Narrating injustice: bureaucratic oppression and the tribal experience in Ant and Tadpa by Gopinath Mohanty

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Abstract

In an era where globalization is redefining socio-economic paradigms across the world, the tribal communities of India remain isolated, marginalized, and oppressed—left behind in the fast-paced current of global progress. This paper examines the deeply entrenched systems of exploitation faced by Indian tribal communities, focusing specifically on Gopinath Mohanty's short stories Ant and Tadpa, which poignantly reflect the multifaceted nature of bureaucratic and capitalist oppression faced by the Kondh tribes of Odisha. The stories offer a compelling narrative that sheds light on the systemic neglect and exploitation of these communities by state machinery, local authorities, landlords, moneylenders, and encroaching capitalists, all under the garb of development and governance. While globalization is often portrayed as a vehicle for economic growth, technology dissemination, and societal integration, its adverse effects on indigenous communities are seldom emphasized. The Kondh tribes, who depend entirely on their immediate natural environment for survival—land, forests, rivers—are being steadily dispossessed of their cultural and material lifelines through administrative manipulation and market intrusion. Ant illustrates the callousness of bureaucratic actors like Officer Ramesh, who misuses his power to scapegoat tribal porters while ignoring the real culprits—wealthy rice smugglers. The story reflects how bureaucratic abuse becomes a daily reality for tribesmen like Binu, an elderly peon who, being humiliated, further displaces his anger on fellow impoverished tribals, highlighting the internalization of oppression and the cyclic nature of suffering. Similarly, Tadpa delves into the infiltration of capitalist motives into tribal lands through the character of Doms from the plains who exploit the financial vulnerability of the Dongria Kondhs. By introducing liquor and debt traps, they force the tribals into a vicious cycle of mortgaging their only means of subsistence—their land and trees. In both narratives, Mohanty exposes how tribals are not merely facing cultural erosion, but are also systematically excluded from the benefits of globalization. Their marginalization is aggravated not only by external economic forces but also by corrupt officials and unjust legal systems. This paper contextualizes Mohanty's stories within the larger framework of tribal studies in Indian English literature, where the depiction of marginalized lives becomes a form of resistance literature. It also touches upon the dynamic identity formations of tribes as adimjati, adivasi, janajati, and vanvasi, showcasing how these labels, imposed and assumed, reflect evolving socio-political positions. Furthermore, the paper argues that such literary representations play a vital role in creating a counter-narrative to mainstream developmental discourse that often invisibilizes tribal suffering. Through Mohanty's realistic portrayal, the reader is forced to confront the gap between constitutional protections for tribals and the ground-level realities of displacement, bonded labor, poverty, and cultural annihilation. The narratives not only document the historical continuity of oppression—from colonial to contemporary times—but also function as testimonials of resilience amidst systemic violence. In conclusion, Ant and Tadpa are not isolated tales of tribal hardship but are reflective of a larger pattern of socio-economic marginalization experienced by indigenous communities in India. This study serves to highlight the need for more inclusive developmental policies and a human-centered approach to governance that recognizes tribal agency, autonomy, and dignity. Gopinath Mohanty's works remain crucial to understanding the lived experiences of tribals in the postcolonial and globalized Indian context, serving both as literary protest and anthropological record.

Keywords: Gopinath mohanty, Tribal oppression, Kondh tribe, Bureaucratic violence, Capitalist exploitation, Indigenous identity, Tribal literature, Odisha tribals, Development and displacement

Introduction

Gopinath Mohanty (1914–1991) remains a towering figure in Indian literature, celebrated for his profound engagement with the lives, cultures, and struggles of tribal communities in Odisha. A recipient of the prestigious Jnanpith Award and the first winner of the National Sahitya Akademi Award in 1955 for his novel Amrutara Santana (1947), Mohanty was a prolific writer whose literary output reshaped the contours of modern Oriya fiction. With a literary career spanning over four decades, he penned twenty-four novels, ten collections of short stories, three plays, two volumes of critical essays, and five ethnographic works on the tribal languages of Kandha, Saora, and Gadoba communities. His translations of literary giants like Leo Tolstoy (War and Peace) and Rabindranath Tagore (Jogajog) further demonstrate his versatility and commitment to enriching Oriya literature (Mahapatra, 1992).

A deeply humanistic voice, Mohanty's fiction emerges from his own lived experience in the Orissa Administrative Service, where he joined in 1938 and served until 1969. His intimate contact with tribal life in remote regions allowed him to present

not just ethnographic detail but also emotional and philosophical depth in depicting indigenous communities. As Satya Prakash Mohanty rightly asserts, “In my opinion, Gopinath Mohanty is the most important Indian novelist in the second half of the twentieth century” (“Gopinath Mohanty”, 2022). His novels such as Dadi Budha (1944), Paraja (1945), and Amrutara Santana (1947) are foundational texts in Indian tribal literature, portraying the disruption of tribal societies under the forces of colonialism, modernization, and globalization. Among his pioneering works, Dadi Budha (The Ancestor) vividly illustrates the customs, rituals, and ecological wisdom of forest-dwelling tribes, offering a compelling counterpart to Chinua Achebe's Things Fall Apart, as both narratives capture the encroachment of colonial and modern systems on indigenous life (Senapati, n.d.). In Paraja, the themes of land dispossession and the alienation of tribal identity foreground a broader commentary on social injustice under colonial and capitalist frameworks. Amrutara Santana, awarded the first Sahitya Akademi Award, stands as a profound exploration of the Kandha tribe’s cultural transformation amidst postcolonial realities.

The post-Independence period saw a significant shift in Oriya fiction, with Gopinath Mohanty leading a literary movement that emphasized the individual as protagonist. Alongside S. Mohanty and M. Das, he played a key role in charting a new narrative course for Oriya literature after the legacy of Fakir Mohan Senapati. Mohanty's stories like Pimpudi (Ants) extend his thematic preoccupations by interrogating the impact of globalization on tribal communities, capturing their resilience, disintegration, and adaptation.

Gopinath Mohanty was the recipient of the prestigious Sahitya Akademi Award in 1955 for his celebrated novel Amrutara Santana. Notably, this was the first time the award was presented to a creative literary work across all Indian languages and genres. Later, in 1973, he was honoured with the Jnanpith Award for his magnum opus Mati Matala (The Conceptive Soil) (Jnanpith Website, 2016). He also received the ‘Soviet Land Nehru Award’ in 1970 for translating Maxim Gorky's works into Odia. In 1976, Sambalpur University conferred upon him an honorary D.Litt., and in the same year, the University Grants Commission (UGC) appointed him as a distinguished visiting professor in the Department of English at Utkal University for his outstanding literary contributions. In 1981, the Government of India recognised his invaluable service to literature by awarding him the Padma Bhushan. Regarded as one of the most influential Indian novelists of the twentieth century, Gopinath Mohanty is best known for his vivid and sincere portrayals of tribal life. His narratives often revolved around tribal communities living in remote forested and hilly regions, away from mainstream society. His work in the state civil service, especially in the tribal-dominated Koraput district, gave him deep insight into the customs, traditions, and daily struggles of these marginalized groups. His close interaction with them informed his stories, enabling him to depict both their rich cultural life and their socio-economic hardships with rare authenticity and empathy.

This paper delves into two of his short stories, Tadapa and Ants, to explore the impact of globalization on tribal life. These narratives illustrate Mohanty’s compassion for indigenous people and his acute awareness of their challenges in the face of sweeping political and economic changes brought by globalization. Martin Khor characterizes globalization as a modern extension of colonialism, describing it as a form of domination historically experienced by the Global South ("Definition of Globalization," 2005). Theories such as those of the Transformationalists suggest that globalization disproportionately benefits the wealthy while disadvantaging the poor. Sociologist Anthony Giddens echoes this sentiment by referring to globalization as a force that intensifies competition, producing a world divided into "winners and losers" (Giddens, 1999). This notion is particularly relevant to the interpretation of Mohanty’s story Ants, which vividly captures the slow erosion of tribal existence under the pressures of such a global system.

In Ants, Mohanty poignantly portrays the extinction and survival struggles of tribal communities, showing how globalization seeps into the remotest corners. Drawing from Jan Aart Scholte’s theory of globalization as modernization, where bureaucratic systems serve as instruments of global domination, the story centers on a government officer, Ramesh, and his journey through the tribal regions of Odisha. Accompanied by his elderly peon, Binu, and a group of Kondh porters, Ramesh sets out to apprehend rice smugglers, eager to make history as the first official to scale the rugged hills and forests of the region. His ambition reflects the competitive ethos often driven by globalization, aligning with the World Health Organization’s definition of globalization as the rapid transnational movement of goods, services, people, capital, and ideas. Ramesh’s inability to cope with the physical strain of the expedition exposes his inner conflict and frustration. In the opening lines of the story, it becomes clear that pride prevents him from admitting his exhaustion: “But it would have shamed him to openly acknowledge as much; after all, he was the youngest of them all…” (Mohanty, 2018, p. 33). His frustration is misdirected at his subordinates, especially the tribal porters and Binu, who face the brunt of his irritation: “Why do you seem to tire so easily?” (Mohanty, 2018, p. 33).

The situation escalates as Ramesh lashes out: “Hurry up, you lazy bums!” (Mohanty, 2018, p. 34). Soon, the Kondh porters appear, scantily dressed and clearly worn out, only to be berated further by Binu: “Miserable lazy! Forever falling behind. Slowpokes! No amount of scolding does any good” (Mohanty, 2018, p. 34). The anger trickles down the hierarchical ladder—from the officer to the peon, and from the peon to the porters—highlighting the systemic exploitation embedded in bureaucratic structures under globalization. As the journey progresses, Ramesh learns that he is not the first officer to climb these hills. This revelation wounds his ego and only exacerbates his ill temper. His harshness towards his team, especially the tribals, becomes symbolic of the oppressive nature of global forces, which prioritize personal achievement and dominance over empathy and cooperation. In this way, Mohanty effectively critiques the hierarchical and exploitative

tendencies of globalization, especially as they affect vulnerable tribal communities.

As Ramesh was inquiring about the hills from Binu, his attention was briefly captured by a disorganized trail of ants emerging from a hidden spot, carrying away crumbs of biscuits. The sight brought a smile to his face. It struck him that not just humans, but even tiny creatures like ants had found their way to such elevations. This momentary reflection reminded him of the real reason for his visit. Suddenly alert, he turned to Binu and asked if they were certain about catching the smugglers in the act. Binu confidently responded, assuring him that the culprits would be apprehended at the Kaspawalsa market, emphasizing there was no possibility of their escape, especially since they were expected to arrive by two in the afternoon. Determined to act, Binu urged the porters with frustration, shouting, "Hurry up, you lazy fellows!" This moment reveals how the tribal porters, integral to the operation, were constantly belittled and ordered around by the officer's subordinate—an embodiment of the bureaucratic machinery that global forces often ride on.

In addition to this portrayal, Mohanty vividly brings out the anguish, hardship, and daily struggle for survival faced by the tribal population. Their fight against chronic poverty and hunger renders them vulnerable to exploitation. This divide is especially clear in the conversations among the porters, which remain inaccessible to the officers due to language barriers. When the porters express their anger, cursing the peon and even Ramesh, Mohanty narrates: "The Kondhs murmured discontent: no rest, only relentless marching. Baring their teeth like irritated monkeys, they cursed the peon's lineage… Both the peon and his superior seemed possessed, driven by madness—who else would trek through wild forests and up steep slopes just because a destitute soul tried to carry a little rice?" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 37).

This excerpt lays bare the impoverished reality of tribal communities, worsened by the impacts of climate change—one of globalization's grim consequences. Unpredictable weather patterns had disrupted agriculture, forcing these people to relocate rice, an act which unjustly branded them as smugglers. Supporting this view, Sahoo (2014) rightly argues that tribal regions, rich in resources, are disproportionately affected by globalization. The tribal workers were denied even a moment's respite, despite their clearer understanding of essential human needs compared to the so-called civilized world. The officials' attitude toward the starving porters underlines the irony of their humanity, or lack thereof. This disparity is further emphasized in the following dialogue, reflecting Scholte's concept of globalization as "universalization" (Scholte's Globalization, n.d.): "Weren't they aware that hunger is a shared experience, indiscriminate and borderless? Didn't they understand that anyone seeking to buy rice must be in genuine need? What difference did it make where the rice originated—from one state or another?" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 37).

Here, Mohanty critiques the artificial boundaries and governmental restrictions that prevent tribal communities from accessing basic necessities. His words resonate with Scholte's notion that globalization should transcend such limiting structures, which instead become tools of marginalization. Further insight into tribal exploitation is provided through the thoughts of a porter: "Who cultivated the rice? The naive people from the plains? These individuals blamed everything on the tribals—brewing liquor, chopping trees, buying rice, taking a break, lighting a cigarette after laboring with heavy loads over vast distances. Every single thing! Just because you existed!" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 37).

This monologue highlights how the so-called developed society singles out tribal behaviors, labeling them uncivilized to justify harassment and systemic oppression. Mohanty also explores the emotional and psychological toll on the tribal working class, particularly through Binu's perspective. Silently resenting Ramesh, Binu—an aging man of fifty-five, already worn out and toothless—found himself lacking the stamina to continue these demanding climbs. His thoughts are recorded as: "His body ached for pause, craving gentle steps. But his young superior was unrelenting—pushing, demanding, tirelessly charting unwalked paths. Binu sighed, aware that the moment he lost his position, the fragile power it lent would vanish. Without it, he'd return to being a mere tribal, scavenging among others like a jackal feeding on leftovers from a tiger's hunt." (Mohanty, 2018, p. 38).

This illustrates the modern conflict faced by tribal individuals: the fear of losing their meager livelihoods in a globalized world, where power and money determine one's place. Binu's suffering is a symbol of the broader victimization of older tribal workers, burdened under younger and more privileged officers. Despite the hardships, Mohanty doesn't ignore the inherent harmony and beauty of tribal life, which globalization threatens to erase. This is seen in the cultural richness expressed through their songs. Binu shares one with Ramesh—a romantic ballad: "Hey girl, my little mustard flower, I love you! Hey jasmine blossom, when will you visit me, my dear?" (Mohanty, 2018, pp. 38–39).

When Ramesh curiously asked if even elders enjoyed such songs, Binu replied with a smile, "No one grows old here, sir." This brief yet profound exchange reflects the timeless spirit of the tribal community. Even amidst hardship, they turn their pain into art. Mohanty poignantly captures how globalization encroaches upon this delicate cultural fabric, threatening not only their economy but their identity.

The influence of globalization has deeply disrupted the traditional structures of tribal life, particularly their marriage customs and interpersonal relationships. In Ants by Gopinath Mohanty, this disruption is exemplified through the character of Binu, who takes a young and attractive woman as his third wife. Binu, being economically well-off due to his government job, manages to marry her by paying a significant bride price to her father—effectively outbidding a less fortunate suitor. This commodification of marriage highlights how monetary power, a core feature of globalization, now dictates personal relationships in tribal communities. As described by scholars like Nino Parjanadze, globalization encompasses economic, political, and cultural transformations, driven largely by money, international communication, trade, and intercultural dynamics (Held *et al.*, 2016). Binu's ability to leverage his

financial position over a poorer tribal man reflects this "object-extended" aspect of globalization, where money becomes a tool of social dominance. Bride-price practices, once rare or symbolic, have gained prominence under the economic pressures introduced by globalization, altering the cultural fabric of the Kondh tribe.

This shift also brings psychological distress to the community. In the story, a young peon named Bishi, who claims familial ties with Binu's third wife, introduces an awkward dynamic that makes Binu uneasy. He worries that his young wife might be vulnerable to romantic advances and even considers how his other wives treat her. He fears, "if she wasn't happy, she would run away; such things happen often enough" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 40). Such anxiety is a result of new social freedoms and fluidity in relationships brought about by modern influences—liberties that were less common in pre-globalized tribal societies.

The narrative also explores how external economic pressures turn indigenous people into unwilling participants in illegal activities like smuggling. Mohanty describes how traders and large merchants set up operations near the border of Madras, creating a black market for rice. Binu, reporting on these activities, explains to his officer that while tribals trade in modest amounts—only 5 or 10 sers at a time—these small transactions are exploited by large traders who transport rice in bulk across regions such as Bishakhapatna, Parbtipur, Bobili, and Makua (Mohanty, 2018, p. 41). Despite the organized nature of these smuggling networks, the blame often falls on the poorest participants—the tribals—who engage in minor rice sales merely to survive. Mohanty likens their efforts to "ants carrying crumbs," underscoring both the scale and innocence of their involvement. Yet, the administration turns a blind eye to the big traders while targeting these struggling individuals. Officer Ramesh's plan to "pounce on them and confiscate their stock" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 41) reflects this unjust focus on the vulnerable rather than addressing the systemic exploitation by outsiders.

Mohanty also captures the harsh attitude of officials like Ramesh towards tribals. His clenched-teeth resolve— "If only I can catch them" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 41)—signifies the misplaced aggression directed at those merely trying to sustain themselves. Yet, when Ramesh enters a Kondh village, he is met not with hostility but with fear and shyness. A child flees crying at the sight of strangers, and women observe cautiously from behind doors (Mohanty, 2018, p. 42). These scenes depict two of the criteria used by the Lokur Committee in 1965 to define Scheduled Tribes: geographical isolation and reluctance to engage with the broader society. Despite their initial fear, the tribal community soon displays its generosity and warmth. Villagers offer food, bananas, and milk to the visiting officials and encourage them to rest, even requesting them to stay the night (Mohanty, 2018, p. 42). Mohanty paints a picture of a kind, nature-loving, and community-oriented people—traits that contrast sharply with how the government views and treats them.

Even in the face of neglect and exploitation, tribal hospitality persists. When Ramesh prepares to leave, an elderly woman blocks his path and insists he eat before going. Her emotional plea—"Would you have done this to your own mother?" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 43)—reveals both her deep maternal compassion and the cultural importance of caring for guests. Yet, Ramesh dismisses her concern and leaves, symbolizing the broader disconnection between state representatives and indigenous communities. On his journey to the market, Ramesh encounters a group of Telugu migrants driven by hunger into the forest, illustrating how the ripple effects of economic displacement touch many. The story ends with a poignant sense of contrast: tribal generosity on one side and administrative coldness and systemic failure on the other.

Ramesh, in his role as a government official, frequently chose the rigid path dictated by rules and regulations to distinguish right from wrong. He believed his authority existed solely because of the legal framework, and therefore, he adhered to it strictly. However, this sometimes left him in a state of inner turmoil and confusion. Reflecting on his past actions, Ramesh recalled instances where he had to suppress his moral instincts in order to uphold the written law. Through this inner conflict, Mohanty exposes how legal systems, under the influence of institutionalized globalization, can become tools of injustice—especially for marginalized tribal communities.

In one such instance, Ramesh was forced to sentence a man to prison for theft—a crime committed out of sheer hunger. The man's wife appeared in court, holding a baby and pleading desperately for leniency. She explained that without her husband, both she and her child would starve. Still, bound by the rule of law, Ramesh had no choice but to send the man to jail (Mohanty, 2018, p. 46). Here, Mohanty sharply critiques the cruelty embedded in legal systems that prioritize technical justice over human compassion. This pattern of injustice is further reflected in another case where a starving tribal man was imprisoned for a year simply for picking a pumpkin from someone's garden—a repeat offense according to the law (Mohanty, 2018, p. 46). These examples highlight how the legal system, an extension of globalization through formal institutions, often becomes a mechanism for oppressing those it is meant to protect.

Mohanty also sheds light on the darker side of globalization through the spread of infectious diseases, which reach remote tribal communities due to human migration. He describes scenes of suffering where people were afflicted with illnesses like leprosy and yaws, characterized by painful, open sores on their backs (Mohanty, 2018, p. 47). Such diseases, often spread by global travel, hit tribal populations the hardest, as they lack adequate healthcare and already live under the burden of poverty. Despite these adversities, Mohanty also highlights a progressive and often-overlooked aspect of tribal culture: gender equality. He presents a scene of tribal men and women mingling freely—talking, laughing, and moving together without hierarchy or separation (Mohanty, 2018, p. 47). This simple yet powerful portrayal indicates a society where women are treated as equals, a fact supported by Sahoo's observation that tribal societies assign meaningful roles to women in both cultural and social life (Sahoo, 2014). However, Mohanty warns that this cultural equity is under threat from

globalization, which imposes external values that often undermine indigenous traditions.

The narrative further describes the suffering of tribal people criminalized for merely carrying small quantities of rice in their baskets. At a checkpoint, officials accused them of illegal trading, and they were roughly ordered to open their bags. A peon shouted at them to be quiet, and commands were issued aggressively to "hurry up" and show what they carried (Mohanty, 2018, p. 52). Ramesh, witnessing this, closed his eyes and imagined the pain of the people: diseased bodies, weary eyes, desperate cries for food, and the silent rage of broken souls (Mohanty, 2018, pp. 52–53). Through this poignant image, Mohanty critiques a system that targets the weakest under the guise of law enforcement, enforcing global trade norms at the cost of human dignity.

The prejudices of the authorities are also laid bare when a subordinate tells Ramesh that the tribespeople were smuggling rice to sell it for profit, branding them as "bloodsuckers" (Mohanty, 2018, pp. 51–52). In reality, these individuals were only trying to survive. The so-called smuggling involved trading small amounts of rice, sometimes even in exchange for songs, revealing the absurdity and cruelty of the accusations. Finally, Mohanty turns to a deeper philosophical reflection, portraying a moment of tribal solidarity and human unity. He imagines the tribespeople silently expressing that they are all alike—walking the same ground, using the same limbs, seeing with the same eyes. Their only enemies are those who steal their food, crush their spirits, or bring harm upon them (Mohanty, 2018, p. 51). Through this, Mohanty presents the tribal worldview as inherently peaceful, inclusive, and environmentally conscious—a vital perspective needed to foster global harmony in our increasingly interconnected world.

In modern urban societies, wealth, security, and achievement are the benchmarks of success. In contrast, tribal communities prioritize their customs and belief systems, where true success is defined by survival — of both individuals and their cultural identity. However, with the rise of globalization, these communities now face the dual threat of cultural erosion and existential crisis. The Dongria Kondh tribe deeply values the principle that children should never hesitate to express their needs to their parents, regardless of time or circumstance. This belief stems from their broader worldview — one that regards all life as part of a unified family. As such, they treat every living being with equal respect. A telling instance of this is when a character, Tadapa, casually leaves money behind and walks away. According to Mohanty (2018), Tadapa believes that money only serves its purpose in the moment it's needed, equating its value to that of common pebbles (p. 68). This perspective starkly contrasts with the materialistic mindset prevalent in contemporary consumer culture, where an increasing emphasis on wealth and possessions has led to unchecked greed and corruption. If society were to adopt such tribal values, issues like corruption and scarcity might diminish, fostering a more secure and peaceful way of life.

In his story Tadpa, Mohanty explores how globalization has jeopardized tribal existence by depicting the struggles and exploitation faced by the Dongria Kondhs. A group of seven individuals, symbolic of globalization's influence, visit the tribal region under the guise of civilizing its people. This group includes development and anthropology experts, a forest guard, and several assistants. They journey from Bishamkatak railway station to the Niyamgiri Hills of Odisha, enduring a harsh and unfamiliar environment with no roads, shelters, or modern infrastructure. Mohanty illustrates the remoteness of the region by noting the absence of basic amenities like hospitals, schools, or even permanent houses, emphasizing that the hills, forests, and farmlands are home only to the ancient Dongria Kondh tribe (Mohanty, 2018, p. 59). This scene paints a clear picture of how, despite the globalized era, certain communities remain untouched by modern development, highlighting their geographical and social isolation. The narrative also introduces the arrival of capitalist forces — notably, outsiders like the Doms — who exploit the tribal people much like the characters in Mohanty's other story, Ants. These individuals, driven by profit, trade liquor and loans for agricultural produce and land. As Mohanty illustrates, for just a bottle of liquor or a few rupees, valuable crops and fruit orchards cultivated by the Kondhs are taken away. The Kondhs, who labor year-round in difficult conditions to protect their harvests, often end up losing everything to these opportunists who then sell the goods in city markets for a profit (Mohanty, 2018, p. 59). This starkly shows how the tribal communities are being pushed deeper into poverty, while capitalist outsiders accumulate wealth by manipulating and cheating them. These exploiters represent the local manifestation of a global capitalist agenda — what can be termed "glocalization" — where the global thirst for wealth intersects with local-level exploitation. It's also noteworthy that some of the traditional crops like turmeric, gram, and sesame, valued for their health benefits and even promoted by India's Ministry of Health during the COVID-19 pandemic for boosting immunity, were stripped from the Kondhs due to their limited awareness. This reinforces former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's observation that those who are uneducated and impoverished are unlikely to benefit from globalization (Babar, 2016).

Mohanty also critiques the superficial attitude of so-called development agents. For instance, Madhusudan, a forest guard, expresses his long-term frustration with the Kondhs, complaining about their resistance to change. He notes their refusal to adopt habits such as personal hygiene, formal education, and abstaining from alcohol. But as he admits, these aren't part of the cultural teachings they were raised with (Mohanty, 2018, p. 62). This passage underscores the tribal community's adherence to their values and truthfulness, while contrasting it with the often hypocritical and dishonest approach of outsiders. These agents, though claiming to assist in development, are often unwilling or unable to bring meaningful change due to systemic issues and a lack of genuine commitment.

Finally, through Hari Pani's reflections, Mohanty explores the real implications of so-called development projects. Pani warns that the arrival of outsiders will necessitate infrastructure such as housing and water supply, costing large sums — perhaps up

to twenty lakh rupees. This foreshadows the commodification and bureaucratic control that inevitably accompany external intervention, putting tribal lands and ways of life at risk under the name of progress. Gopinath Mohanty's portrayal of the tribals' fear of exploitation offers a critical perspective on the impact of globalization, as seen through the character of Bharat, the professor. Mohanty warns of the negative consequences of increased contact with outsiders, as illustrated in his description of the Kondhs. He writes: "Too much money will bring with it new troubles for the Kondhs. Their innocence and honesty will be the first casualties. Contact with outsiders will make them more cunning. They will pick up all the bad things first. They'll become comfort loving, not repay their loans on time, and also sell their produce in secret.…That will lead to new problems" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 65).

This passage highlights Mohanty's concern about the corrupting effects of globalization on tribal life. The simplicity and honesty of the Kondhs, which are integral to their humanity, are threatened by their interaction with external influences. Their traditional virtues, such as honesty, may erode as they become exposed to negative aspects of the outside world. Further, Mohanty comments on the loss of self-control and self-confidence in the face of these external pressures. He emphasizes the value of self-discipline and commitment to one's ideals, pointing out that even wise individuals may falter in their resolve: "Even such people sometimes totter and trip: they question their ideals, lose their self-confidence and regret their life of austerity and self-denial.…Apparently, no ray of wisdom or of culture has penetrated here" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 66). This reflects the erosion of both individual and collective moral frameworks as globalization progresses, leading to a loss of values essential for maintaining a humane society. According to Manfred B. Steger, this can be understood as the "embodied globalization" and the "cultural dimension of globalization." These forces strip the tribal communities of their fundamental qualities, which are crucial to maintaining peace and harmony in the world. Therefore, preserving these traits, such as self-control, dignity, and honesty, becomes essential in a world increasingly shaped by globalization.

Additionally, Mohanty sheds light on the tribal community's moral values and their sense of duty. For example, in a discussion with an external team, Tadpa demonstrates the significance of honoring community rules and respecting elders: "This is our land - this hill and this forest - and you all are our guests here. So, who will show the way to whom - you to me or I to you? If the matter reaches the ears of my elders, what will they say? If it reaches headman Lamu Bishi's ears, what will he say? Won't they say: Tadpa, you let us down, you brought shame on us?" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 72). This passage underscores the respect for community norms and leadership within the tribal structure. The tribe's adherence to social duties and their sense of unity are integral to their survival in a globalized world. Mohanty suggests that these qualities should be preserved, as they are vital for a society's growth and well-being. In the face of globalization, it is essential to recognize the importance of maintaining leadership structures and respecting cultural traditions.

Another negative impact of globalization highlighted by Mohanty is the degradation of the environment, particularly the loss of biodiversity. Tribals, who have lived in harmony with nature for generations, are portrayed as the true protectors of the forest ecosystem. This is exemplified when Tadpa reassures the external team about the wildlife in the forest: "Don't worry about them. They're like our kith and kin" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 73). Through this dialogue, Mohanty emphasizes that the tribals' connection to the land and the animals is an essential part of their identity and their role as guardians of biodiversity. However, globalization, manifested in the form of corporate activities such as mining and dam construction, is displacing the tribals from their homelands, threatening the very ecosystems they have protected. These activities lead to a loss of biodiversity, further exacerbating the ecological crisis.

Moreover, Mohanty illustrates the deep trust the tribals have in government officials, seeing them as parental figures who are responsible for their well-being. Tadpa's interactions with Madhusudan, the forest guard, demonstrate this trust. When Tadpa takes a matchbox from Madhusudan, he responds, "I don't care, who will I take things from if not from my fathers and mothers?" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 68). This moment reveals the tribals' view of officials as part of their extended family, underscoring their belief in government authority. Similarly, Tadpa's demand for money from the development officers, not out of greed but as a form of respect, further illustrates this point. "Come on, come on. Who'll I demand money from if not from my parents?" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 73). This interaction highlights the respect and trust the tribals place in these officials, not as exploiters, but as figures of authority to be revered. This relationship contrasts sharply with the greed-driven society of globalization, where money and material wealth often become the primary motivation.

In response to the challenges posed by globalization, Mohanty offers a vision for the development of tribal communities. Through the character of Parsuram, the development officer, he proposes practical steps for tribal empowerment, such as providing access to government-run stores and credit facilities to protect the tribals from exploitative moneylenders. Parsuram advocates for small, incremental changes: "It's better to do something, no matter how little, than to keep waiting.… Let's go into every Kondh home and talk to people, try to persuade them, coax and cajole them" (Mohanty, 2018, pp. 64-65). This approach reflects the need for a more compassionate and tailored form of development that respects the tribals' way of life while offering them access to necessary resources.

Through the character of Bharat, Mohanty critiques the exploitative nature of both the outsiders and the tribals, noting, "Does it take place because of the aggressive ways of the exploiter or because of the unchanging ways of the exploited? Because of both, I think" (Mohanty, 2018, p. 62). He argues that the key to protecting the tribals lies in altering their perception of modernization, making them aware of the benefits of adapting to new ways without losing their cultural identity. The goal should be to help them navigate the complexities of globalization while maintaining their traditional values and self-reliance.

In short, Mohanty's work illustrates the detrimental effects of globalization on the tribals, particularly in terms of cultural erosion, environmental degradation, and economic exploitation. As Jimmy Carter has stated, "if you are totally illiterate and living on one dollar a day, the benefits of globalization never come to you" (Babar, 2016). In this context, Mohanty suggests that the Dongria Kondh, like other marginalized tribes, can only truly benefit from globalization if their cultural values and natural resources are protected. Sahoo (2014) aptly sums up the situation, asserting that tribal livelihoods are under threat in the name of development. Therefore, the challenge is not only to provide tribals with an alternative to exploitative systems but also to safeguard their unique qualities, cultural knowledge, and environmental practices.

Methodology

The methodology for this research paper is primarily qualitative and analytical, focusing on a critical literary analysis of Gopinath Mohanty's Ant and Tadpa. The study employs a textual analysis approach to examine the themes of bureaucratic oppression, globalization, and the tribal experience as portrayed in these novels. By closely analyzing the characters, narrative structure, and dialogue, the research seeks to uncover the underlying critiques of bureaucracy and the societal implications of external influences on tribal communities. The paper also draws on secondary sources, including scholarly articles and books, to contextualize Mohanty's works within the broader discourse on globalization, development, and tribal rights. The analysis is framed through theoretical lenses such as postcolonial theory, globalization studies, and cultural anthropology, with a focus on understanding the socio-political dynamics that shape the tribal experience in contemporary India. Furthermore, the research integrates insights from various scholars who have explored the effects of modernity and bureaucratic structures on marginalized communities, particularly tribals. This methodological framework allows for a comprehensive exploration of the themes of exploitation, resistance, and cultural preservation in the face of systemic injustice, providing a deeper understanding of Mohanty's critique of societal structures and his call for a more just and ethical approach to development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Gopinath Mohanty's Ant and Tadpa serve as profound narratives that shed light on the oppressive impact of bureaucracy and globalization on tribal communities. Through his portrayal of the Dongria Kondh tribe, Mohanty powerfully critiques the exploitation and degradation that result from the intrusion of external forces, highlighting the systemic injustice faced by marginalized groups. His characters, such as Bharat, Tadpa, and Parsuram, act as lenses through which we witness the tribals' struggle to preserve their culture, dignity, and values in the face of an ever-encroaching modernity driven by bureaucratic and corporate interests. The loss of innocence, self-control, and moral integrity—hallmarks of the tribal identity—becomes evident as the tribals are increasingly exposed to the exploitative mechanisms of globalization, as seen in the disruption of their communal bonds and the erosion of their environmental stewardship. Mohanty effectively portrays how the complexities of bureaucracy and external interference not only undermine the tribals' autonomy but also threaten their ecological wisdom, which has long been integral to their survival. His exploration of the tribals' trust in government officials further illuminates the tension between their reliance on external authority and the ultimate betrayal they experience when their lands and resources are taken from them. Ultimately, Mohanty's work underscores the need for a more nuanced and compassionate approach to development—one that recognizes the inherent value of tribal cultures and seeks to empower rather than exploit these communities. The portrayal of tribals as both victims and resilient agents of change calls for a re-evaluation of the policies that govern their lives, emphasizing the importance of preserving their unique identities while integrating them into a modern world that must learn to respect and accommodate their way of life. Through Ant and Tadpa, Mohanty invites us to reflect on the broader implications of bureaucratic oppression and its destructive effects on tribal communities, urging us to consider the ethical responsibility of society in addressing the injustices they face.

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