

**LITERATURE REPRESENTING FOURTH WORLD: THE  
INSIGHT OF FOURTH WORLD FOLKS FOUND IN *THE PADMA  
BOATMAN* BY MANIK BANDAPADDHAY**

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***Abstract***

*The aboriginal tribes in Odisha constitute twenty-four percentage of the total population of the state. Around 62 types of tribes like Kondh, Saura, Gond, Santal, Paraja, Gadaba, Koya, Oraon, Bhuiji, Bonda, Juang inhabit in Odisha. They mainly dwell in undivided Koraput, Sundargarh and Mayurbhanja districts. The aboriginal Bondas dwell in the inaccessible dense forests of Eastern Ghats Mountains in Malkangiri region of undivided Koraput district.*

*'The Primal Land' (2001) is an English translation of 'Adibhumi' (1993), an epic-novel by Pratibha Ray, a prolific living Odia writer with crowning glory of Jnanapeeth award. It reconstructs the social life, cultures, beliefs, customs, rituals and struggle of the Bonda tribe in Odisha. This narrative deals with the embattled Bonda tribe which has roamed freely among the mountains since time immemorial, but now its life and culture face the danger of extinction because of the invasion of civilization.*

*My paper would highlight the socio-cultural life of the marginal Bondas and the impact of the government attempts at uplifting and 'civilizing' them and their struggle to preserve their life and culture.*

**Key words- Tribal, Marginal, Culture, Civilization, Politics, Power**

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The concept of fourth world relates the sociology, anthropology, folkloristic, political science and several other disciplines though; the discussion is incomplete without the expedition on literature. As literature has the scope to articulate human life in such a way that it enliven the phenomena appetizingly with a subconscious credible way as the readers feel it whereas other discipline going through the theoretical way and thus keep the readers unsatisfied.

Literature has always a better chance to voicing the untold, suppressed, economically marginal group. As the discussion indicates such people considered fourth world citizen with the literature about the fourth world people, the endeavor was to find out not only that literature portrays the fourth world people but also resembles with the traits of fourth world which allows the insight of their life and mind, desire and feelings, laughter and weep, ethics and ideology, bread and butter, work and leisure, conversation and argument and the life as a whole. A distinct novel by ManikBandapaddhay called *The Padma Nadir Majhi* or *The Padma Boatman* from the Bengali Literature matches the idea about all aspects. Though the people of *The Padma Boatman* are not from the ethnic or tribe, they are those very people who are neither producing nor consuming, have inferior political status and integration, unprivileged economic position, cannot access to the first world standard of living by any means and the symptoms of xenophobic sentiment as well.

Here several things will be discussed gradually. Firstly, how *The Padma Boatman* is one of the best evident literatures representing fourth world. Secondly, how the characters of this novel are 'doubly colonized', or 'cultural war prisoners.' Thirdly, the traits of fourth world exactly fit with the novel. Fourthly the characters of *The Padma Boatman* fight with capitalism and commoditization and how they suffer from the imperial power, deprived of their rights by their riches. Finally how it is suitable to make a psychoanalytic criticism of fourth world folks.

As the first discussion goes why *The Padma Boatman* would be considered one of the best examples of fourth world life, the context of this novel as well as the novelist have to be considered. ManikBandapaddhay born in 1908, the novel is first published in May 28, 1936; when the political stability of subcontinent was in danger. The people of unbroken India had been fighting for freedom. The novelist gets his upbringing in east Bengal. He depicts the life of this people with firm skill, shows how the inhabitants of fourth world suffer from class conflict, cast division, socio-political suppression and economical injustice.

It is from the pages of this periodical that we see the emergence of ManikBandopadhyay, author of *A Boatman of Padma*. Ray identifies the general trend of the writings in this periodical as a

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revolt against existing indigenous traditions in fiction. A marked characteristic of this genre of writing was to portray lower class life. [Biswas 25]

It is not veiled that the novelist had an intention to glorify communism, his touch and observation on marginal people was unique. The most fascinating thing is that ManikBandapaddhay was the honest follower of realism. Though he knew the reader's psyche, the readers do not want their life in literature second time, as the truth of life hasten them always. They want fairy tale, to manage escape from life; the writer was well aware about that but didn't compromise with reality. According to him, whatever the novelist write in his novel, the base must follow reality, the attitude of a novelist should be scientific. Being a scientific author he may refute the attraction of romanticism and spiritualism. 'Their writings enriched by exposure to the literary tradition of realism and the political ideology of Marxism dealt primarily with the struggle for survival of marginalized classes and communities.' [Biswas 24] *The Padma Boatman* is an example of unmixed realism that leads to create the real picture of fourth world.

As the fourth world covers all ethnic, racial, caste, linguistic, gender and even socio-political and economic marginal, the characters of *The Padma Boatman* resemble some aspects. They are no doubt in underprivileged economic position. Kuber, the protagonist of the novel, is middle aged poor fisherman lives in the village name Ketupur. Kuber is a fisherman who would have to come out with his fever suffered weak body. He is afraid enough to miss one day fishing in season; River Padma is only the source of income. Kuber, the fourth world hero, has no net or boat for fishing, depends on Dhononjoy who belongs to superior economic position. River Padma is not dependable in winter, she hides the children in her vault, and fishermen try in vain.

The citizens of fourth world are cheated by their economic superior. The owner of the boat Dhononjoy cheats Kuber as it is rule to be obeyed. When they board Kolkata docks, Dhononjoy sells the fish hiding from Kuber and mentions the false number of fishes was captured.

Dhananjoy cheats with Kuber and Ganesh in counting caught fishes. He gets the lion share; still he takes some extra fishes, which Kuber understands but can't say anything. He weeps and thinks that he is poorer than other poor, lower kind of man than other lowers. Everyone takes him as granted to make him fool and deprive like other religious and social rules. He knows everything, but can't protest because he has no right of that. [Yasmin 83]

The fate of fourth world people is always being deprived. Although Kuber doubts, but nothing to argue, cannot debate with his boat owner, his boss, his superior.

One of the traits of fourth world is 'underprivileged economic position.' They are in the evil circle of poverty. The novelist depicts his protagonist Kuber in such a way that suffers from severe poverty. It is custom to deprive them, like other rules of society and religion are obeyed at ease. The children of the fourth world never stop crying. They worship the God of hunger; weep and dark soul which never stop.

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They always try to continue and keep happy the Gods and Goddesses of hunger, laughter and cry, unseen creator etc. They are tired of quarrelling for their rights with family members and neighbors for their survival. Again and again they start their fight after few moments of interval. Here a new born baby is taken with sorrow. Life means only to hunger and thirst. [Yasmin 84]

They are suppressed twofold, the upper cast and the gentlemen society pushed them to the river and the river of rainy season flooded their house, the winter air touches the boons, *Kalboshakhi* or the summer storm wants to abolish them, diseases are welcome. The taste of life is beneath hunger and thirst, love, sex and meanness.

Little amount of *muri* and *chira* are found at Kuber's hut. Mala feels hungry and asks for little amount of *chira* to Kuber, but he gets angry. Not Kuber or Mala or their children can eat with full satisfaction. They always struggle against hunger. Kuber has affection for his family but he cannot express it for his poverty. [Yasmin 81]

Manik Bandapaddhay said in their language that God exists in the good and gentle society; He does not live here in the fishermen community. God himself is not with the fourth world people. The characters of fourth world in *The Padma Boatman* hate their own existence. As the white make the Black people hate themselves. The Whites embedded the concept that their race is superior, the Black are cursed, the society of gentlemen make think the fourth world people inferior. It is revealed they hate their successor, don't think they are the sign of fortune rather these children are also cursed. Their enlarged population might not have food, honour, security and even space. The novelist of *The Padma Boatman* describes, the birth is unwelcome here. Kuber heard about the newly born baby of him, cute enough, he cannot be happy. He is thinking that a new person has to be fed. The writer says about the mother of this child, she lies down the wet floor with her new born child; she passes the whole day here. A two room's house with weak fences, in one of the room's narrow veranda is used as Kuber's wife Mala's delivery. Middle class people made home separately for their infant, the rich make permanent room for delivery. The fishermen community, as the fourth world inhabitants virtually the citizens of third world or even the first world, does not have the house actually.

Once it is discussed that the people of fourth world has xenophobic sentiment. It is true that they are not so called 'social' as they are afraid of people, the strangers, even their landlords while they are showing sympathy to them. A landlord, Mejobabu, wants to give the knowledge of hygiene and make them educated; as they are cheated always cannot trust even that is considered the stage of xenophobia though the people would harmless actually. In *The Padma Boatman* the landlord Mejobabu used to go Ketupur fishermen village to make their life 'developed', 'progressed' and 'educated' but they do not receive it rather their women got scandal as he might be a lustful man and thus they become more xenophobic.

The people of fourth world are 'doubly colonized.' The setting of *The Padma Boatman* is early 20<sup>th</sup> century colonial India. The subcontinent is considered third world nation released from British rule and people of this area were colonized. The fishermen of Ketupur are doubly colonized both by the British ruler and their landlords. As the fourth world is defined as indigenous people descended from a countries aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the rights of their own territories and its reaches; the

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fishermen of the Ketupur are undoubtedly the people of fourth world as they are deprived of the right of their own territories and its reaches. They are the prisoners as the novelist says that lot of land surrounded the village but the houses do not cross an invisible line. Their fate is sanctioned like their land.

*The Padma Boatman* is a significant depiction of class relations. The fishermen have no land, honour and status. Kuber, Gonesh, Aminuddin, Shambhu, Boga, Pitom, Rashu are the proletariat and Shitalbabu, Mejobabu, Dhononjoy are the representative of Bourgeoisie. As a practiced Marxist ManikBandapaddhay has shown the realm of suppressed People in Moynadip, a silt bed island what is a territory established by Hosen Miya, an enchanting person though a narcotic dealer.

In his daily quest for survival he befriends a local businessman HossainMiya, a small businessman suspected of human trafficking and other clandestine activities. At the heart of HossainMiya's rags-to-riches story stands Moynadip, a remote siltbed island or *char*. It is to this *char* that HossainMiya takes settlers from different parts of the region to build up a settlement. The settlers, hapless victims of either natural calamities like floods and cyclones or social ostracism, accompany him in search of new beginning. Ironically, in the end Kuber embarks on the journey to HossainMiya's river island to avert a false charge of theft. The *Padma* is at the center of the lives of the marginalized communities of fishermen, boatmen and small peasants. The river silently witnesses their daily chores, small joys and sorrows. [Biswas 28]

Hosen Miya establishes economic equity, justice, law and order; a communist utopia. As ManikBandapaddhay says that Mejobabu is not Hosen Miya who makes room both for the religion with infidelity, poverty and corruption. He has more property than Mejobabu but that doesn't fade the nature of a fisherman in him. 'Moynadip' is the revolt against capitalism. The capitalist world snatched the land, pushed them into the river, deprived them from education, life standard, abode, cloth, food or medicine. Moynadip is a promise of equity, solvency and justice.

The characters of *The Padma Boatman* do not belong to modern industrial norms, neither produces nor consume. They have lower level of political and economic integration, actually not important for the concept of 'state', 'modernization', 'progress' and 'development.' They mere not access to the first world standard of living, their cultural existence is also abolishing. As a British colony, India was a follower of capitalism; the characters of the novel are the lower caste people, underprivileged economic condition, are the prey of capitalism.

Written prior to World War II, the novel criticizes the society that supports the elites, while inhumanly exploiting the underprivileged and impoverished class of fishermen. Even for small matters the fishermen community depends on the local landowner's mercy and charity. The importance of the novel lies in the fact that it ushers in a new hope for the inhabitants who are ultimately able to break away from the cruel nexus of corruption and exploitation at the hands of the social elites and begin a new life. Kuber's journey to Moynadip clearly indicates the dawning of the new era where people like him have the choice whether or not to accept their destinies unquestioned. His transition marks the ultimate cross over to a new world order that abounds in equality and justice.



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Moynadip is thus a metaphor for liberation where people work together without being exploited by privileged classes. [Biswas 29]

The people of fourth world are much vulnerable. As their poverty does not allow them to make a tangible house, the summer storm can vandalize them. The village Ketupur is nearly destroyed after a *Kalboishakhi*, the summer storm. Fishermen in Padma were mostly missing and who were in the land, lost their houses with severe injuries. Aminuddin, a poor fisherman gets his wife dead and children at that stormy night. Kuber lost his house and his daughter's leg is injured. There is nobody in this village lost nothing.

*The Padma Boatman* is not the mere description of the agony of poor and suppressed fourth world people rather found a psychological insight of the male and female characters. The role of women is also significant here.

Many scholars have discussed Bandopadhyay's representation of sexuality. He is widely hailed as a novelist —of the subconscious mind and its symbol. His novels explore repressed sexuality - a subject traditionally avoided by nineteenth century writers. In the novel Bandopadhyay accords a unique place to the female characters. But women in this novel play an important yet a subservient role. [Biswas 29]

The women of the fourth world are treated unimportant, deserted and 'triply colonized'; they are the subject of British emperor, their landlord and their male superior. Their husband may leave and retake them on will. They become grateful when their husband accepts them again. In the *The Padma Boatman*, Shamadas, the husband of Kopila; tall, strong and vigorous, once abandoned Kopila, the sister in law of Kuber. After a few months Kopila was proposed to back with her husband as Shamadas came to accept her. Kopila was excited and delighted. She dressed up and made up well hence forgets providing launch to Kuber. These fourth world women have nothing to do. There is no other shelter.

The female character 'Kopila' created by ManikBandapaddhay must be considered a fascinating character among the outstanding creation in world literature. The relation between Kuber and Kopila make this novel luscious to the readers and thus it is not a mere description of poverty and misery. Kuber feels illegal attraction to her as society or religion forbade extra-marital relationship. As human subliminal mind never cares society they become attracted by each other. When Kuber brought Kopila from Chardandga he has been receiving unwanted services which never received from his physically challenged wife, Mala. Once Kopila brought tobacco till the riverbank as Kuber left it unconsciously, he was afraid of ill repute, pushed Kopila back home, astonishingly Kopila pinch his masculinity, sets on fresh mud, he got exotic but not advanced to lechery. Other day Kuber and Kopila were on the way to home at first hour of night after attending a village festival. Kopila make them released from her nephew Lakha, technically. Kuber become suspicious and optimistic about their love making but when he hug her, Kopila falls in dilemma, asked to make her free excusing gloomy mood for her husband. In the other part of the novel we see Gopi, the daughter of Kuber was severely injured in the stormy night, transferred to the hospital of Aminbari. When the sun started to set Kuber wanted Kopila back but she denied. Even at night Kuber cannot sleep outside of the hotel room as Kopila pretends afraid.

**LITERATURE REPRESENTING FOURTH WORLD: THE INSIGHT OF FOURTH WORLD FOLKS FOUND IN THE PADMA BOATMAN BY MANIK BANDAPADDHAY -MD. JOYNUL ABEDIN**

Kuber was always in a mystery, does not have the insight of Kopila, never understand her though well observed, never enter the depth of her psyche till the last sentence of the novel, 'Would you take me with you'? This urge was pronounced by Kopila while police was searching Kuber alleged of theft, Kuber was escaping to Moynadip. The true feeling come out and the readers get denouement; Kopila loved Kuber, revealed at last. She gripes him first not to go Moynadip rather be jailed. Kuber realizes he would go jail repeatedly therefore become rigid on his decision; Kopila disclose her at that moment indicating to be a forever company.

*The Padma Boatman* mainly shows the proximity between the concept of fourth world and the story of the novel no doubt resembles as 'it covers all ethnic, racial, caste, linguistic and socio-political and economic marginal.' As the discussion shows, 'the literary representation of the reality of ongoing marginalization by the imperial power', 'drug all the oppressed section under the same portmanteau term', 'voicing the silenced marginal', *The Padma Boatman* consequently characterized the phase of marginalization of the fishermen, 'who today are completely or partially deprive of the right of their own territories and its riches.'

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