

Depiction Of Tribal's Migration Experience In Gopinath Mohanty Paraja.

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Abstract

Gopinath Mohanty is a contemporary Indian tribal writer who deals with the life and experience of tribal people and their culture. His novel *Paraja* highlights the importance of community and solidarity in adversity. The present study explores how Gopinath Mohanty delves into the lives of the *Paraja* tribe, an indigenous community in Odisha, India, and how they migrated from one place to another place for survival. It also traces how the tribal community is forced to migrate in search of livelihood as they fall into the trap of debt and exploitation by landlords and moneylenders. This migration represents a physical displacement and a loss of identity and cultural heritage. This group of tribals moved away from their ancestral lands and settled in a new land. In the new land, they are facing alienation and struggle to adapt to the unfamiliar and often hostile environments, symbolizing the broader impact of modernization on Indigenous populations. Their family's debt mounts in the new land; they work as bonded laborers (known as gothis) for the landlord exploiting them. The novel offers a deep exploration of the intersection between tradition and modernity through the characters.

Keywords: Migration, Relocation, Bonded Labor, Tribal Hardships.

INTRODUCTION

Gopinath Mohanty is a twentieth-century eminent Indian novelist and short story writer. His novels *Paraja* and *Danapani* are modern classics initially written in the Odia language and later translated into English. He won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1995 for his novel *Amrutara Santana*. He won the Jnanpith Award in 1974 and Padma Bhushan in 1981. His novel *Paraja* is a moving narrative based on the life of a tribal community. The tale of one's attachment to land, with the soil of one's ancestors, deals with the story of shattered dreams. It also portrays the experience of colonial rule and its impact on odia tribals. It is not a fictional work, an authentic record of the hopes and sentiments, dreams and desires, pleasures and miseries of a tribe that exists.

Mohanty has left an extraordinary, indelible imprint in the global fictional scenario with his vast and outstanding collection of fictional and nonfictional outputs. His famous novel *Paraja* is a masterpiece that creates the contours of the fanciful world of the *Paraja*-inhabited village, Sarsupadar, with different shades, colors, and dimensions using a language that is rich and lyrical. The landscape is imaginary, but they exist in the backwoods of some districts in Odisha. Their central locations are Koraput, Pottangi, Semiliguda, Lamatpur, Laxmipur, Jeypore and Dashmantpur. Their mother tongue is Parji, a part of the Dravidian language family. As an administrative officer, the novelist was privileged to come near the untouched tribal heartlands of the state. His fiction deals with the tribal concept, which emerges from his direct communication, first-hand experiences, and substantial knowledge of the tribal ethos. The novel *Paraja* bears the stamp of a magnificent onlooker who has studied the challenging circumstances, living conditions, and cultural nitty-gritty of the *Paraja* tribe and has presented them with an exotic flavor and an antique appearance. The polychromatic sketches of fascinating scenery, graphic details of rugged mountains, dense forests, dirty villages, and glimpses of superstitions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

The study's objective is to find out the experiences of migration tribals who faced different kinds of experiences and how they were oppressed by landlords, officials, and caste-ridden society. It helps us understand tribals' property rights and the laws of other stakeholders involved in their migration. The study compiles the experiences of migration depicted in the novel with the actual condition of tribal migration in India. The study also traces the critique of government policies, social inequalities, and economic pressures that drive tribal migration. This study will explore the tribal migration experience in Gopinath Mohanty's novel *Paraja* with the following objectives:

- To examine the portrayal of tribal migration of Gothi communities.
- Identify the primary reasons behind the *Paraja* tribe's migration, such as land displacement, economic hardship, and environmental challenges.
- To investigate the effects of migration on the cultural identity, traditions, and social structure of the *Paraja* tribe.
- To analyze how the writer Mohanty portrays the migration experience of the tribal community in *Paraja*.
- To describe the influence of external forces such as new government policies, industrialization, and social pressures on the migration patterns of the *Paraja* tribe, as represented in the novel.
- To explore the psychological and emotional struggles that the *Paraja* people face while attempting to migrate, including their feelings of isolation and grief, as well as the process of adjusting to new surroundings.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY:

The scope of the study is to investigate the depiction of tribal migration experience in Gopinath Mohanty's novel *Paraja*. It also concentrates on the rural and tribal regions depicted in the book, primarily focusing on the setting within Odisha, India. The events and experiences of migration within the historical context described in the novel reflect the socio-economic conditions of early to twentieth-century India. It also explains a critique of the exploitation faced by tribal communities and its implications for understanding broader social issues. In the novel, the themes of migration and displacement resonate with contemporary issues tribal communities face. The context of the story reveals the current issues related to tribal displacement, land rights, and cultural preservation in India. The multifaceted experiences of tribal migration, as depicted in *Paraja*, draw connections to broader cultural, historical, and social contexts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mishra, N. (2008). In his article *Depiction of Tribal Life in Gopinath Mohanty's Paraja*, "he explains how Gopinath Mohanty realistically portrays the struggles, customs, and socio-economic challenges of the Paraja tribe in his celebrated novel. Mishra highlights Mohanty's humanistic and empathetic approach to depicting tribal life, emphasizing the author's deep understanding of Indigenous culture and his ability to reflect the effects of exploitation, poverty, and oppression on these communities. The article discusses how Mohanty uses vivid, nuanced descriptions to illustrate the harsh realities and rich cultural heritage of the *Paraja* people. Mishra also contextualizes Mohanty's work within the broader field of Indian literature, positioning him as a pioneering voice for the marginalized and rural populace, making the novel significant for studying Indigenous life and tribal issues in postcolonial India.

R. Siva Kumar [2003], in his article "Migration and Identity in Postcolonial Indian Literature," examines the complex relationship between migration and identity formation in the context of Indian literature after colonial rule. Kumar discusses how postcolonial migration, both within India (internal migration) and beyond (diasporic migration), profoundly shapes the personal and collective identities of characters in literature and the authors themselves. Drawing from several postcolonial Indian texts, he illustrates how migration—whether forced due to economic hardship, displacement caused by political turmoil, or voluntary relocation for better opportunities—leads to a redefinition of selfhood, often marked by conflict between tradition and modernity, belonging and alienation. Kumar explores how authors grapple with themes of loss, nostalgia, dislocation, and hybridity while portraying the migrant's struggle to reconcile their homeland's cultural values with their new environments. The article underscores how migration in postcolonial Indian literature is not just a physical movement but also a metaphor for the more extensive processes of identity reconstruction in the face of colonial legacies. In works by writers such as Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, and Jhumpa Lahiri, Kumar notes a recurring narrative of fractured identities, where characters oscillate between various cultural, linguistic, and geographic spaces, struggling to find a sense of home. The author emphasizes how these literary works reflect broader societal tensions in postcolonial India, where migration has created dynamic, fluid identities that resist simplistic categorizations. Ultimately, Kumar argues that the migration experience in postcolonial Indian literature symbolizes both the challenges and opportunities of constructing new identities in a world shaped by the intersections of history, geography, and politics.

Amartya Sen [1999], in his article "Development and Displacement: The Tribal Dilemma," explores the complex relationship between economic development and the displacement of indigenous tribal communities, focusing on the ethical, social, and financial implications of this issue. Sen argues that while development is essential for economic growth and progress, it often comes at the cost of displacing marginalized tribal populations, who are already vulnerable and economically disadvantaged. Using case studies from India, he highlights how large-scale development projects, such as the construction of dams, mining operations, and infrastructure development, frequently lead to the forced relocation of tribal communities from their ancestral lands, severing them from their traditional livelihoods, cultural roots, and social networks. Sen critiques the "developmentalist" perspective that views displacement as a necessary sacrifice for the greater good, emphasizing that this approach ignores the severe human costs borne by the displaced populations, who often receive inadequate compensation and face impoverishment, social alienation, and loss of identity. He also discusses how tribal communities are disproportionately affected by these policies, lacking political power and legal protections to resist or negotiate fair terms of resettlement. Sen calls for a more inclusive and ethical model of development that prioritizes human welfare and recognizes the rights of tribal communities to participate in decisions affecting their futures. He suggests that development should not be measured purely by economic indicators but by its ability to enhance human capabilities, dignity, and well-being, particularly for the most marginalized. The article advocates for policies that combine economic progress with social justice, proposing alternative models of development that involve tribal populations as active participants rather than passive victims of progress. Sen concludes that development should aim to improve the quality of life for all without sacrificing the rights and identities of vulnerable communities.

Harish Trivedi [2005], in his article "Narrating the Nation: Tribal Stories in Indian Literature," examines the construction of national identity in Indian literature while highlighting these communities' marginalization in mainstream discourse. Trivedi argues that despite India's rich literary traditions, tribal voices have often been sidelined, with their stories either being appropriated by dominant cultural frameworks or left out of the national narrative altogether. He analyzes how Indian literature frequently portrays tribal communities through an external lens, focusing on their "otherness" rather than recognizing them as integral parts of the nation. Trivedi critiques this exclusion and emphasizes the need to understand tribal

experiences as vital to the broader story of India, particularly in postcolonial contexts where questions of identity, belonging, and cultural diversity are central. He explores how authors like Gopinath Mohanty in *Paraja* and Mahasweta Devi in works like *Aranyer Adhikar* use tribal stories to challenge hegemonic ideas of progress, modernity, and nation-building. These authors, Trivedi suggests, offer counter-narratives that resist the erasure of tribal histories and question the dominant development discourse that often portrays tribal people as obstacles to national progress. Trivedi also discusses how the forced displacement, cultural assimilation, and economic exploitation of tribal communities reflect the darker side of India's modernization, with literature serving as a critical space for articulating these struggles.

Furthermore, he examines the tension between oral tribal traditions and written literature, exploring how the transition from oral to written forms affects the authenticity and representation of tribal voices. Trivedi ultimately calls for a more inclusive understanding of Indian literature that recognizes the diversity of voices and experiences, urging for tribal stories to be narrated not just as peripheral, exotic tales but as central to the nation's identity. In doing so, he advocates for a literary framework that includes but prioritizes the perspectives of India's indigenous and tribal populations, contributing to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the nation's cultural and historical fabric.

DISCUSSION

Mohanty's *Paraja* explores the *Paraja* tribe's difficulty and their sad journey as they negotiate the forces of migration. In the novel, Tribal migration is shown as a complex trip with socio-economic, cultural, and emotional components rather than just a physical relocation from one location to another. The novelist effectively conveys the tribal struggle in *Paraja* and the effects of outside pressures on indigenous tribes with his vivid narrative and sympathetic representation. It takes place in rural Odisha at a time when tribal groups were struggling to adapt to the modernization and exploitation of outsiders. The *Paraja* tribe has strong ties to its homeland and a culture closely intertwined with the natural world. Moneylenders and landlords invade, and their ancient way of life starts to fall apart, forcing them to migrate against their will and severing their ties to the land and one another. *Paraja* tribes are portrayed as living with their surroundings and adhering to long-standing social structures and rituals that have supported them for many generations before their relocation. From their daily rituals and community meetings to worshiping the natural world to support their way of life, Mohanty's depiction of tribal life is replete with minute details. *Paraja* regards the land as a holy place containing its history, culture, sense of identity, and source of subsistence. The subsequent departure is more heartbreaking because it represents the breaking of the relationships that constitute their identity. Mohanty says: "...the novel is not a fear of cataclysm and destruction; on the contrary, it is an unusual and uncanny sensation of visualizing the past and the future based on [the] present..."²²⁴

In the novel, *Paraja* is compelled to migrate due to their inability to repay their loans, which causes them to lose their land eventually. This process is a sign of unplanned marginalization and uproots Indigenous communities rather than just being a reflection of the landlords' avarice. There, Mohanty provides the actual condition of the socio-economic factors that influence migration, which is both critical and nuanced. Sukuru Jani says: The Kondhs, who revere the hills as their god, constantly fear losing their life and livelihood. The sense of eco fear in them becomes evident in their fear of losing the mountain, which maintains the biodiversity of the Western Ghats, and the bauxite that enables the continuous flow of perennial streams. "¹³⁴ The *Paraja* tribes have experienced significant cultural deterioration and identity loss due to migration. The tribe experiences an identity crisis due to the erosion of their ancient rituals and beliefs as they are pushed to adapt to new circumstances. The novel examines how migration upends the tribe's social systems, causing a disintegration of links within the community and a feeling of estrangement among the protagonists. Mohanty's portrayal of this breakdown of culture is moving; it conveys the profound sense of loss that comes with migration. Despite their best efforts, the characters cannot resist the forces of change and preserve their cultural identity. *Paraja* serves as a reminder of the human cost of migration and the importance of maintaining cultural identity in the face of change. Mohanty's work has had a lasting impact on the discourse surrounding tribal migration, making it an essential Text for understanding the complexities of this issue. The portrayal of migration is entwined with themes of exploitation and resistance throughout the book. The *Paraja* tribe is exploited in several ways, from the challenging labor conditions they are pushed into after moving to manipulation by landlords. However, novels also depict character resistance; they rebel against the powers that would oppress them. Sukuru says, "The tribesmen had a natural horror of law" and were afraid to do anything unlawful. When Sukru Jani and his son Mandia approached the judicial system against the tyranny of the moneylender, they became the victims of the law. ¹⁶²

The characters oppose their circumstances physically and psychologically, refusing to be thoroughly defeated by them. Mohanty's depiction of this resistance adds complexity to the story, which demonstrates that although migration is a form of displacement, it also inspires defiance and tenacity in the face of hardship. Gopinath Mohanty's novel *Paraja* offers a profound and empathetic portrayal of the tribal migration experience, capturing both the resilience and the challenges faced by Indigenous communities in India. Through its vivid narrative and rich characterization, the novel illuminates the complex interplay between tradition and transformation as tribal people navigate the pressures of modernity and displacement. Mohanty's perspective not only underscores the socio-economic and cultural impacts of migration but also serves as a powerful commentary on the broader forces shaping the lives of marginalized groups. Personal struggles with more prominent socio-political themes, *Paraja* remains a significant contribution to understanding the nuances of tribal experiences and the enduring struggle for identity and autonomy in a rapidly changing world.

Conclusion



Gopinath Mohanty's '*Paraja*' offers a profound and poignant depiction of the tribal migration experience, shedding light on the socio-economic forces that drive Indigenous communities to leave their ancestral lands. The novel intricately explores how systemic exploitation, indebtedness, and land alienation uproot the *Paraja* tribe, forcing them into an involuntary journey of migration in search of survival. This migration is a physical movement and a deeply emotional and cultural dislocation, highlighting the gradual erosion of tribal identity, customs, and connection to the land. Mohanty captures the intricate web of exploitation, land alienation, and survival struggles that push the *Paraja* tribe into a cycle of migration and displacement. The novel portrays the physical journey of migration and the emotional and cultural dislocation accompanying it, reflecting a broader commentary on the marginalization of tribal communities in the face of modernization. Mohanty's empathetic narrative voice and his detailed portrayal of tribal life emphasize the human cost of such forced migrations, urging readers to reflect on the systemic injustices faced by these vulnerable communities. Ultimately, '*Paraja*' is a timeless exploration of the loss of identity, home, and dignity in the migration process while embodying the resilience and spirit of the tribal people in the face of adversity. In capturing this complex migration experience, *Paraja* remains a powerful commentary on the human cost of development, urging reflection on the need for more inclusive and equitable societal progress.

Bibliography

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