it does not contain so much, it is supposed then that drought is unavoidable this time in this land, causing the production of crops impossible. The condition of the hinterland of India was same in 1991-92. The reasons like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh etc. which experience scanty rainfall led to the cause of drought. People one after another began to die in the district of Sorgooja, Madhya Pradesh owing to drought from the beginning of May 1992. Most of the villages of Rajasthan too experienced similar situation. The distress of drought hit people ranging from north Karnataka, Maratrawada, Gujarat etc. knows no bound. People in groups started deserting the villages. Everyone even selling items of furniture, cows and buffaloes began leaving the villages. Village after village were reduced to a cheerless desert, but those who were not able to go away felt the frightful jaws of death. There was no information whether those who went away did survive or not, moreover, the chance of survival of those who’s stayed back was, too, quite disappointing. A few old men and women, some young women along with a few children plus some dogs were spotted in the village; all the cows and buffaloes were sold in slaughter-houses. Even under such circumstances every man was felt to have a strong urge to live. Despite knowing that death is inevitable, every man out of biological urge to live carried out their utmost effort to fight against death, but death had been present a mid them in the form of drought. On the other hand, our government was so much indifferent to drought hit people as much as helpless they were. In fact, the government was unwilling to define drought as drought, rather the government held the views regarding the people died from drought –

“Their age itself declares that their days are numbered”.⁶

The post-mortem on the persons died of drought has revealed that there had been stool in the bowel of dead bodies, which proves that starvation did not cause their death, so no drought centric facilities were provided to them. But in actuality, the pre-death conditions of these dead persons was of different type-

“People cannot die just going without food, how long people can live without having anything, they eat whatever they get. People have to die if they want to live eating worms and insects as well as herbs.”⁷

Our government is actually ignorant about the sense of “Khora” (Drought), as they have no means of estimating the severity of drought which may appear or disappear at any time. Nobody can guess as when and where it (drought) would hit and how fearful would be the death caused by it. So the novelist Debesh Not doing further analysis of the word “Khora” moved a head towards the drought stricken people.

“Khorar Pratibedon” is developed containing an introduction and three different chapters. The first out of three chapters depicts and interview of such a person, where a little hint of his pathetic life pricks out heart like a thorn. An interview in Ambikapur Civil Hospital with Ribai Pando, father in law of Jakhlibai who died of starvation in the village Beejkuda of the district of Sorgooja, Madhya Pradesh. We can imagine a horrible nature of Drought from the very title of the chapter

itself. The succeeding chapter contains the story of Atma (soul) of Jakhlibai. There is no question of hearing someone who is already dead, but the speaker rushed to the hospital in order to collect facts about the dead person from someone who is alive. The reading circle got dazed from the interview given by Ribai Pando, who now had no other dream except going back to his grandson in Beejkuda. We came to know the tragic death of the family members due to cruelty of drought, and along with that it is also learn, the effort on the part of the political organization to project the death news as un-natural. That's why the death news of Jakhlibai was circulated in news network from the attack of tetanus.

"Did Jakhlibai bend back? Was she attacked with fever?"

Did Jakhlibai get tetanus?

The grand daughter died in the night and the grandson in the morning.

The son's wife bending forward died over the gran son.

Hmm

The sahib of Chathwal and the senior officer of Sorgooja said that Jakhlibai died bending back."⁸

The exploiting class keeping the cause of death of Jakhlibai away from drought tried to move about avoiding responsibility; and on the other arranging proper medical treatment for the members of the family of Jakhlibai went on spreading their own power and kindness. In this way even the death of Jakhlibai's husband named Rambichar, son of Ribai Pando, was kept away from the cause of drought; but the official records showed that the village had the water at the time of the death of Rambichar, so there was no reason for his death. The official records did not have any such information as how many people of the some family died one after another. Actually, everything including the activities of nature, too are used in the favour of the interests of upper class. In this regards a comment from Ranjit Guha can't but be cited here-

"So far politics is concerned, it primarily and even exclusively signifies political ambition, ideal and activities of the upper class, it is nationalism which is one of the elements of that very politics, even a salient exposition."

So, it has to be added to say that domineering power here, too has taken a more effective form.

The name of the village Beejkuda was spread all over the state after the death of Jakhlibai. As the government officials and journalists starting pouring in Beejkuda, so pucca road was constructed. Beejkuda whose name was unknown to everyone became famous over night for the death of Jakhlibai. After her death there came food items for the inhabitants of Beejkuda from Raghunathnagar, medical facilities were arranged, Ribai Pandowas shifted to hospital, but the government failed to satisfy the hungry soul of Jakhlibai. As drought caused suffering to her little by little before death, so also her soul was not relieved from the terrible grip of drought even after death. Hence the second chapter of the novel depicts the self-statement of Jakhlibai, the story of giving birth of a child amid drought situation by pregnant Jakhlibai, the dying condition of that new born baby. The manner by which she narrated the tale of death of mother and two children at the same time does not contain any kind of hyperbolic expression, nor of any blending. The very simple described incidents do not seem to be so ordinary, as because the despicable face of society remains hidden behind it, which needs a very skillful view point for the reader to perceive. The novelist presenting the matter before the reading circle through the application of simple vocabulary and sentence has left the rest on their shoulders for consideration. Jakhlibai along with her two children used to wander about in those areas where the entry of living persons was prohibited, she had a hope in her mind before death that she would get the trace of food in this area coming after death. But it was seen after death that even the living persons after the start of drought used to come in this hilly area in search of food. When the living persons claim their share on the food of dead ones, the souls of the dead ones remain hungry. Same was the condition of Jakhlibai and her two children. They after death roaming in every hill could not find out food. The pre death problem seemed to be unwilling to give them relief after death. When the hungry soul heard that food would come to Beejkuda from Raghunathnagar, then the soul of Jakhlibai reached the specific place to get their names enlisted for getting the share of food, but she by no means was able to get her name and those of her children enlisted, as because they are atman (soul), how would the living ones here them? Never the less, Jakhlibai went on waitinf for food- "without knowing whether her name was included on the list of Beejkuda or not, Jakhlibai holding her daughter tightly in her bosom and son by hand had been waiting beneath a big tree as when a carriage would bring food from Raghunathnagar."

Nobody can change destiny, which, as if, always leads the people stricken with drought to the jaws of death. As no data is available at the arrival of drought, so is the case of the persons died from drought. Nobody is worried as who when died on the road. Everyone hit by drought knows since dead persons are over taken with death, so they die. They too, know that they would not be speared by death, moreover, nobody would pay any attention to the fact someday they would also die somewhere. They also know the bodies of the dead persons hit by drought remain lying here and there being decomposed. Same and similar condition happened in the village Antral of the district of Kalahandi of Odisha. When the life of people was in the clutches of death due to drought, then an incident that occurred before the very eyes of Tulshi Nayak created a violent commotion throughout the state; which was such that Horijons in Khome spent their days

swallowing mud. The name of Kalahandi of Odisha reached the upper level all over the country. The then Prime Minister visited Kalahandi three times, visits of journalists and political parties plus other incidents such as number of population, houses, estimate of production, number of tribe helped Kalahandi in occupying a large space on the page of history; but amid all such things the villagers who are at the last gasp, deprived of normal course of life are unable to keep their own data. So how they would provide data to the government? The act of bearing witness on the part of Tulshi Nayak as how an old woman ate mud out of tiredness of life under a specific situation became a special item of news. An old woman stricken with starvation tried to satisfy her hunger by eating mud, but the Indian government instead of showing empathy and compassion to this incident, found out that one can live even eating mud. Tulshi Nayak could see that the old woman in question not getting anything to eat, was having mud dissolving it in water. Though the matter seems to be absurd, but actually such incident happened in Kalahandi.

Kalahandi always faces problems caused by drought, yet men are born there, grow up and then some day people also died abruptly. As soon as a year hit by drought passes, they think they are lucky to live a year more. Although the people of this large area are stricken with sorrows and sufferings, but our government is pathetic. When the political circle comes to any decision regarding Kalahandi, it is concerned with as how these dry areas can be used, that is, setting up of yarn mill, sugar mill, but nobody pays any attention to the fact that the artificial factories would push further to the path of drought. The political evil design exploits the inhabitants of the Kalahandi not only in this way, various rules and regulations related to agriculture work also exploit them without any effort from the part of the government. As gaunti'yara gets the cultivation engaging cultivators, causing exploitation to poor parents and the cultivators himself. Here also in some way or other the upper class people are gainful. If the reading circle looks into the matter deeply, they can find that these rules and regulations are framed by the government itself. This upper class being charmed by colonial illusion always continues to exploit the simple souls.

One who has fixed the destiny in the inhabitants of Kalahandi of Odisha has left no room for empathy and compassion for them. On the one hand, there is political conspiracy, on the other hand, nature of Kalahandi- the inhabitants of Kalahandi are almost ruined being stampeded by these twin factors. The barren land of Kalahandi by no means smiles on them. There is no rainfall year after year, but even if flow of water comes at any good moment, the barren land of Kalahandi refuses to accept it. The picture of Kalahandi is clear from the flaw less description –

“It will be seen from the village periphery – the land of Kalahandi gives back men. It is to be viewed, the earth does not want men, it is itself busy with so many tricks and feats. As if a tiger being satisfied with human flesh has been enjoying its relaxed moments spreading itself in every direction. Somewhere that dark brown stone hard earth is lying on its back with legs towards the sky; exposing its white belly. The wind which is expected to give a push so as to cause to swing year of corn, now oscillates far from the belly of animal satisfies with human blood.”

The novelist has fixed every matter worn out by drought in the novel ‘Khorar Pratibedan’ as the goal of the novel, on the one hand, unproductive land caused by drought, on the other hand evil design of the exploiting class. A larger part of India is almost going to be ruined by trampling of these two factors. The novelist could not even forget the animals along with persons stricken with drought. The fourth chapter helps us in hearing the self-story of evil spirit of the dead buffalo of Rakhambai. A story of a village of Maharashtra after Madhya Pradesh and Odisha comes to our ears where the speaker is a buffalo died of drought. A buffalo which was brought under the loving care of Rakhambai narrated its own story in the fourth chapter of the novel. Although Rakhambai was about to die out of starvation and scarcity of water, yet she was equally pained at the hunger of the buffalo. Where everybody has been selling their domestic animals for subsistence, there Rakhambai not considering her buffalo as a saleable commodity refrained from drinking most valuable drinking water at its death. The matter of gladness of Rakhambai is known in the reminiscence of evil spirit. This coddling becomes explicit in the detailed analysis of the writer-

“Bai used to itch forehead, I felt ease and comfort for a long time. The fingers of Bai came itching close to my eyes directly. Then I shut my eyes. Bai in course of itching even itched upper lips of my eyes. My eyes were closing down, Bai used to itch I lids of both the eyes, upper part of nose, and itched both the sides of nose.”

While the entire India had been neglected and oppressed in the grinder of exploitation of political conspiracy, there such fondness and compassion of Rakhambai for the buffalo are certainly to amaze the reading circle. The novelist Debesh has created an instructive model for those through Rakhambai who in a reckless manner killed animals and sell them to a slaughter house without considering the presence of vital flow in them. She guarded the buffalo most affectionately at the time of drought regarding it as her own children, but nobody can deny destiny. So once even the buffalo of Rakhambai too, had to die. Such type of seems to have no end. The buffalo concerns had been spiritless for a long time owing to drought, without food and scarcity of water. So, when the spirit of the buffalo completely went out of its body was not even known through the buffalo itself.

“Bai so I was even then on the verge of death, or my death had already been over. I, too, do not know exactly whether I was already dead then, or my death was over. I do not know whether I died before falling down, or I continued to live without falling in the lap of death completely. I had been in a spiritless state for a long time, or perhaps for a long spell of days.”

As the terrible nature of drought comes to our notice through the self-expression of the evil spirit of the buffalo, likewise similarly the highest form of humanism of Rakhambai comes to our view. Drought never attacks one spearing another. Village after village is ruined at the arrival of drought. Both human beings and animals equally suffer from drought condition. So the novelist has spread an important message in the fourth chapter for being compassionate to animals.

We somewhat conjecture the mental condition of Rakhambai before the death of buffalo from the very self-expression of the evil spirit of the animal. The buffalo due to drought has become so much thin and weak that it even lost its strength of chewing grass. It died after a few days. What was fit to be done by Rakhambai then? Bai poured a good quantity of water into the mouth of the dead buffalo from the pot and which she did not feel with water for the second time. There might have been a strong sense of hatred behind the factor keeping the pot empty, and that very hatred can remind us our political system. Rakhambai may not be in spirit for the next twenty four hours, but the souls of Rakhambai, Jakhlilai and the buffalo remaining every thirsty and hungry will continue to roam about in the exploiting circle of representatives of the upper class numbering ten to fifteen crores of India for getting justice.

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