



BODHI INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SCIENCE



An Online Peer Reviewed, Refereed and Quarterly Journal

Vol – 1 No – 2 January 2017 ISSN: 2456-5571

www.bodhijournals.com

POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE IN BHARTI KIRCHNER'S GODDESS OF FIRE

R. Vidhya Lakshmi

*M. Phil Scholar, Research Department of English
The American College, Madurai*

Abstract

Nowadays English Studies deal with the Postcolonial concepts because literature has been reflecting the impact of the colonial rule. The most countries have been under colonial rule; though they have got the independence still follow their political system, education system, culture etc. The slave treatments of the British have existed for more than two hundred years by have a remarkable effect of colonization. They also robbed the wealth from India, ill-treated the women and children. Racism played vital role, imperialistic attitude towards natives and their properties still withstand in the minds of Indians. They dominated colonized in culture, economic, language and politics. Bharti Kirchner's novel Goddess of Fire establishes Postcolonial impact in clear picture.

Keywords: imperialistic attitude, power, dominance, oppression, marginalised, racism.

The term Postcolonialism has been developed in 1990's and it is associated with imperialism, the power dominance over colonized by the colonizer. Colonization of British in India made a great impact in Indian history. Even though the British have left India but their footprints still withstand in Indians' mind. Colonization brought both merits and demerits to this land. The merits such as communication, transport, education, medicines are flourished, industrialization improved production and hygiene habits are improved. (Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*).

A Postcolonial study deals with the effect of colonization on the colonizer and the colonized culture. These kinds of impacts have been discussed by the Postcolonial theorist like Fanon, Said, Homi Bhabha, Spivak. (Peter Barry *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, 185)

Today's exciting features of English literature is the explosion of postcolonial literatures. Literatures in English based on colonised societies and its impact have given rise to a great range of theoretical ideas, concepts, problems and debates. The features Postcolonial effects have been addressed in articles, essays and books. (The Postcolonial Studies Reader).

Being an Indian American Bharti Kirchner has felt the impact of colonization and she reflects in her work *Goddess of Fire* (Bharti Kirchner, *Contemporary Author Online*, 1). This paper is an attempt to analyze life time

struggle of the protagonist Moorti through the postcolonial point of view.

The novel *Goddess of Fire* shows the agony and rebirth of the protagonist 'Moorti' during the period of colonization of British. The practise of widow burned along with her husband's dead body is called as 'Sati'. Sati is widely practised in India culture against women.

The novel open with eve of the funeral pyre (sati), the protagonist Moorti only seventeen years old has been dragged to pyre by her brother-in-law and his son. Both imposed their dominance over her being a feeble woman she cannot fight against them (Bharti Kirchner, *Goddess of Fire*, 1). She wishes to live long but she has been forced to scarify her life.

Moorti longed for her mother's voice and she thinks that her mother can help her. Moorti mother rushes towards the crowd in the funeral ceremony and she tries to save Moorti by begged to her husband's relatives. But they never mind her and continue their ceremony. Moorti prays to goddess Ganga Devi to do some miracle to save her.

Unfortunately her wish has been satisfied by the Englishman named Job Charnock. She has been in the end of her life, there happens a miracle. Suddenly there comes Englishman and his team members who came to her village for their trade. They are against Sati system, they does not like the young girl to be scarifies in the fire. So they try to save her and there is a dispute

among the natives (colonized) and the Englishmen (colonizer).

But the heroin of the novel Moorti has been saved by Job Charnock, the Englishman. Job Charnock, agent of the English East Indian Company finds difficult to pronounce her name 'Moorti' especially the Indian sound soft 'T' sound so he renamed her as 'Maria'. This shows the imperialistic attitude and power of dominance over India and Indian languages by the Englishmen.

This transformation of her name develops sense of lose and identity crisis. Already she has been marginalised by her male dominated society and she has been double marginalized by Englishman. She has been removed from her society and culture because she is alive. She has a satisfaction that she has an opportunity to lead a new phase of life with new identity.

Job Charnock informs her that Englishmen are against Sati system and he himself is also against that system. He also added that they recognise widow remarriage. This views states that their respect and concern for women. Moorti felt aloof when she is called by the name 'Maria' and sense the loss of her self-identity. But she motivated herself as if she has reborn in new life as Maria. (Bharti Kirchner, Goddess of Fire, 20)

Job Charnock, the Englishman offers her a job as a cook at his factory. Though Moorti doesn't like job, she accept his proposal. The Moorti has chosen factory work because if she returns to her village, she will be ill-treated by her husband's family and the villagers. She will be considered as ill-omen and they will not provide food to her.

She will be restricted in the public places and wearing colourful saris. Finally they will clean shaved her head always and will not her to remarry anybody ever, though she is so young. This is the horrible custom practised by the upper caste Hindus in the patriarchal society and it is evident in the novel *Goddess of Fire*.

In her new way she faces many obstacles and has to cross her hardships. She is the only girl in the kitchen of the factory and her wage is very low. She will be given food once a day but she has to work hard throughout the day. Residency allotted for her very worst and unsafe. Once she is tried to be raped but somehow she has managed to escape. This kind of situation not

only left for her but for other women workers too. They have suffered lot yet they remained in the factory because of their poverty.

The English East company makes use of the poverty and continuously exploits labours and never give them rest. If anybody raises their voice against the authority they will be punished heavily or put to death. Though they are ill-treated, they remain passive like a slave under the English Sahibs for the sake of their family. This act as an evidence of oppression of colonizer over colonized.

Then she has faced her family members' fatal end. Once she tried to save her brothers from the Dutch East India Company where they were bonded labours. But they are found dead as naked and sexually molested. This ill human activity makes a scar in her mind and insists the lack of workers' rights.

The novel *Goddess of Fire* also shows how the British want to establish their power in India by their trade business. The Nawab's are in hierarchy during that period under the rule of the Emperor Aurangzeb and the Dutch is top in trade. Job Charnock is kind hearted but sometimes he too overrules the employees on the behalf of Council.

But the protagonist Maria improves her position as an interpreter by learning English language and helps Job Charnock's factory to improve the trade by her shrewd attitude. She also wins the heart of Job Charnock and married him. But the Sahibs at the factory are not willing to accept her due to her colour and Hindu religion. She has faced racism problem throughout her carrier even during her marriage.

In course of time their company has been destroyed by Nawab rule due their competition in the trade. Then they tried to escape and establish new small company at Hooghly and it is successful. Then during Job Charnock illness the British Council has given power to Maria to undertake the company and she is successful in this activity too.

Finally she has plan of extending the company and welfare of the native people and she extends her proposal to the British Council. But the council changes her plan and made treaty that orders to build a company which excludes employment of natives and their welfare.

Job Charnock being Britisher (colonizer) and members of the Council accept the treaty made by the Council. But Maria being native (colonized) boldly denied both the Council and Job Charnock order. Later Job Charnock realised his faults and again request the Council to take account on Maria's proposal and he succeed in it.

At last both united and found a town where education, workers rights, production, workshops and other requirements fulfilled through the British council is flourished (Bharti Kirchner, *Goddess of Fire*, 319). The whole novel *Goddess of Fire* reveals the ordeal of the natives (colonized) and the power of the colonizers to withstand in the land. The imperialistic attitudes of the colonizers are clearly picturesque in the novel, yet there are some positive effects splashed in the novel *Goddess of Fire*. Bharti Kirchner has created self motivated and bold protagonist who nourished herself and the society.

Works Cited

1. Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, Helen Tiffin, eds. *The Postcolonial Studies reader*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
2. Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*. New Delhi: Viva Books, 2011. Print.
3. Kirchner, Bharti. *Goddess of Fire*. Uttar Pradesh: Harper Collins, 2015. Print.
4. Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2001. Print.
5. "Bharti Kirchner". Contemporary Author Online. Gale, 2015. Web. 16 Nov. 2016. <http://ic.galegroup.com>