

RESEARCH ARTICLE



ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2636 (Print);2321-3108 (online)

REPRESENTATION OF ANDAMAN TRIBES IN DEEPAK DALAL'S *ANDAMAN ADVENTURE THE JARAWA AND ANDAMAN ADVENTURE BARREN ISLAND*

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doi: doi.org/10.33329/rjelal.73.152



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ABSTRACT

Andaman archipelago; a region once home land to a number of tribes has only three tribes left today and they are also in the verge of extinction. Like their counterparts across the world these tribes are also the victims of colonisation. This paper discusses the representation of Andaman Tribes in Deepak Dalal's *Andaman Adventure The Jarawa* and *Andaman Adventure Barren Island*. Dalal explains how the intrusion of settlers has literally shaken the simple eco centric life of the tribes physically and mentally through his characters Lifae and Jarawa youngmen. Andaman tribes are forest dwellers and hunter gatherers. They do not know agriculture and hence they will be relocating often unlike common people. Dalal voices for their rights to live as they wish and the need to stop encroachments in their territories. The protagonists Vikram, Aditya and Chitra encounter the tribes in course of their adventure and understand their plight. This paper uses 'Tinai' concept in ancient Tamil literature to prove that the tribes have not been disturbed before colonisation, and Fanon's concept of colonisers' 'epidermalisation of inferiority' to understand the psychological impact of colonialism in tribes.

India is a homeland to a large number of indigenous tribes who are also called 'Adivasis'. Tribal people generally live in forests and they have unique culture and lifestyle. When European countries set their colonies across the world they intruded tribal areas too. This resulted in a catastrophic turn in the history of the colonised countries. Colonisation resulted in the extinction of many indigenous races. The British and the other imperial powers considered indigenous people of the colonised countries as uncivilized and inferior.

Exhibition of Sara Baartman like an animal in England and France stands as an evidence for such racial discrimination by the imperial governments. Neither the lives nor the culture of the colonised 'other' mattered to the colonial masters. The impact of colonialism in physical and

psychological environment of the colonies is expressed in post colonial literature. Two hundred years of colonial rule in India resulted in extinction of many species, destruction and exploitation of natural resources like forests and its inhabitants. This paper discusses the representation of the tribes; the subaltern voiceless 'other' in Deepak Dalal's *Andaman Adventure The Jarawa* and *Andaman Adventure Barren Island*.

Deepak Dalal is one of the renowned Indian English writers who has given up his career as a Chemical Engineer and taken writing. He writes stories for children and young adults. Being a nature lover, all his eleven books, News paper columns and lectures are centered on nature. He loads his stories with enormous facts about the endangered species

of the background chosen and the need to protect them.

The background of the select adventure stories *Andaman Adventure The Jarawa* and *Andaman Adventure Barren Island* are set in the Andaman Islands. It is an archipelago of three hundred islands with tropical forests and coral reefs. The current population of the islands is approximately four lakhs. Andaman Islands were set as a penal colony of the British on 1858. This is when the original inhabitants of the island started losing their lives. The original inhabitants of the Islands were black people of different tribal groups who are hunters and gatherers. They are forest dwellers. Presence of dense forests, small islands, tribal reserves, endangered species, poachers, coral reefs, creeks, water sports, coasts and an active volcano makes it an ideal background for an eco centric adventure story.

Three teenagers Vikram, Aditya and Chitra are the protagonists of the select stories. During their summer holidays in the Andaman Islands, they are kidnapped by illegal weapon dealers. Their adventurous escape from the captors, venture to find the criminals involved and handle them to the government is the plot of the story. Dalal has made an exhaustive use of the landscape and tribes in course of action.

In *Andaman Adventure The Jarawa*, Chitra and Aditya are saved by the Jarawa from the captors and they spend some time with them. They see their huts without walls and door, smear the paste they give and eat the mussels they cooked. They find them to be healthy and happy. In *Andaman Adventure The Jarawa*, "Aditya couldn't help noticing how lean and fit the Jarawa were. There wasn't an ounce of fat on their naked bodies and despite the absence of 'body-builder' type muscles, the man and the teenaged boy appeared robust and visibly strong. The children radiated well being too, their tiny bodies dark and trim" (88). On the contrary, during her escape to Barren Island, Chitra sees how depressed Lifae, the great Andamanese boy is. Striking paradox in the psyche of two tribes The Jarawa and The Great Andamanese depicts the impact of colonisers and

outsiders in their lives. The Jarawa are fierce to outsiders and are living happily in their forest territories. On the contrary The Great Andamanese, the first friends of the British in the island, are sad and depressed.

The reason for Lifae's depression is colonization; as it has not only abducted the tribal land but also inculcated inferiority complex in them. Frantz Fanon in his *Black Skin White Masks* explains "If there is an inferiority complex, it is the outcome of a double process: primarily, economic; subsequently, the internalization or, better, the epidermalization of this inferiority"(4). This double process of making the natives poor and injecting a feel that they are inferior is evident in case of great Andamanese tribe. On their escape to Barren Island, Lifae vents out about his tribe to Vikram and Chitra in *Andaman Adventure Barren Island*. "Is there a single rich Andamanese? Name me one rich man amongst my people... All of us live in poverty. We can't even afford a decent education" (143). Since Lifae's mother is too poor to pay for his education, he leaves Strait Island and works as a cook for a meagre amount. Though he wants to study he cannot afford it.

The second process of epidermalization of inferiority is done by setting standards keeping the coloniser in the center. In *Andaman Adventure Barren Island* Lifae says "...The Britishers and the Indian convicts were far too advanced for my simple-minded ancestors. My people felt inadequate and inferior...This sense of hopelessness also contributed to our demise" (142). This could be understood by comparing with Fanon's example. A black man never feels 'black' when he is brought up in his community by his parents. He feels 'black' when he is educated using coloniser's stories and lives among white. Similarly, the Jarawa and the Sentinelese who have not mingled with the settlers are healthy and happy and the ones who came into contact with the settlers feel inferior and give up on life. Lifae's tribe has just forty members left. In *Andaman Adventure Barren Island* Lifae says "...my people gave up on life" (141). Lifae who is of same age as Aditya, Vikram and Chitra is a touch stone for the plight of the tribes.

In *Andaman Adventure The Jarawa*, Aditya and Chitra come across a Jarawa youth who wears shorts, a broken sunglass, a watch strap and carries shoes in hands. His weird sense of fashion is the result of his effort to imitate the tourists and settlers. He utters some bollywood actors' name and tries to start a conversation with Chitra which she is not comfortable with. Unlike warm, friendly Jarawas, he attacks Aditya and Chitra. They are surprised by his instant dislike for them and discuss about it. Chitra says, "May be people tease and trouble him at the jetty. That could explain his odd behavior. He strikes me as the sort who wants to be accepted by people who wear clothes. It could be that he is n't being accepted and people instead make fun of him" (105). This is the inferiority complex Fanon talks about. Unlike his folk who are healthy and happy, he is restless. He shows them the wrong route to jetty. He could neither mingle with his tribe nor with the settlers. Dalal portrays the impact of settlers on Jarawas through this character.

Dalal gives a brief note on history of the islands in his book. Andaman Islands were made penal colony of the British in 1858. It is the colonial masters who were responsible for the extinction of the tribes. The British failed to understand tribal customs and culture and acknowledge their uniqueness. They refused forest rights to the tribes which makes the government, the sole owner of the forest. In case of Andaman Islands, the tribes who have been the original inhabitants of the forests for the past sixty thousand years are denied their rights over it. Unfortunately the Indian government follows the footsteps of the British in forest laws. Forests were and are acquired for estates and mining in the name of growth.

Eventhough the princely states of India before colonisation were casteist, they never interfered with tribes as they have known their culture and habits. 'Tinaï' concept in ancient Tamil literature is an evidence of this all inclusive society. 'Tinaï' concept classifies landscapes into five types; Kurinci, Mullai, Marutam, Neytal and Paalai. Each type has its own land, people, food, music, god, etc. This knowledge about the existence of different landscapes and different types of people is the tape

root of co existence of different races in the sub continent. Understanding the tribes through 'Tinaï' concept, gives a broader mind that they need not cultivate and eat, build and live, work and earn, travel and explore but they can hunt and eat, live under thatched roof, do not own material wealth and live in peace in their forests.

As Edward Said says, the western imperial powers understand the 'others' by keeping themselves in the centre and from their point of view. They refuse to acknowledge the existence of other culture and deem it low. Assuming the role of masters they enslave other races with the justification that they are civilizing and educating. European mind keeps itself in the centre and pushes Africans, Asians and every other race to the margin. On the contrary rest of the world believes in co existence. Unfortunately the Europeans who believe in one dominant race theory colonised many countries and collapsed the co existence.

When the Jarawa take Aditya and Chitra to their closing after saving them from illegal weapon dealers, they see the Jarawa closing and feel odd seeing plastic water bottles, aluminum pans and net bags with the naked primitive tribes. "Aditya shook his head. I thought they were primitive people. Plastic bottles, net bags, cooking vessels... I didn't expect modern amenities here. What did you expect? asked Chitra,... The Jarawa cannot escape us. We, the 'civilised' people, are pressing on their reservation from all sides "(93).

This discussion between Chitra and Lifaee in *Andaman Adventure Barren Island* stands as an evidence to Said's view.

She asked, "Do you believe you will never be like us?"

Why should we want to be like you? Why do we have to lead the kind of lives you want us to?

"well-" stuttered Chitra.

This is the problem. Nobody bothers to ask us what we want. We have to be like you. We have to conform. We are a forest people. The forest was our lives. Your kind

took away the forests from us. Every inch of these forests belonged to us. All of it was taken away (142).

The select adventure stories give a hint about the two tribes; The Jarawa and The Great Andamanese. The Jarawa are in the beginning of invasion where as the Great Andamanese are in the verge of extinction. By juxtaposing the happy commune life of the Jarawa, Dalal unveils the happy past of the other tribe who are in great depression now. He ends his adventure story with a positive note that Lifaee, the Great Andamanese gets the confidence and will to live and save his tribe from extinction after seeing energetic Sentenelese and Jarawa. Through these short episodes in his adventure stories, Dalal represents the voiceless subaltern, the tribes who cannot speak for themselves.

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