

Narrating the History of Violence and Resistance from India's Margins: A Study of Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood* and Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*

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Abstract

Many renowned writers like Temsula Ao, Easterine Kire and Monalisa Chankija have been expressing the insider's view of the often neglected and conflict-ridden region of Nagaland through their versatile literature. Among them all Easterine Kire deserves special mention. Although almost all her novels are extremely localized, yet somehow the themes of violence and resistance portrayed in them cross the boundary of the state and make her readers ponder upon the greater issues of globalization, mass migration, war and peace. At the same time the adivasis belonging to Chotanagpur belt also underwent misrepresentation or no representation at all in post-independence India. Mahasweta Devi, the social activist and a writer having spent most of her life among these people had voiced the real terror of life in the periphery. At present both communities are at the verge of cultural extinction due to their repeated history of colonization, religious conversion and subsequent modernization that now threatens to homogenize all cultural distinctions. Thus automatically the writers from the region had taken up the cause of the deprived marginalia. The novels under discussion can be considered under 'resistance writing' and in my paper, I find it most relevant to do a comparative study, to analyze their problematized representation of the process of decolonization of India that puts to question the basic foundation upon which the nation was formed. In the larger context, a major section of the indigenous communities all around the globe, have been subjected to exploitation and exclusionism in one way or the other, for a very long time now. Comparative study of such texts may bring clarity in perspective about the problems encountered in their day to day interactions with the mainstream society and its tentative solution that we may consider for further research.

Keywords: geopolitical, resistance, representation, communities, localized

Introduction

“Comparative literature counteracts the tendency to claim national superiority or precedence on the basis of the imagined “genius” or specificity of a nation.”

Katherine Durnin (2)

“If the story of the rise of nationalist resistance to imperialism is to be disclosed coherently, it is the role of the indigenous subaltern that must be strategically excluded.”

Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak (337)

Modern India is celebrating its status as a globalized nation since the start of the new millennium. But the Indian marginalia living in the distant hills and forests still presents a persistent picture of poverty and conflict. In fact, we find that although the two writers, Easterine Kire and Mahasweta Devi belong to two different geographical locations, describing two separate events in their respective narratives, yet common experiences of oppression and exploitation on the one hand and resistance to all this on the other hand, connect the two novels inevitably. Both Easterine Kire's *Bitter Wormwood* and Mahasweta Devi's *Chotti Munda and his Arrow* are novels that represent Indian marginalia during more or less the same time-period – that is the turbulent fifties, sixties and seventies, of the last century. In both the novels, the new nation in the process of coming to terms with 'itself' and its subaltern 'Other', clashes with it in two separate contexts but raises almost the same issues about the nation and its power politics.

Homi K. Bhabha in his 'Preface' to *The Location of Culture* enunciated that, “Globalization ... must always begin at home. A just measure of global progress requires that we first evaluate how globalizing nations deal with 'the difference within' – the problems of diversity and redistribution at the local level, and the rights and representations of the minorities in the regional domain” (Bhabha Preface). The two novels under analysis have given rise to pertinent questions regarding India's claim to globalization and have placed the nation as a bordered power-container. The predicaments of the marginalized people as depicted in them condition the possibilities of different interventions within the nation space, thereby challenging the very idea of 'democracy' upon which the nation was formed seventy five years ago. According to Karl W. Deutsch, “a nationality is a people pressing to acquire a measure of effective control over the behaviour of its members. It is a people striving to equip itself with power, with some machinery of compulsion strong enough to make the enforcement of its commands sufficiently probable to aid in the spread of habits of voluntary compliance with them” (28). This machinery of compulsion can be manifold. Power can be sustained not only through military and economic domination but also through 'hegemony' by imposing one's fiction upon the 'Other'. Stephen Greenblatt claimed that, “the quintessential sign (of power) is the ability to impose one's fiction upon the world: the more outrageous the fiction, the more impressive the manifestation of power” (Jamuna 126). Likewise, the Western intellectuals and imperialists had joined hands to construct the Orient through their elaborate discourses on history and anthropology, firmly establishing the ideas about binaries, thereby dehumanizing the very subject of study. Similarly, since the early nineteenth century, writing and studying of national literatures was taken up as an inevitable part of nation building all around the world. In India also, driven by nationalistic motives, several chroniclers resorted to the Vedas and the Upanisads to create a “historical memory about a classical ARYAN-HINDU-BHARATVARSA” (Chatterjee 213), by default excluding the non-Aryan marginalia.

Quite in the same note in his famous book *The Discovery of India*, the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru had taken up the project of excavating histories in order to claim a common Indian past. However, in his analysis of Nehru's historical enterprise Ramu Nagappan says, "Both the narrative and the "discovery" it entails are bound up with Nehru's practical sense of place and mission" (3). Nagappan's claim highlights the fact that mainstream historiography is a process of deliberate obliteration or forgetting. In the Indian context this forgetting was expected to help in the process of constructing a discourse that would address the "problem of totalizing the people and unifying the national will" (3). But it is found that instead of unification, the obliteration of other histories and cultures has often only led to bust the myth of 'unity in diversity'. This is evident in the several uprisings for statehood in the last few decades. Approximately one-sixth of Indian population is constituted by the tribes, who are an even older civilization than the dominant mainstream. Inhabiting in the margins of the British Empire their culture and customs were incomprehensible to the administrators, who labelled them as either 'criminal tribes' or 'head-hunters'. As a result they became victims of social discrimination and state atrocities since the colonial period itself. Subsequently in post-independence India also, they were invisible in the great task of nation building. But working within the space of displacement, writers like Mahasweta Devi and Easterine Kire, have tried to "write in" the history of the disinherited, the dispossessed, and the displaced indigenes, evidently "written out" of Indian history. They have thus problematized the mainstream's discourse of nation building.

Therefore, in the new millennium, representations from the margins and by the margins are essentially bound to be resistant – it is always a process of 'writing back'. The novel of resistance here is one that deals with marginalized people – their direct or indirect oppression by imperialist forces and their reciprocal intervention to counter those forces of oppression. According to theorists like Edward Said and Ngugi wa Thiong'o any such literary undertaking is deeply ingrained within the social, economic and political system within which it has been framed and can never be innocent, - 'art for art's sake'. The writers Mahasweta Devi and Easterine Kire have taken up cudgels against the accepted Power and Knowledge structure of imperialism, by rewriting 'other' histories - creating in the process a series of counter-narratives. Their creative efforts have resulted into an alternative discourse aimed at acquainting the mainstream world with the Munda and Naga philosophy of life and thereby, it also acts as an effective tool for reclaiming lost power – the power to tell one's own story. In this regard, Ngugi in his book *The Writers in Politics* says, "All art aims to evoke; to awaken in the observer, listener or reader emotions and impulses to action or opposition" (6) and in reclaiming power both the narratives provide an interesting study.

In her novel *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, Mahasweta Devi portrayed the life of the Mundas where the unending cycle of pain and suffering is as inevitable as the cycle of seasons – 'Jeth....Asharh... Aghran' and simultaneously their histories of resistance are also never ending. Chotti Munda, the hero of the novel, is a figure of continuity, from the Ulgulan to the Emergency, followed by the post-Emergency period struggle for self-assertion among the marginalized Chotanagpur tribes. He carries forward the legacy of revolt that was started by Birsa Munda and later on taken up by Dhani Munda. Similarly in *Bitter Wormwood*, Mose is a figure of continuity of a revolt that had been started by Zaphuphizo and he remains a witness to subsequent developments within the movement. Coincidentally, Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru and the elections are at the background of both the novels and we may note that both Zaphuphizo and Birsa Munda

were imprisoned and tortured by the police. Their enormous presence is felt throughout the stories as they are frequently mentioned, although the leaders themselves never come to the forefront within the novels. The failure of the established system among the marginalized sections of India's periphery forms the underlying theme in both the stories. The Gandhian principle of non-violence is rendered ineffective in the life of the deprived sections from the margins because in the jungle the civilized man behaves more brutally than the 'uncivilized man' (*Chotti Munda and his Arrow*). Nehruvian detachment is also often lashed at by the marginalia, as much more involvement and understanding is expected from the leader of the 'greatest democracy of the world' (*Bitter Wormwood*). Masses are left frustrated and betrayed through repeated diplomacy; and a gaping physical and psychological distance between the centre and margin is apparent in both the novels.

In this way, writing in tandem with Subaltern Studies group Easterine Kire and Mahasweta Devi derided the exclusion of the literary 'ec-centrics' from the mainstream Indian historiography, thereby deconstructing and revealing lacunae in traditional historiographical approach. They are Foucault's 'wirkliche historie' or effective historian in their new historicist agenda of reinterpreting Indian history, through inclusion of the voice of the marginalia. They not only appear to have trusted the agenda of this school but also seem to have upheld and executed its doctrines heart and soul through their creative best.

Power and Violence

As discussed earlier, the people in power use some 'machinery of compulsion' to maintain that power. Human history is full of techniques introduced by rulers to manage the conditions of confrontation so as to reduce the potential for reciprocal control by subordinate people.

One such technique is to increase the political gap between the ruler and subjects, by ways to make the ruler unapproachable. In *Bitter Wormwood* Indira Gandhi's hurried visit to and departure from Nagaland evidently marks a deeper design to project an amiable picture of India's relationship with its indigenous 'Other' in the broader platform of the world community. In *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, the print media, showcased the Naxalites to be the greatest enemy of democracy. Although in reality, the common people from Chotti village acknowledged their benevolence and helped them in every possible way, but the young Naxal boys were conceived as barrier to the system of governance and thus they got mercilessly killed in fake encounter by the police. Such incidents gave rise to anger and bitterness while Chotti Munda's heart wept for the boys who were actually fighting for the rights of the poor people like Chotti himself. Simultaneously, whereas 'the Prime Minister's photograph with many tribal kids' was published with the caption that the 'Prime Minister was the friend of the tribal', in reality the tribal had never experienced any of his interest in their destitute lives except for enhancing his vote bank. In *Bitter Wormwood*, the ruthless extortions in Nagaland were distorted to the extent of being recorded as 'wholehearted donations' by common people according to the famous daily, 'The Indian Express'. This gross mismanagement and lack of authenticity in the publication of national news deepened the sense of betrayal among common people from the periphery, increasing the distance between the centre and the margin. Often it is seen that basic interest of the general public from the periphery of the nation got compromised against the public image of the powerful few.

Yet ironically, all decisions about life at the periphery, depended upon the whim and fancy of these administrators, academicians and politicians from the powerful centre.

Another technique to maintain power has been that of terrorising and spreading the fear of punishment among the masses. Images of the new nation as the power-container at the periphery, reminds one of the great sage Manu's chapter on kingship where he had stated that "Punishment is (in reality) the king ...". Fear of punishment maintains social order and holds all beings, including the gods, to their duties (Walter 44). Hence the most important function of the king is to correctly measure and administer penalties in the form of violence and deprivation. In certain circumstances, violent treatment was encouraged by way of thinking that "Dehumanize classes of persons or reduce them to objects. Resistance is not acceptable from an instrument. A tool that refuses to carry out the purposes of its owner is defective, and it is either discarded or hammered into shape" (Walter 19).

Hence in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, after losing the 1962 and 1967 elections, the ruling party snatched the tribal vote in the 1972 elections by letting loose lumpens like Romeo, Pahalwan and Dildar, who unleashed a reign of terror purposelessly annihilating the oppressed class. Mahasweta Devi opined that the marginalized tribal had been a burden to the new government and their more advanced fellow citizens, and they were to be obliterated from the face of the earth. During 'emergency' the violence of punishment, automatically shifted over to the violence of terrorism because the process was used not only to punish acts of disobedience and resistance but also to sap out the potential for disobedience in advance and to break the power to resist. Tremendous brutality was a common technique applied for governing slaves in ancient times and it resurrected in the jungles of Chotti village in post-colonial India in and around the national emergency period. Thus Dukhia Munda, Puran Munda, Sukha Munda, Bharat Munda, Basmati Oraon, Motia and Chagan's daughters got victimized by the brutal harbingers of the new system. For the poor people of Chotti, independence was perceived merely as a shift of power from Tirathlala to the Youth League followed by the Janata Party. Similarly, to the people of Nagaland, independence of India meant mere shift of power from the 'white man' to the 'brown man'. In the past, the Nagas have been a fiercely independent people who valued their culture and honour more than anything else. The question of independence was a matter of life and death to each and every member of any Naga community. However, under the British rule the situation was comparatively peaceful. The reason for this was that, prior to independence people took some solace in the fact that the white man was bravely encountered in the battlefield; and their suzerainty was accepted only on the basis of British government's superior war techniques. But during the independence of India in 1947, Naga self-esteem was challenged when people were caught unawares as they were being handed over to the 'brown man' by the 'white man' without even as a thought to consider the significant issue of integrity and desire of the community. According to the Naga war customs, defeat in an open confrontation is considered to be much more honourable than unconditional complete surrender, without having been allowed the chance to defend oneself. Before contact with the British the Nagas were a quite closed community with very little recourse to the outside world. They did not in any way identify with the brown man - culturally, socially, politically or economically. Such sudden change in destiny was taken as a grave insult and since then the history of Nagaland was a never-ending battle to correct what was considered to be a heinous offense.

Resistance

According to Joan Borsa, people do not naturally occupy a space outside “the larger cultural and representational field” (37) as that position inevitably puts them to a state of exclusion. Borsa further observed a “constant search for ways to play with the relations of history, culture and power, to parody or deconstruct and reconstruct meaning...” (39) among such people.

The term resistance is ambiguous and ubiquitous in nature. Mahasweta Devi in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow* presented the concept of resistance in the form of its multiple realities of social resistance, passive resistance, political resistance and armed resistance. Through Chotti's several actions of resistance within the novel we may derive the fact that the true potency of any resistance depends upon an amalgamation of activities of different yet complementary characters. Chotti Munda's actions are multiple as he fights for the rights of his fellow beings and, negotiates and re-negotiates with the administration and other local powers to squeeze out a survival. Imperialist violence in the form of economic exploitation by the outsider 'Diku'- small industrialist Harbans Chaddha and moneylender Tirathnath had invaded Chotti's land long before independence. Chotti Munda from Chotti village became the Gandhi from the margin – the saviour of his people. Tactfully, he diversified work, so that the moneylender's grip is loosened little by little. Originally where there was no space allotted to them in the economic structure of the then developing nation. They created their own space and slowly oozed out from that huge structure little by little. This was their first act of resistance against a faulty economic and political system that was rooted in unchecked exploitation and it was a passive form of resistance. Again when Chotti's son Harmu was insulted by Tirathlala, Chotti threatened non-cooperation and Tirath was forced to apologize. Chotti becomes the secret godfather of many armed activists too. During 1930s, the Gandhians pass from outside the village but never touch ground in Chotti village. Simultaneously, Dukhia killed the manager (active resistance) and surrendered to the police with the severed head of the victim stuck in his spear but the two events never merged. Gandhian non-violence is rendered ineffective in Dukhia's case. Dukhia's ultimate act of violence is based upon feelings of deep rooted betrayal and injustice that cannot be undone by practicing non-violence. His unflinching courage to acknowledge the unthinkable act despite having a hundred opportunities to have fled ushers in the era of active resistance and open rebellion like the dark sky before a severe storm. 1942 August Movement also remained outside the premises of the village and India became independent in 1947 without even as a hint to the poor people from India's margins about the huge reversal from being a colony to the process of decolonization. Thus Spivak's enunciation that “the political goals of the new nation are supposedly determined by a regulative logic derived from the old colony, with its interest reversed” (337) becomes evident in Devi's portrayal of 'problematic representation of decolonization' in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*. Interestingly, in both the novels, the independence of India is treated as more of a piece of news and a passing event. Whereas, the rest of India rejoiced and celebrated this event with great pomp and show; and as it became the greatest event of the millennium, in Mahasweta Devi and Easterine Kire's work of fiction all this is relegated to the background and the simple life of the extraordinary people like Chotti and Mose occupies the foreground.

In Easterine Kire's novel *Bitter Wormwood*, peaceful plebiscite was the Naga people's first act of resistance against the state. When plebiscite and repeated appeals with

authentic documentation - first to the British and then to the India government to treat their land as an independent nation, failed to bring the desired result, people boycotted the election. This acted as fuel to the fire and led to forced balloting at gunpoint in 1952. Ironically enough, now the army assumed the role of 'lumpens'. People saw more soldiers than they had ever seen during the Japanese war. Violence of punishment for disobedience to the nation once again shifted over to violence of terrorism. Curfews, village groupings, rape, decapitation of bodies, shooting at peaceful rallies, beating civilians and killing the revered 'gaoburas' created panic while the people, exclaimed in horror, "This conflict is eating us alive" (Kire 122). The tension had ruined the lives of promising young men and women whose education got hampered irrevocably and they took up arms to negotiate justice. Sometimes the CRPF and sometimes the Rashtriya Rifles let loose reign of terror by publicly torturing men and humiliating them. Innocent people were targeted and Mose's friend Neito exclaimed, "They kill a few to put fear in the rest..." (Kire 67) So fear became the chief armament in the hands of the powerful, to strike terror among the masses.

This automatically led to anger and revenge, which in turn led to more anger and more revenge, thereby creating a vicious cycle. The environment of terror and hatred percolated glibly to all strata of the Naga society and village councils held meetings to discuss tyranny of the state. The situation worsened as even children accepted violence as a norm. This gave rise to inadvertent acts of violence like the killing of a CRPF jawan by a boy's slingshot and subsequent counter-violence took place. Evidently, hatred becomes the natural outcome of terror and violence. The pathos of the situation hits hard when it is realized that civilians and young children took up arms to encounter the army. In the face of such oppression and exploitation the Naga National Council was formed in and around Mose's village just as rebellious groups became active in and around the vicinity of Chotti village. In both novels, contrary to normal expectation violence united the downtrodden as they came together to assist their liberators. But ironically, their 'liberator' was the Centre's 'insurgent'.

People learnt tact to survive during such difficult circumstances. They learnt to smell their perpetrator. They learnt to camouflage and disappear without leaving a trace, and their families learnt to suppress facts. They learnt to shift camp often, to escape being traced. They also learnt to survive by recounting the acts of heroism. Every small success of Chotti Munda was celebrated and remembered by his people, who composed and sung songs in his honour. Mose's hoisting of the Naga flag and Neituo's clash with the Indian army made rounds in public memory whenever he recounted the tale of his fractured knee. The story telling was like a balm that soothed the inner pain as it got expressed through recounting of this unforgettable memory. Recounting such old stories of heroism instilled faith and re-instated lost pride in one's culture. It was the straw that kept them afloat during turbulent times. Chotti's 'Arrow' became the symbol of revolt for his people. It was silent, prophetic and self-explanatory of its mission. Similarly, the leaf of the bitter wormwood plant also achieved further symbolic significance. Already it was a common practise to use it to ward off evil spirits among the people in Mose's clan but in the new conflict-ridden circumstance it is again being recounted by Mose's grandson to instil good sense against hatred and violence.

Consequence

India in defending the integrity of the map she had inherited from the British government had inadvertently made the marginalised locations become significant sites of constant

geopolitical anxiety. This geopolitical anxiety got expressed in the form of distrust and mistrust of the dominant economic and political system that had led to serious complications. In *Bitter Wormwood*, we find that in the case of any kind of accidents in the army camps or in army vehicles, responsibility of the entire event automatically shifted over to the Naga nationalists or the so called 'underground' and common people were harassed to teach them a lesson. Basic human rights like 'the right to speech' got compromised by default as people spoke in whispers. Evidently, the environment of tension and alarm tightened, disrupting the day-to-day lives of the people. 'Whispering', was often self-imposed as people felt threatened to speak out loud after the onset of turbulent times. Eventually Mose became the voice of his people, as he undertook the ultimate act of disobedience by hoisting the Naga flag on the Indian Independence day. He became the hero of his people. However he got marked from that day onward, as his name appeared in the most wanted list of the Central Investigation Branch. For the rest of his life he was considered a threat to the 'centre'. Also Dhani and Chotti in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, even when they had returned to normal life of a civilian, were always kept under close vigilance. So fear was on both sides. Neither Chotti nor the Diku (both white and brown man) trusted each other. For every untoward incident Chotti and his arrow was held responsible. As a natural consequence of this, the rise in tension and stress led to over-all existential crisis among the masses.

Post-independent India became the site for various kinds of power politics and clash of interests. This is mirrored in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow* where on the one hand there are the 'lumpens' let loose by the political parties, performing the horrendous dance of death according to their whim and fancy; on the other hand there are people like Swarup Prasad, the 'insurgent' eager for a separate state for the tribal; then there are the Naxalites and in order to teach them all a lesson, there is the IAD from the centre. In the midst of all that, the life of the downtrodden got crushed every day. In *Bitter Wormwood* we see, on the one hand there are the Indian army and police, while on the other hand there is the Naga National Council which subsequently broke up into several factional groups and to make it worse there are the politicians wallowing in their newly found power of statehood along with other opportunists and criminals. Partha Chatterjee enunciated that Indian Nationalism "accepted the very intellectual premise of 'modernity' on which colonial domination was based" (3). The lusting after power, brute force and the associated diplomacy to achieve it defines this period in the suppressed history of the marginalized people of India. In desperation the Naga activists had sought international support. To douse the fire, several peace agreements were initiated. This created the false impression of India's liberalist policy. Kire observes that it did not take long for the common people to realize that the Ceasefire agreements and Shillong Accord were mere strategy by the Indian Government to isolate and make the movement even more complex. Ngugi wa Thiongo in his book *The Writers in Politics* opines that "Liberalism has always been the sugary ideology of imperialism: it fosters the illusion in the exploited of the possibilities of peaceful settlement and painless escape from imperialist violence which anyway is not called violence but law and order" (20). Glaring examples of 'State Terrorism' are AFSPA and AMPO that empowered a soldier to "shoot and kill, in case it is felt necessary to do so for maintaining of public order" (Kire 73). The statehood accorded to Nagaland was also perceived as nothing more than a ruse as the Nagaland State Assembly was made to declare the freedom movement as outlawed under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. Thus, further problematizing of the very ideals of armed resistance is evident as the movement which had been started

with high ideologies had now been gradually reduced to the status of criminal activity by the state forces. Now it was the State that wielded the stick. As soon as the new state of Nagaland was formed, money and land was offered to disband the Underground. The intention behind this was to bring back the rebels to the mainstream life but the dishonest people looked upon it as an opportunity to make wealth. Thus the government was indirectly helping to create vested interest and corruption. Political interests of the powerful few had replaced general security of the masses, and it is evident that Ruby hall, that was the cultural hub of the town was finally bombed to malign the freedom fighters. By this time septuagenarian, Mose and Neito observe that the movement itself had gone wrong after the statehood of Nagaland. The diplomatic 'centre' had successfully torn the uprising into several factional groups that were soon fighting for separate ideals. A movement that was started by intellectuals of the community, who had dreamt high as they had formed the Naga Club, was also torn down to the benefit of corrupt uneducated or less educated vandals, drug-addicts and extortionists who used the name of the 'Underground' to meet their own selfish ends. Thus it is evident that violence drawn out for too long eats up its own roots.

Finally disillusioned, Mose turned suspicious of armed resistance because eventually it got absorbed into that very system which it had been opposing, thereby failing to be a feasible alternative to it. When the goal of the battle remains unfulfilled, Mose is as lonely as Dhani Munda in *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*. He sadly realized that the movement had transformed into a 'mind game'. Armed resistance had failed to sustain itself with the right spirit. With Mose's violent demise in the hands of the two young men, the earlier understanding of conflict gradually wanes away and makes way for a new beginning. Neibou, Mose's grandson refuses to walk in the path of revenge. He introduces the final transformation of mind-set within the novel when he justifies his decision saying:

We have to learn to let the past remain where it is... It (the conflict) has overtaken our lives so much that we have been colonised by it and its demands on us. But we do not have to let it continue to define us and limit us. It only otherises us again and again. In this day and age it has simply made our lives unnecessarily complicated... . I saw that for myself after my grandfather's killing (Kire 236).

Activist Irom Sharmila Chanu in Manipur and the Naga Mother's Association in Nagaland, through peaceful resistance, adamantly upheld the right spirit of the movement. Women formed the backbone of such struggle. The new generation represented by Mose's grandson, has decided not to be defined by the conflict. So their tact is to crowd the centre. They migrate in huge numbers to the centre to squeeze out what the capitalist centre has in store to offer. They fight against discrimination and racism to create their own space. The novel ends with the hope of bridging the gap, as the grandson living in Delhi finds a friend and confidant in Rakesh who hails from central India and as their friendship gets acknowledged by the two families as well, a lot of misunderstandings appear to have existed due to mere miscommunication or lack of communication between the centre and the margin. In *Chotti Munda and his Arrow*, towards conclusion, for the first time the margin speaks on a megaphone to the administration about their long drawn anguish, indicating once again the tremendous need to communicate. Suddenly the power quotient is reversed, and numerous black faces surround the SDO who is overwhelmed by their black presence. It ends

dramatically in a freeze shot, where all oppressed have their hands raised in revolt. The 'dim dim dim' sound of the drum threatens to burst out like a volcano and settle scores with the centre. We find that when the margin speaks everyone else becomes silent in awe and both novels end with an urgent need to communicate and put an end to conflict.

Conclusion

Thus, it is the renegotiation of indigenous culture and viewpoint which triggers the process of healing from the trauma of exploitation and exclusionism. Niketu Iralu in one of the best analysis of the struggle gives a speech entitled 'Historical Rights of the Nagas and their Quest for Integration', where he says, "Nagas have done virtually nothing to speak to the minds and hearts of the Indian people whose understanding alone can solve the problem." He further emphasised on the need to reach out to the Indian people "to get them to understand why we maintain our position is unique and why we are not secessionists." He clarified that it is not sufficient to approach the politicians because the "politicians in Delhi whose minds are too distracted to listen sufficiently to us to understand the facts of our historical and legal position" (Kire 262). Acceptance is a two way process. If 'diversity' is what a secular state celebrates, then differences should be respected rather than attempts of mechanical and gross homogenization or assimilation. A rejection of this leads to ever-growing anguish and bitterness resulting into reciprocal exclusionism. Evidently many peace talks one after the other has failed till date in the case of Nagaland; the most recent one being in 2019. Although the rest of the nation apparently reflects no signs of disharmony, yet constant demands of statehood from various quarters is a fact that cannot be denied. Resistance literature helps us to understand conflict and it offers us access to different viewpoints often simply denied in the mainstream discourses. Stephen Greenblatt had noted that 'texts' form that ideological resistance, which helps to reconstitute a shattered community. In the forging of a new identity, thus counter discourses have been appropriated by writers like Mahasweta Devi and Easterine Kire, while contextualizing and exposing untold stories and buried memories.

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