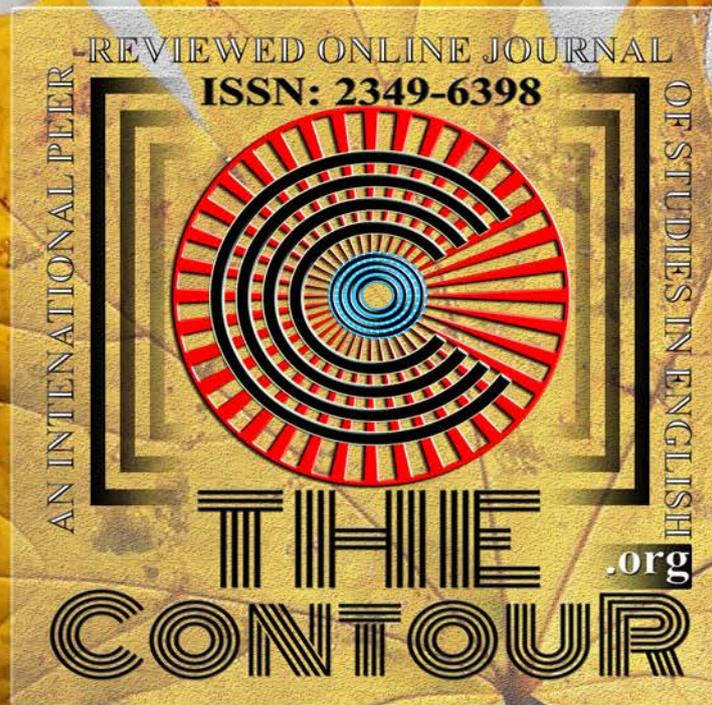


July & October, 2018



Volume 5 | Issue 1 & 2

   [thecontour2014](https://www.thecontour2014.com)



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Volume 5, Issue 1 & 2

ISSN: 2349-6398

Website: www.thecontour.org

E-mail: thecontour.contact@gmail.com

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TCJournal2014>

Twitter: twitter.com/thecontour2014

July & October, 2018

Editor-in-Chief

Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan

Cover Designing & Formatting

Suman Saha

Special Thanks

Samarpan Chatterjee

Publisher

Dr. Susanta Kumar Bardhan,

Suri, Birbhum, 731101, West Bengal,
India



Marginalisation, Negligence and Crisis of the Tribals: A Glimpse through the Silver Screen

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-REVIEWED ONLINE JOURNAL

ISSN: 2549-6398

Abstract

My paper entitled “Marginalisation, Negligence and Crisis of the Tribals: A Glimpse through the Silver Screen” is a modest attempt to analyze the two Indian films-PrakashJha’sChakravyuh(2012) and VivekAgnihotri’sBuddha in a Traffic Jam (2016), which are basically social commentaries on the issues of distress and sufferings of the innocent people of tribal communities, their long negligence by the government that propels them to be inclined towards the Naxalites (extreme militant leftist group generally regarded as ‘terrorists’), and their mental dilemma whether to support the state or the revolutionaries. This paper aims to examine the colossal crisis and anguish of the tribal people in the context of globalization and industrial development. These films provide a glimpse about the tribals who experience the worst form of oppression by being deprived of their own land and forests. Both the protagonists, Kabir in Chakravyuhand Vikram in Buddha in a Traffic Jam, discover a new dimension of power politics operating between capitalist ideology and socialist demands. My paper also interrogates the complex structure of the moral and ideological orientation of the tribal people, who are trapped between the intricate nexus of state machinery and reactionary impulse. This ultimately leads to socio-political unrest that provides no satisfactory result to the actual problems of the tribal people.

Keywords: Tribal, marginalization, crisis, conflict

Introduction:

In this world, where we have experienced the pinnacle of scientific advancement, certain spheres of the globe still live under the shadowy darkness. Even in a liberal and democratic political system, the continuous negligence of the marginalized communities and their deprivation from accessing the security of life, food and shelter lies at the root of their grievances. In these hey days of social medias and visual arts, the marginalization of the tribal people of our country has become a matter of significant concern. In the film *Chakravyuh*, the tribal people have no voice to rise or protest against the oppressing system. A similar treatment is found in *Buddha in a Traffic Jam*, where the weeping voice of the innocent tribal man left unheard. The inhuman torture and tyranny of both the police and reactionaries gave rise to violent class conflict that resulted in bloodshed and death of numerous innocent lives. These films provide a glimpse about the tribals who experience the worst form of oppression by being deprived of their own land and forests.

Marginalisation, Social Crisis and Psychological Anxiety:

The movie *Chakravyuh* is aimed to be a social commentary on the issues of the distress of the tribal people, their long negligence by the government that forces them to be inclined towards the Naxalites (extreme



militant leftist group generally regarded as ‘terrorist’), their mental dilemma whether to support the state or the revolutionaries, and the conflict between head and heart. Despite the various dimensions of this film, I would particularly focus my study on locating the extreme marginal existence and sufferings of the innocent people of tribal communities, which is a recurrent theme in *Buddha in a Traffic Jam*. The movie *Chakravyuh* seeks to examine the plight of tribals (indigenous people) in the context of globalization and industrial development. The tribals identify themselves in the lap of nature and the sustainable development of their community is possible only in their own natural habitation. India has the second largest tribal population in the world. The impact of globalization on the indigenous communities is multifarious, and often these people are negatively affected, as the tribal indigenous areas have to face the attacks of massive developmental projects under globalization. Although the Constitution of India provides socio-economic and educational development of these scheduled groups, the reality is that the state did nothing much for their development. *Chakravyuh* shows that after sixty-five years of independence, these tribes continue as the most marginalized communities within the state. Despite a few initiatives from the government, the existing socio-economic profile of the tribal communities is quite low, compared to the mainstream population. In the movie, we see how capitalist bourgeoisie influences the government ministers and forcefully captures the land of tribal villages by manipulating the local goons.

Moreover, the oppression by the police gives them no right even to defend themselves. The tribal man was not even told about his fault when he was mercilessly beaten by Nanhe Singh or sexually assaulted by Azad. This reveals the insolent and dictatorial attitude of the ‘centre’ and the helpless situation of the common powerless people, who had nothing but to receive brutal treatment despite committing any crime. In *Chakravyuh*, Inspector Madhav used to torture and cruelly exploit innocent villagers by forcing them to pay bribe, killing them mercilessly and even rape women. The police also collect money illegally from the poor villagers who have small business in the market, which provides them as a source of extra income. In *Buddha in a Traffic Jam*, Naxal chief Azad molested Charu and Nanhe Singh threatened the tribal man to rape his wife and daughter in front of him if he does not join the government camp. These malicious and devilish acts of the police not only alienated tribal people from the development process but also from their own dwellings. People from tribal communities face marginalization virtually in every sphere of social life because the mainstream development process tends to create unequal social spaces.

All the actions taken by the state for the welfare of the tribal community has not made much change for the socio-economic life of this marginalized class. Nithya N.R. analyzes the causes of the degradation of their socio-economic condition,

Extreme levels of poverty, deprivation and vulnerability, high levels of exclusion, both developmental and social, extreme low levels of empowerment (political, social and economic, rapid marginalization due to unfair, unequal and exploitative relations of production, and exchange between tribal communities and others, low level of access to entitlements, practically zero participation in development matters with no autonomy in any form of decision making . . . Fast-increasing tendency to use tribal people as cat’s-paws in criminal activities like illicit distillation, cultivation of narcotic plants, stealing of forest wealth, etc., high levels of exploitation of women by outsiders, weak delivery system of public services . . . are the problems faced by the tribal community. (103)



The opening scene of Vivek Agnihotri's film *Buddha in a Traffic Jam* (2016) provides a glimpse of our stagnant society, where the word development would seem alien. An adivasi man earning his own livelihood by chopping firewood in the district of Bastar, the same way in which he used to do thousands years back, long ago in the primeval era. This evidently establishes the fact that although we have succeeded to build skyscrapers and multiplexes in the urban towns and cities, a vast area of rural India is still left darkened. Thus, it is the result of this unequal allocation of wealth and inadequate distribution of developmental measures, which lies at the root of all grievances of the neglected section of the society. The case is similar to *Chakravyuh*, where a certain segment of the society resorted to violent struggle against the state for acquiring their socio-economic demands.

Another significant aspect of these movies is the Naxalite insurgency. In *Chakravyuh*, we see that thousands of people took up arms in their hands against the state to finish the system of oppression and wipe out their miseries and affliction. Tribals are the most deprived and repressed sections of India. Tribal women are worst affected by gender bias and gender oppression. The long negligence of the state had propelled them to view the violent warfare as the only means for achieving their desired aim. The film depicts the poor condition of the tribals who do not have land and suffer from poverty. They are deprived of the basic amenities of healthy living including the basic medical health facilities by the government. Thus, being severely enraged by this maltreatment, they declared war against the state. In the movie, the Naxal leader Rajan captured vast areas of lands, set freed from the state administration and set up a parallel government there. He is also seen to look after the welfare of the common people providing them with medical treatment and technological training. The Naxalites (ultra-leftist militant group) take this as an opportunity to manipulate that agitated group and subsequently include them in their organization to lodge a fierce attack against the authority. However, there is no way to return. Once you have stepped into the path of violent revolution, you can never turn back. The Naxalites or the Maoists not only include comrades with their respective ideological support but also try to increase their strength by forcing the common villagers to join their movement. There is basically no difference between politician of SalwaJudam, Nanhe Singh (Indal Singh) and Naxal leader Comrade Azad (Gopal K. Singh), none of whom hesitate to torture the innocent tribal people, do sexual harassment and even threatens to kill them if they go against their instruction. This becomes evident when it is later revealed in the film that Nanhe Singh is a Naxalite in disguise of a politician and both of them are involved in the conspiracy to instigate a sanguinary revolution.

Therefore, the general mass at large are in a dilemma whether to actively support the state power or remain loyal to the rebels. The peculiar charm of the film rises from this conflict and we observe the long lasting fight between capitalism and communism, which provides no optimistic or satisfactory result to the tribal people. The tribals are the worst victim of this conflict. They are in no position to support the oppressive government or totally accept the Naxal ideology. What they earnestly want is development, employment and progress of their community in all sections of life, which were once promised by the government. But when the state failed to fulfill its promises, the tribals got inclined to revolutionary movements. The result of this social and ideological conflict is the loss of innocent lives. We see Rajan kills the tribal youth who happens to be the informer of Adil Khan, the police superintendent. On the other side, 63 people are killed due to police encounters for being Naxal activists. Therefore, the common masses are trapped in a situation where there is danger from both ends. Neither they could completely support the state officials and bureaucrats nor could they go with the Maoists. This psychological crisis and dilemma becomes a prominent feature occupying a significant place in both the movies. The director has made meticulous treatment for presenting the complex interlacing of social crisis, moral dilemma and psychological dimension of individuals, who are always at the receiving end of any class structure.



The movie *Chakravyuh* addresses many aspects directly related with the socio-economic status of the tribal community and their exploitation in an oppressive political system. The film shows that most of the tribals are illiterate, poor and this is why it is easy for the state and police to manipulate and torture them. They are adversely affected by globalization and the so-called 'industrial progress'. It creates discrimination, displacement, migration and drastic changes in their livelihood. They have a limited source of income and suffer from poverty. It is quite ironical that the poorest people of our country live in the land of richest natural resources from which they are deprived. This film focuses on the crisis of the tribal people, their sufferings, marginalization and negligence by the state, atrocities by the police- all of which forces them to be inclined towards the militant groups. However, the film does not provide us with any solution. Moreover, it emphasizes the fact that the conflict between the state and extremist will continue in future, resulting in bloodshed and loss of numerous lives, of which the tribal people will be worst affected.

Conclusion:

Both the films interrogate the complex structure of the moral and ideological orientation of tribal people, who are trapped between the intricate nexus of state machinery and reactionary impulse. This ultimately leads to socio-political unrest that provides no satisfactory result to the ongoing problems of the marginalized communities. Antonio Gramsci has observed, "Subaltern groups are always subject to the activity of ruling groups even when they rebel and rise up..." (55). This is exactly witnessed in the movies while tracing the space that these neglected tribal groups occupy. The marginality of their existence is emphasized by their subaltern position; they are individuals 'without identity'. Here, both the state officials and Naxal leaders are symbols of the ruling group, which decides the course of action and counter-action and the dominated tribal people are mere tools in their pre-planned mercenary dealings. Therefore, the claim of the ultra-leftist groups as being oppressed and marginalized is actually vague and it is the tribal people who are exploited, subjugated and ultimately ostracized from the central power structure.

Despite special provisions by the Indian Constitution for the social and economic development of the tribal groups, providing them reservations in government affairs, and special donations for their upliftment, it is also a fact that successive governments after the independence have unfortunately failed to solve the tribal issue. The political parties seldom take care of their actual concerns. The film effectively criticizes the malfunctioning of state policy and exposes the hypocrisy of extreme vulgar Naxalite ideology. Both the protagonists, Kabir and Vikram discover a new dimension of power politics operating between capitalist ideology and socialist demands. In *Chakravyuh*, we see that SP Adil Khan was forced to free the local goons whom he had arrested for demolishing tribal villages, by the intervention and order of the corrupted political leader. In *Buddha in a Traffic Jam*, the viewers are shocked when they come to know that Professor Batki, political leader Nanhe Singh and Naxal chief Azad all are the members of the same Maoist group who desperately try to throw the existing power structure by means of violent revolution. Although the tribal people are not benefitted by their aberrant and harmful activities and their real problems are left unaddressed. Therefore, it is high time that we think about the actual problems of the tribals and try to solve those taking proper effective measures. The government must constitute 'Special Land Tribunal' to redress their grievances related to land alienation. The police must sympathize with the tribal people and treat their complaints and allegations patiently. Nevertheless, the state must ensure them proper health facilities, drinking water; improve literacy and advancement in all spheres of life. However, if the government fails to implement its welfare policies for the development of the tribes, the situation will grow worse resulting in armed revolution, a vision which the narrator anticipates in *Chakravyuh*.



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Bio-note: Raj Raj Mukhopadhyay is presently an M.Phil. scholar in the Department of English, VisvaBharati. He completed his M.A. in English literature with a First Class First degree from VisvaBharati University in the year 2017. His research areas include Historical Novels, Partition literature, Classical literature, Indian mythology, Mysticism and Tagore. He has presented papers in various seminars and conferences, actively participated in several workshops and published research articles in reputed journals.