



Impacts of Modernisation on Environment as represented in Anuradha

Roy's *The Folded Earth*

Dr. M. Angkayarkan Vinayakaselvi ^a, R. Abinaya ^b

^aAssociate Professor of English, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli – 620 024. Email id: avs@bdu.ac.in

^bJunior Research Fellow, Department of English, Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli- 620 024. Email id: abinayarenganathan@gmail.com

APA Citation:

Dr. M. Angkayarkan Vinayakaselvi and R. Abinaya. (2020). Impacts of Modernisation on Environment as represented in Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth*. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 16(3), 1667-1671.

Submission Date: 19/06/2020

Acceptance Date: 20/08/2020

Abstract

Modernisation is one of the major proponents of India as a developing country. The impacts of modernisation among the marginalised people should be taken into consideration in order to integrate them in the process of modernisation as a democratic governance. The impacts include, displacement, loss of socio-culture identity, imbalanced distribution of natural resources and economic benefits, social disintegration and class and caste discrimination. The article analyses the impacts of modernisation on the marginalized people and how it is represented in Anuradha Roy's *The Folded Earth*. The narrative focuses on providing an empathetic depiction of the relations among the characters and environment involved. Thus, it delineates the impacts modernisation for effective reception.

Keywords: Modernisation; The Folded Earth; Marginalisation; Social discrimination

1. Introduction

Modernisation is a transformation of the social, cultural, political and economic structures, values and norms. The popular association of modernity lines with industrialisation and urbanisation. Modernisation involves over use of land and natural resources and with the social position of the tribal people among the indigenous people make them more vulnerable to economic and social deprivations. As “most of the pressure, however, comes from the process of integration within a national, political and economic system that brings tribes into increasing contact with other groups and different, prestigious belief systems” (Ekka 8). Modernisation and urbanisation are closely related and mutually reinforcing processes. They argue that urbanisation brings about social and cultural changes in community life that also correspond to modernisation. For example, urban life is characterised by rationality, scientific temper, individualism, secularism, progress and mobility². These are also the defining features of modernisation.

Sarkar comments on the need to assimilate modernisation to suit the local population. This demands interactions and involvement of the people in the process of modernisation. In the general sense the tribal population are treated as uncivilised people - it is represented through Puran in the narrative. Hence, power and authority replaces the need to understand the sustainable cultural practices of the tribal people brushing them off as uncivilised lifestyle.

The story revolves around Maya and her life in Ranikhet after her husband's death in a trekking accident. The town of Ranikhet span three hills, on every side there were mountains and forests, stretching many miles, interrupted only by tiny hamlets and villages. To the north of the town is the high Himalaya, on clear days towards east the five pyramids of the Pancha Chuli at Nepal will be visible to bare eyes. During the end of April, the peaks were hidden behind a dust haze that rose from the plains. It was cool in the evening but the grass was yellow, the earth dusty far too early in the summer, and the sun was so intense. In the monsoon, "the hills were a lush brilliant green, and wild gladioli drooped everywhere in the rain. The forest was carpeted with pretty, mauve, orchid-like floweres. Roads were reclaimed by nature as landslides buried them and waterfalls drowned them, the wind felled trees,..." (Roy 154). The town has two distinct parts, one is the crowded Sadar Bazaar, and the other is the cantonment, where the most of the estates are. Ranikhet was a small hill town where the inhabitants were accustomed with each other and Maya became a hill person soon after her arrival.

The description of each characters in the novel is accompanied by a part of the town landscape or ecosystem in Ranikhet. This analogous representation of Roy situates the major theme of the novel – the harmonious relation between people and their environment. Hence, the modernization process of the town resonates the inevitable impacts on the native people. Father Joseph used his network to get Maya a job at St Hilda's, a church run school. She found a cottage to rent on an estate called Light House. The landlord was Diwan Sahib who lived alone in a crumbling mansion. Down the slope there was mud rooms and cattle sheds, Charu lived there with her grandmother and uncle Puran who was often called Sanki Puran because he did not seem to have his wit with him. Maya's cottage was at the edge of the spur on which the Light House stood. Charu was one of the students in St Hilda's and she barely learned to write even the alphabet. Ama wished Charu to marry a government servant and live in peace. Charu spent her days herding the cows and goat along with her dog Bijli. Veer was Diwan's nephew and he was a professional climber and he owned a trekking company. Maya was close to Veer and liked spending time with him. He left often suddenly, sometimes for a stretch of days and weeks together. Qureshi owned the town's garage and he was acquainted with Diwan from the time he owned a blue Morris Minor which was fallen over Ranikhet's steep western ridge. Charu's paramour, a half Nepalese boy from a low lying small town was Kundan Singh. She met him on the Aspen Lodge where she often went to look for pasture for her cattle was bought by a hotel chain that planned to start operations in the town. One day when she went to graze her cows, she saw a young tall boy who asked her not to graze there again. The boy hesitantly stammered about a place with nice patch down the hill with grass, and after a few days it became a place they meet, the old Dhobi Ghat.

The above mentioned characters were either indigenous to the hill or loved the region and the natural environment. These characters can be placed in contrast to those who are want to commercialize the town for political or economic reasons. Chauhan was the Administrator, the Sub-divisional Magistrate and he wanted to make the town a bustling tourist spot. He put up educative slogans all over the town. He wanted Ranikhet to become the Switzerland of India or at least another Shimla and he wanted to replace the parapets, the old stones, and grass and wild plants growing out of them. He also wanted to make a view point, and furnished roads to promote tourism. He promotes his ides in the garden of aspen lodge in the background of a re-laid garden with the geometric precision of the flowerbeds. Though the same landscape accompanies Kundan Singh, Roy portrays the latter as a rural setting close to nature while the former resembles an urban landscape. This difference in illustration of the same place in different scene highlights the characters and their affiliation towards nature.

Roy places this contrast in the next scene where the different perception of the same landscape are put together to understand the interactions of the impacts of modernization. During the party three cows and two buffaloes were browsing at the edge of the lawn, quite close to the Brigadier, and Maya recognized that it was Gouri, Charu's favorite cow and Pinki, her little goat. Puran was half asleep on a boulder far down the slope. Chauhan lost his composure and shouted at Puran yelling that he is going to lock him up with his cattle and he further complains that Puran has also been feeding the stray dogs in the Mall Road. Chauhan was stressed with the thought of Puran who was smelly, slovenly a disgrace, moreover he grazed his animals on precisely those slopes where he had planted signs both in Hindi and in English announcing fines for illegal grazing. Puran was not acquainted with the alphabet in either

language. After a few days of the party, on a midday, Puran had been sitting at the edge of the slope next to his cows. Without any warning Chauhan's people thrust him into a jeep, and as he responded with keening and terrified, the men slapped him around the ears. Then they stopped the vehicle, pushed him out, stripped him down to his threadbare underpants and thrust him under a roadside tap. They threw soap to shivering Puran, and one kinder man among them lathered him the soap giving him a bath. Puran found himself in an unfamiliar dress, he darted to his clothes but the men gathered the clothes and shoes and put fire. Puran rushed and took his shirt from the fire which was a little burnt. His hands were charred and he managed to put the shirt. He took a hiding in the cowshed and refused to graze the animals.

Another such incident of violating the native in the name of modernization happened when Chauhan's deadline, the Regimental Reunion was nearing and he prepared for the construction of new roads. He placed iron benches which were stolen. He was everywhere working. One day he spotted Puran grazing his cows near one of the sign boards. He was furious and chased him away and the animals followed him as their hooves flattened the newly planted saplings that Chauhan's workforce planted.

Puran saw his deer missing and searched for it all over the place fearing of wild animal. Joshi the forest guard said that the deer was at the police station and it was to be taken to the Nainital zoo. He rushed there to the deer which in the locker in a mad frenzy afraid of the new place. Charu tried to plead with Police to let the deer out, and she went to get someone whose words could be answered in Ranikhet. Diwan tried to reason with the police stating that Puran had special connection with the deer and he did not intended to harm the deer, she bluntly replied that keeping a wild animal as a pet or food is illegal and she will sent the animal to zoo. Chauhan ordered to the constable that Puran should be rid of the army clothes and he was to be locked up until the deer was safe in Nainital zoo. Puran came home in someone else's clothes after three days, Rani was also moping in the zoo without eating. The zoo's vet had suggested that Puran should be brought to the zoo to save the deer. Chauhan was too proud to allow this and avoided the calls. On the 13th day the deer died of malnutrition and dehydration. It became a small news item and people came to interview Puran but he never came out of the cowshed mourning for Rani.

Puran was the representative character of indiginity and living with nature and this is in complete contrast with the paradigm of modernization. The notion of civilization and economic development of status are defined as the essence of modernization by its propagandists including Chauhan. The forest path deep in the hills had the Himalayan Golden Eagles and rare majestic birds. There were Steppe Eagles that come here each winter from the deserts of Mongolia and Kazakhstan. In due course there are trucks that come and go, trees were cut and forests destroyed. During forest fire, Puran saved animals every year, once it was save a fox club, another year he rescued a baby monkey. One morning, Puran came with a little fawn exquisite in its delicate beauty. He named her Rani, and he made her soft bed. Charu took some grains to feed the fawn. Rani was always with him avoiding others. The langurs (monkeys), they were not afraid of dogs but doubtful of humans, until human came and made anthills out of these mountains but those animals trusted Puran and followed him. Diwan points this out by stating that,

the land had belonged to these monkeys, and to barking deer, nigai, tiger, barasingha, leopards, jackals, the great horned owl, evene to cheetahs and lions. The archaeology of wilderness consisted of these lost animals, not of ruined walls, terraccotta amulets, and potsherds.... Puran was the sanest of us all, because animals knew whom to trust. They were imbeciles themselves who called Puran half-witted. (Roy 74)

The involvement of the indigenous people with the animals can be seen through the portrayal of Charu's cow. During the summer season, Charu and Puran began to go farther as the grass closer to home was exhausted. Bijli was still an overgrown puppy, it was not capable of herding. Ama complained that the other day a leopard seriously wounded Lachman's dog and Bijli was sound though it wandered far off. Gouri was missing and everyone searched, later the next day Charu found Gouri in a deep gully

where it had fallen awkwardly. It laid still without making sound. Ama called Ohjha instead of veterinary doctor. He applied Ghee, turmeric and so and chanted some words, later he finalized the time has come for the cow, by then he got 20 rupees and eaten three meals at Ama's house. Charu remained with the cow next day and day that followed. Puran came and sat by the cow, stroking it gently. When no one was there Kundan came and gave food for Charu and set fire so no wild animals should come. On the fourth day Gouri Joshi died with pain filled eyes.

She works to ensure a brighter future for her daughter Florens as a responsible mother. She goes through the struggle that many slave mothers go through. Hooks writes, "In the midst of a brutal racist system, which did not value black life, [the slave mother] valued the life of her child enough to resist the system" (144) in response to the brutality of racist society toward Black people. Hooks contends that the brutally racist system devalues black people. A black woman has an obligation to respect her children's life. *The Narrative of Fredrick Douglass*, a work of autobiography by Frederick Douglass, is a good example of this concept. Douglass describes his own mother, stating that she would frequently go twelve kilometers at night to give her son a single hug. It also appears to be true in this instance because Florens' mother Minha Mae goes above all predetermined limits to give her daughter a less dehumanized life. She rejects playing the vulnerable mother. She makes every effort to protect her daughter from enslavement and tyranny.

Morrison describes and situates motherhood as a locus of power in this novel. According to Andrea O'Reilly in *Toni Morrison and Motherhood: A Politics of the Heart*, "Building upon black women's experiences of, and perspectives on, motherhood, Morrison develops a view of black motherhood that is, in terms of both maternal identity and role, radically different than the motherhood practiced and prescribed in the dominant culture" (1). According to O'Reilly, black women's experiences and viewpoints on motherhood reflect a distinctive maternal identity. Additionally, the duties they play diverge from those that mothers are expected to fulfill in the mainstream culture. Her justification clarifies Minha Mae's strategy for dealing with the issue and validates her position as a mother. In order to put her daughter in the care of another slave owner who she believes will treat her more humanely, she sacrifices the maternal ties. By altering and rearticulating the natural power of black women, Morrison's perspective on parenting empowers black women to adhere to harmful ideals of femininity.

Minha Mae is portrayed as the ideal mother in *A Mercy* because she decides to put herself between her daughter and a better life. She asks Jacob to accept her daughter instead of money because she is an experienced woman who can discern Jacob's mentality. Florens harbors this secret, which she subsequently shares and expresses through her interactions with rivals. When Florens is given to Jacob in exchange for cash, she is roughly eight years old. She recalls with pure sadness and finds it difficult to comprehend her mother's decision to not offer the son as a slave. As she narrates:

Me watching, my mother listening, her baby boy on her hip. Senhor is not paying the whole amount he owes to Sir. Sir saying he will take instead the woman and the girl, not the baby boy and the debt is gone. A minahmae begs no. Her baby boy is still at her breast. Take the girl, she says my daughter, she says. Me. Me. Sir agrees and changes the balance due. (Morrison 8)

2. Conclusion

The tribal people lose their socio-cultural identity including their customs and traditions and are forced to adapt to the town culture under pressure. Urban planning and management should aim to balance the economic, social and environmental needs of urban dwellers, ensuring adequate provision of basic services, infrastructure, housing, health care, education and employment opportunities. Urban policies and programs should foster social cohesion, participation and inclusion among diverse groups of urban dwellers, preventing marginalisation, discrimination and conflict. Ekka points out that the livelihood of the tribal population is dependent on the forests and in turn they contribute towards the

conservation of forests. Moreover, the cultural system that determined consumption practices and attitudes towards environment inclined in supportive of sustainability. Though they get accustomed to the modern process, the pervasion of power structure subjugates the tribal people making it difficult to reclaim or reconstruct their identity in the modernised centres. The benefits of health care and education as improved life conditions are narrowed to the western or dominant socio-cultural or economic paradigm and does not include the tribal wisdom. They are dismissed completely as superstition without any proper study or survey. This attitude towards the indigenous tribal people should be changed.

References

- Chaudhary, Asha. "Modernization: Impact, Theory, Advantages and Disadvantages." *International Journal for Research in Education*. 2.2 (2013): 34-38.
- Ekka, Nancy. "Impact of Modernisation on Tribal Religious Customs and Traditions: A Case Study of Rourkela." May 2013. National Institute of Technology, Rourkela.
- Ibrahim, Saad E. M. "The Relationship between Urbanization and Modernization in Yugoslavia." *International Review of Modern Sociology*. 2.2 (1972) 143–60.
- Roy, Anuradha. *The Folded Earth*. Hachette, 2012.
- Sarkar, Bipul Chandra. "Impact of Modernisation on Economy of Tribal People Living in Dooars." *International Journal of Research in Geography*. 3.4 (2017): 21-26.
- Schnaiberg, Allan. "The Modernizing Impact of Urbanization: A Causal Analysis." *Economic Development and Cultural Change*. 20.1 (1971) 80-104.
- Siddiqui, Kalim. "Modernisation and displacement of rural communities in India." *Journal of social business*, 4 (2014): 3-27.