



A Theoretical Discourse of Domination of Power and Societal Injustice in Adwaita Mallabharman's Novel *a River Called Titash*

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ABSTRACT

Class and caste struggle between bourgeois and proletariats has been one of the crucial concerns in the Indian subcontinent for long. The Bengali writers in the continent too have been influenced by the Marxist concept of power and domination. A number of writers became vocal about many local issues that have long been ignored by the previous writers. Adwaita Mallabharman is one of them who highlighted the issue of the subaltern *Malo* fishing community living on the bank of Titash river through his remarkable novel *A River Called Titash*. In the present society where capitalism decides almost everything, this fishing community lives under domination and is deprived of the minimum opportunities they deserve despite their hard working. The upper caste *zamindars*, money lenders snatch away the profit from these fishermen and keep them under perpetual debt. The upper caste *Kayasthas* use multiple ideological state apparatuses to destroy the cultural identity of the *Malo* community. The present research paper is a modest attempt to study the socio-political and economic position of the *Malo* fishing community who are marginalized from the mainstream Bengali society because of their lower caste identity. This paper has further discussed the theoretical discourse of domination of power and societal injustices covered in the select Bengali narratives.

Keywords: *Malo* community, fishermen, class and caste struggle, power, societal injustice.

Introduction

The existence of subaltern people in society has become miserable due to the domination of power. The domination of power is apprehended when the oppressed fail to resist the injustice they are usually meted out. The upper caste people who have a strong hold over knowledge exercise the power over everything and as an arrogant force they begin exploit the lower caste people on social, cultural, religious and economic level. The power holder group establish the ideology on their own interest to control the society, and the powerless people of the society get trapped by those ideologies. They accept such ideological domination as their fate and don't challenge it ever. Antonio Gramsci, the Marxist Philosopher associates the term ideology with societal power and force. He defines how the bourgeois groups being powerful in the social structure force the proletarian people to get their own interests accomplished.

The shaping of a people's ideologies is, according to Gramsci, a kind of deception whereby the majority of people forget about or abandon their own interests and desires and accept the dominant values and beliefs as their own. (Bressler, 2007, P. 198).

Power indicates a negative meaning in social context where the dominant class always rules the subaltern group whereas, Michel Foucault, the French philosopher describes it as the cause of social revolution. He argues that the existence of power leads the oppressed class to protest and to realize their basic rights. In this connection Foucault rightly asks: 'if power was never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but say no, do you really believe that we should manage to obey it?' (Foucault, 1978, P. 36)

He has shown the power as a constructive and productive force in the society which provokes the human to change their behaviour. He opines in his book *The History of Sexuality* that 'where there is power there is resistance' (Foucault, 1978, P. 36). He enunciates that, on every occasion, when power will emerge, resistance will be observed as its outcome. Foucault illustrates, power is:

coextensive with resistance; productive, producing positive effects; ubiquitous, being found in every kind of relationship, as a condition of the possibility of any kind of relationship. (Kelly, 2009, P. 38)

The novel *A River Called Titash* is the symbolic interpretation of the domination of power of the upper castes and bourgeois capitalism. Adwaita Mallabarman, influenced by Marxism, opines that "Religion" is Ideological State Apparatus through which the capitalist society pervades their ideology. As a true follower of Marxism, Mallabarman regards society as the battleground of the two hostile groups –oppressors or bourgeoisie and oppressed or proletariats, that evokes Engel's thought:

Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes, directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. (Engels, 1848, P. 3)

Mallabarman dreamt of a classless society and a socio-political and socio-economic victory of proletariat over the bourgeoisie in their relentless struggle for existence. His novel may also be understood as a conscious attempt to awake the consciousness of the proletariat fishermen shaped by the means of production in a capitalist society for assisting the labour class to understand the social injustice and to fight against it. The novelist has realistically portrayed how the Hindu upper-caste *Kayasthas* use 'Ideological State Apparatus' to destroy the cultural identity of the *Malo* people. He also shows how the upper-caste *zamindars*, and money lenders as the 'Repressive State Apparatus' oppress and exploit the *Malo* community in multiple ways.

The author, a member of the Marxist, acknowledged the abstraction of human labour in the manufacturing processes while also criticising capitalism in his writing. In their storytelling, one can find tales of marginalised populations like daily labourers and landless peasants. The novel highlights how important nature is to these underprivileged populations' life and how this distances them from the outcomes of their labour. The select novels also illustrate how wealthy classes that control the means of production exploit these populations. The novels emphasise the obvious dichotomy that exists in the interaction between nature and people. Between the fishing hamlet and the river are a number of inequities dictated by class. The fish, as a product with a market value, illustrates the objectification of the fishermen's labour. Fishermen are under double pressure from the class of moneylenders who own the boats and nets (Bhaduri, 2018, P. 5). The moneylenders take away the fishermen's means of livelihood while also owning the fishermen's work power for a specific monetary value for the fishermen no longer produce for themselves. Thus, the river-centric setting in Mallabarman's texts no longer serves as a passive backdrop but rather manifests as a vibrant entity that significantly contributes to the struggle for existence (Mallabarman, 1993, P. 90).

The novel *A River Called Titash* deals with the problems of caste and class domination and exhibits the resistance and revolts of a marginalized fishing community against the established societal order. Mallabarman depicts the lives of *Malo* fishermen who put their life at risk for the sake of fishing. He has recorded the pain, misery and day to day events of the lower caste *Malo* fishing community living in Gokarna (now in Bangladesh) near the bank of Titash river. The never-ending struggle of the *Malos*, the apathy of nature and the domination of the upper caste people, have been anointed to a greater extent in his narrative. The novel gives a picture of a marginalized society not in the utopian sense but in the light of the real experiences of the author. In spite of their hard physical labour, their economic condition always remain underline. There are number of occasions specially when the river Titash gets dry the fishermen's family do not get even one time meal in a day to fill their stomach. The poverty-stricken picture of the *Malos* can be assumed by looking at the cottage of Ananta's mother where

the straw roof of the hut has holes through which water drips day and night. The wall panels have given way in places through which the rain-cold wind blows. The only sari she has is so worn that trying to cover her chest exposes her hips and trying to cover her waist leaves too little to cover her breasts. (Mallabarman, 1993, P. 124)

The foremost reason of their starvation is their poverty and the over exploitation run by the upper caste people. As a power holding group the upper castes create such a circumstance in social, religious and economic spheres for the *Malo* people which forces them to live a life of survival. The upper caste decent people avoided the association as much as possible with the people of *Malo* locality. The lives of the *Malo* fishermen are tied to the Titash river. They are connected with river since birth. So, their hopes, expectations for the river never comes to an end. The lives of the *Malos* without river are like fish out of water.

It is clear from Mallabarman's thematic division that Marxist theories influence the work. This had a big impact on how he depicted the socio-political systems of a rural village called Gokarno in this book. His narratives, which

incorporate the experiences of marginalised *Malo* fishing community, paint a vivid picture of the home, social, and economic life of Colonial Bengal's fishermen, which revolved around collecting fish and operating boats. He saw these lower social classes as the architects of their own socioeconomic changes within the late colonial society's structural confines.

The concept of 'subaltern' class has been reintroduced in recent discussions on the society and history of India. Ranajit Guha (1998, P. 22) has represented this term as lower caste or *Nimnborgo* in Bengali. This idea of the lower class/caste originated by following Gramsci's hints. But it has been applied and spread in the society and history of India. The concept of upper class and lower class has been defined as the plan of social relations where power is the essence, where social relations are tied to one of the most prominent structures of power and subordination (199, P. 133).

The importance of Titash river has not been able to draw much attention by the historians because it has no history, no sign of great emperors like the Mughal or the Pathans which could able to keep alive their glorious victory over the times. And *Malos* are the most neglected inhabitants of this neglected river bank. The way a painter implements all his thoughts in a painting with the help of brush, same way Mallabarman has thoroughly conveyed his self-realization about the life of the *Malo* people to the *Bhadralok* [gentlemen] society. Their manners, beliefs, culture, customs, festivals, ceremonies, activities, language, everything could not escape his mind. The boats are tied to the wharf of Titash, the nets are spread on the land, mud storage tank in the corner of the yard, spinning wheel, weaving mill, mesh weaving equipment etc. are the possessions of the *Malos*, their identity, their source of existence. And their families are formed with these all. Their lives are surrounded by cultural festivals and ritual ceremonies through out of the years. Culture is the backbone of any society and the abandonment of it means the crisis of that society's existence. The *Malo* people try their best to retain their cultural identity.

They were the most underprivileged and destitute community in colonial Bengal. Rabindranath Tagore, a Bengali author who won the Nobel Prize, illustrated the appalling socioeconomic situation of this group. When he went to a village, he discovered that not a single *Bhadralok* [gentleman] had ever been there, touched their crops, or harvested them. It is not in human nature to fall so low, the author writes. It was a religious command that made people act in this way. In our nation, torture and prejudice against men and women were committed in the name of religion (Byapari & Mukherjee, 2007, P. 4118). The fishing community had a tenuous social standing. These folks lacked basic human dignity and were poor and landless, like floating hyacinths. In his book *A River Called Titash*, Mallabarman (1993) accurately represented the fishermen's society. They are described by the author as,

Malos right was in the flowing water, in its formless, groundless.... That right never had the solid touch of real ground.... Hence, they are floaters.... No matter how hard they cling to the bosom of the earth, the soil forever pushes them away: 'No space for you, no place for you'. (Mallabarman, 1993, p. 245).

In his book *Fisheries and Fishermen: A Socio-Economic History of Fisheries and Fishermen of Colonial Bengal and Post-colonial West Bengal*, Rup Kumar Barman (2008), remarks, 'The traditional fishermen [have] more miserable condition in the class hierarchy of Bengal' (Barman, 2008, P. 24). The occupation of fishing lacks respect in Bengali society. The fishing community is seen as belonging to the lowest caste, *Dom* [engaged in corpse cremation and scavenging]. In addition to being considered as 'outcastes,' (Barman, 2008, P. 23) 'fishing as a profession' thus has been identified as a job of the lower castes.' (Basu, 2008, P. 67). Barman (2008) mentioned the fishermen of Bengal in the research paper *Caste and Class Awareness among the Fishermen of Bengal* as 'water labourers' (Barman, 2008, P. 72) or 'slaves of the water' [Jaladas], who perform daily labour for upper caste landowners who own boats and nets and take advantage of the local fishing community for the same.

Their womenfolk aids them in market in selling fish (Halder, 2021, P. 21-22). The fishing community is more vulnerable than other marginalised communities on both cultural and socio-economic backgrounds. They don't possess any land, "They [are] thus 'floaters having no assured mode of living'" (Barman, 2008, p. 26). In their narratives, a number of Bengali writers have described their social location on the outskirts of the hamlet. However, the fishermen's habitat is two or three "miles away from the gentry village" (Jaladas, 2014, p. 10). "They are not those with yards facing the roads that lead to the city and that cast out along the way branches reaching towards towns and large villages, roads that carry horse-drawn vehicles" (Mallabarman, 1993, p. 21). All the paths from the yards of fishermen's houses bring them to the water. The fishing community was unable to take up a substantial amount of space in subaltern literary discourse. Their existence is therefore irrelevant and still shrouded in mystery. The socioeconomic status of fishermen has not changed to contemporary time and continues to fall below the margin. Fishermen, known as *Jaladas* [slave of water] in Bangladeshi, are traditionally members of the *Kaibarta* caste. South Asian nations, particularly India (specifically West Bengal) and Bangladesh, do not treat fishing with the appropriate level of respect. In his article *Fisheries Traditions in Bangladesh*, Ahmed (1987), explains the fishing community in more detail. He says, "They have been operating and living in isolated village along the coasts or the side of major rivers for centuries. As a community, they are relatively autonomous from the rest of the villagers with respect to primary social relation and kinship (1987)."

It is very obvious that the Jaladas community in Bangladesh belongs to the lowest caste in the Hindu caste system and that they are traditional fisherman. In his book *Sons of the Sea*, Harishankar Jaladas (2014) also examines

the predatory loan system via the perspectives of two *Dadonders*, Sashibhushan Roy and Abdus Sukkur. The fishermen are forced to sell their catch to these two crafty moneylenders at a predetermined price that is significantly less than the market rate in exchange for advance loans from them. "They advanced money on two conditions. The borrower would have to pay 10% interest per month on the money he took or they would have to sell all the fish they caught at a price fixed by the *Dadonder*" (Jaladas, 2014, P. 51). Fishers who dare to violate the agreement face exclusion and severe penalty. Gangapada, the main character, is assassinated for trying to speak out against the moneylenders' persecution. They frequently get the amount wrong and set up an endless trap to take advantage of the uneducated fishermen in North Patenga. In order to take advantage of the impoverished, moneylenders act as a tool of the repressive state apparatus.

In West Bengal and Bangladesh, the state of the fishing community has not changed since colonial Bengal was divided. The plight of the fisherman in West Bengal following independence is described in Samoresh Basu's (2016) novel *Ganga*. The financial plight of the *Malos*, a Dalit fishing community, in the capitalist society is depicted by Basu. Even though they work extremely hard and get enough money during *Hilsa* (fishing season), the fishermen do not even have enough to eat. Due to debt, they end up mortgaging their boats to the lenders. In actuality, they became bonded labourers for wholesalers and moneylenders via the *Dadon* (advance loan) system. They consequently failed to escape the control of the upper caste moneylenders (Basu, 2016, P. 9).

It is clear from Mallabarman's thematic division that Marxist theories influence the work. This had a big impact on how he depicted the socio-political systems of a rural village called Gokarno in this book. His narratives, which incorporate the experiences of marginalised *Malo* fishing community, paint a vivid picture of the home, social, and economic life of Colonial Bengal's fishermen, which revolved around collecting fish and operating boats. He saw these lower social classes as the architects of their own socioeconomic changes within the late colonial society's structural confines.

The Boatman of the Padma, an iconic book by Manik Bandyopadhyay (2012), portrays the struggles of fishermen on the Padma River's shore (now Bangladesh). Through the main character Kuber's transfer from Ketupur to Moynadwip, where the material forces or sources of production have changed from Dhananjoy to Hussain Mian, the story offers a symbolic interpretation of the shift in power from aristocratic feudalism to bourgeois capitalism (2012). As a symbol of the capitalist class, Hossein Miya enjoys an excessive amount of money, power and position. Marxists hold that exploitation of workers occurs when capitalism profit-making occurs. A capitalist also appropriates a sizable percentage of the value the employees created when he sells something they produced and makes more money off of it than he invested in it, including the pay of the workers. Workers are exploited by capitalists who dominate the entire production system because they only receive a little percentage of the value of their productivity. This notion is supported by Bandyopadhyay's depiction of Hossein Miya, who makes use of the Ketupur fishermen's physical prowess for his personal gain and a self-centered, selfish goal. Bandyopadhyay (2012, P. 40) envisioned a society that was egalitarian and in which the proletariat would triumph over the bourgeoisie in their ongoing struggle for survival.

Recently, Lily Halder (2021) in her novel *Nadir Mohnai* [Outfall of the River] has depicted realistically in the different parts of her narrative how the repressive State Apparatus of the zamindars has made an impact on the subaltern consciousness that causes them to reject the hegemony established by the upper-caste people. She also points out how they became victims of Repressive State Apparatus of the landlords (zamindars) though they themselves were oppressed by the upper-caste zamindars, landowners and moneylenders. The powerful and cunning Suredranath's enslavement of the uneducated, underprivileged fishermen in the narrative makes this discriminatory disparity clear. Here, a Marxist viewpoint on the idea of human labour and the associated function of nature is also very much relevant (Halder, 2021, P. 89).

The location of the *Malo* village is described geographically at the opening of the novel *Nadir Mohnai* (outfall of the river), indicating their social seclusion. They resided on the Ichamati River's bank close to Sundarban (West Bengal), which is located far from the gentry of the city. The location of the *Malo* people's village demonstrates their full social segregation and seclusion. The story frequently depicts this feeling of exclusion, which labels the fishing community of Sharupnagar as "other" and "excluded."

They suffer from social neglect, cultural mistreatment, economic ruin, political pressure, religious exclusion, technical laggardism, geographic isolation, vulnerability, and lack of information appropriate to their lower class and unclean caste background. For them, education is a luxury. They are far away from the morbid political gain. They live simple and unknown lives as an unknown community far from the civilized madding crowd in Bengal (Halder, 2021, P. 61). Boats and nets are their only sources of livelihood. Because of their abject poverty, they spend the majority of their income on food rather on clothing and other items. Thus, since ancient times, fishermen have managed to survive despite their inferior social standing.

Apart from that her narrative has become very important document to study the socio-economic and socio-political condition of the *Malo* community in the pre- and post-colonial Bengal. The partition of colonial Bengal was great tragedy for them (Halder, 2021, P. 50). The torture of East Pakistani police and the sporadic communal violence made them flee from their forefather's houses. As rootless refugees they floated on the water. Crossing the border,

they took shelters near Sundarbans where they found suitable atmosphere for their livelihood. In colonial East Bengal, the Dalits were engaged in agricultural activities and fishing, thus they became jobless in the new country. With little help and support from the government they endeavoured hard to reaffirm their identity and settle in West Bengal according to their favourable geographical, agricultural locations like 24 Parganas, Nadia, North East part of Assam, Cooch Behar, Ganga riverine deltas etc. and also started living on the other river beds, "Even the government had consciously encouraged the policy of settlement of the Scheduled Caste refugees in the river beds, forest areas covered with jungle, hill and rivers" (Barman, 2012, p. 184). To discuss the present condition of the fishing community Panigrahi and Bakshi (2014) in their article, *A Study on Profile of Fishing Community of the River Side Villages of River Churni, Nadia, West Bengal with Special Reference to Socio-Economic and Technological Appraisal of Fishermen*, say,

The total value of all the property owned by the fishermen was taken into consideration for calculating the asset value. Most of the families have houses with tiled roofs and mud walls. In some cases two to three families are housed under a single roof. Several fishermen families are found to live in the bamboo-made houses with tiled roof. Average income of the families was found to be very low in most cases (2014, p. 100).

The socioeconomic status of the riverside settlements was discussed in the aforementioned readings. However, the statistics showed a persistent decline in the number of fishing families in the villages, exposing the socio-economic structure's breakdown. Due to the river's declining productivity, the majority of fishermen are exhibiting tendencies to leave their traditional profession. Their economic situation does not permit them to purchase contemporary technological equipment for fishing and other uses. According to reports, fishermen have participated in other professions since they find it difficult to grasp fishing throughout the year as a result of conservation measures. (Panigrahi and Bakshi, 2014, p. 100).

The ultimate truth of life is death, and the *Malo* people are not afraid of it. The *Yamarāja* (deity of death) always keeps his hand extend to take lives of the fishermen who catch fish in the river at risk. We can also observe the domination of death on the *Malo* people's lives in the novel *Ganga*. Samoresh Basu in the novel *Ganga* has depicted the lives of the *Malos* whereas Mallabarman has illustrated that picture in his own style in his novel. But both the novels are quite similar regarding the presentation of the *Malo* community and in some cases, followed by some dissimilarities. *Malo* lives cannot live without water, their livelihood, their existence everything depends on water. The so-called *Bhadralok* of mainstream society may not be able grasp the meaning of love, co-operation and miserable lives of the *Malo* people. The lives of *Malos* depend on fate, so the doubts in their lives never end. In the combat of birth and death, birth has to accept the loss. In the family of landless labourers, there is no concert of love and affection. Infact, there is no significant of love and care in their lives. The writer says, "yes, of course, it is of no values! For landless peasants like them love has no value. You value love when spring visits your life. Does spring ever come into their lives?" (Mallabarman, 1993, P. 25).

There is no economic competition among the people on the bank of Titash, nor thirst for power, nor inheritance arrogance, nor pride of opulence lifestyle. There is an extraordinary bond of love and fellow feeling among the ordinary people. Although the hatred, violence could not be eliminated from their hearts forever, they live their lives immersed in the darkness, showing the light of humanity to the society. They have a spiritual relationship with the river. The relationship of Jamila, Kadir, Udaitara, Anantabala with the river seems to be intertwined.

In the novel through the discussion between the exploiter and the exploited class gives an indication of how the weak and poor *Malos* are in vulnerable condition. The subaltern *Malo* people cannot escape the bloodshot eyes of the high-class brokers. The fishermen of Titash river do not have the power to stand against the aristocratic upper castes of the society. If the small *Malo* fishing dealers buy fish from the village and sell it in the city market, they have to pay two rupees per *vhar* (tanks) as levy to the *zamindar's* accountants. In the history of perpetual exploitation, the human bodies are only changing with the passage of time, but natural character of the exploiters remained unchanged. Hence, it is clear that the novel *A River called Titash* describes the vile game of power and domination and how the fishermen protest against the illegal exploitation of *zamindars* like Ananda Babu and Jagat Babu. The voices of the *Malos* turn into anger and say,

Listen, trader, tell the *babus* straight: the *Malo* never paid a tax in order to sell their fish and never will, no matter whether they're allowed to sell or not. Tell them the *Malos* know how to start a market as well as they know how to end one. (Mallabarman, 1993, P. 89)

Here the readers can use the view of French Philosopher Michel Foucault who pronounces:

You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you're not doing what you want. So, resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with the resistance. So, I think that resistance is the main word, the keyword, in this dynamic. (Foucault, 1978, P.167)

The attitude of the *Malo* community towards education is more repulsive than attraction. Their children cannot cross the threshold of the school, even if their children take admission, they cannot go far. The absolute poverty, social backwardness, lack of social responsibility, above all ignorance in realization of their own good and evil slowly loosen their ties with the school. Although they have not a close relationship with the modern formal educational

institutions, the *Malo* people try their best to keep their culture alive within themselves. Ramprashad and Bharullah organized music and dance programme to inculcate their cultural tradition. They get self-satisfaction through these songs, and their unsuccessful attempts to protect their culture from the calamities of the modern civilization.

Mallabarman has tried to illustrate the true picture of the *Brahmin* ideology through his pen. At the same time, the novelist's vision has not escaped from the issue of untouchability that prevailed in the society. In narration of the novel, we see a *Brahmin* man called Buruj is scorched by the heat of sun in the month of *Chaita-Baishak* [April-May], he is in a state of thirst. He looks around the river but couldn't trace any source of drinkable water, he goes to a clean and small hut nearby. After taking water from a girl of that hut, he comes to know that the hut does not belong to a *Brahmin* caste, rather a *Bhuimali*, an untouchable one. Instantly he begins to mourn for what he had just done. These lower caste people suffer from social inequality and untouchability since time immemorial. In the novel, Tamsi's father, a man of *Malo* village, has a kind of intimacy with the upper caste *Kayasthas* that later proves to be malicious as the *Kayastha* uses him as a tool to enter into *Malo* community and dismantle the *Malo* cultural identity. Dayal Chand protests against the social disharmony addressing to Tamsi's father and says,

Your hut is near the marketplace. We hear the *Kayasthas* come to your home to practice table-playing and to eye your daughters. Think of this—your mixing with the *Kayasthas* will not confer on you the rank of a *Kayastha*. You will always be just a *Malo*. Even if you seat them on thrones when they visit you, they'll give you a broken old plank to sit on when you visit them. Even if you serve them tobacco in a silver hookah, they'll hand you only a detached clay top, not a hookah they themselves use. (Mallabarman, 1993, P. 89-90).

To *Malos*, the upper caste *Brahmins* are like masters, the formers and directors of the society. *Malo* people understand that *Brahmins* and *Kayesthas* are educated groups, their intelligence is much higher than them. The traditional aggression of the power holder towards a weak society has not changed yet. In order to subdue and to cage the lower caste *Malos*, the upper caste *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas* always devise various kinds of traps. The way upper caste *Kayasthas* used to organize the night orchestra in Tamsi's father house, their target was to attack and destroy the *Malo* culture.

At this juncture, Raymond William's statements might be rephrased to reveal how culture is to be understood. Culture and social consciousness are actively experienced in this setting through genuine relationships, which go beyond systems interactions between fixed units. It demonstrates the ongoing conflict between accepted perception and actual experience (Williams, 1997, p. 130). This is the distinctiveness of the folk or popular culture that this book represents. This aspect is frequently overlooked by critics searching for subaltern resistance and popular culture autonomy. Here, Drishadwati Bargi (2016) would like to stress that the coexistence of the elite and the populace is not merely a sign of their resistance's. The fact that cultural practises can allow for contradictions and contraries is a sign of how complicated they are. In order to acknowledge this complexity, the novel makes an intervention in our comprehension of cultural practises. (Bargi, 2016, p. 94)

The *Malo* people have no other option than to buy goods from the *Kayasthas*'s shop, and then gradually fall into the trap of debt due to high interest. The capitalist *Kayasthas* conspire to lend money to the *Malo* people for their wedding ceremony, and thus the *Malo* people get enslaved under them forever. To the *Malos*, the words of the *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas* are like the order of the *Brahma*, the God Himself. Although a few members of *Malo* community like Basanti and a few others make some unsuccessful attempts to raise voice against the power holder, but the consequence becomes quite terrible. Both the *Brahmins* and the *Kayasthas* together intensify their devilish efforts to make *Malos* completely voiceless. As long as *Malos* were united nothing could harm them. The day their unity disintegrated; the beginning of their misery took momentum. Earlier they had the strong unity among themselves. They were integrated by the strong boundary of their lineage culture. The upper castes of the society cracked this unity through the introduction of vulgar night orchestra.

After this defeat the *Malos* lose their self-identity. Their sense of personal integrity, distinction, and colour fades. The social ties of morality that had bound their community slacken and begin to fall apart. (Mallabarman, 1993, P. 240)

The culture of the *Malos* was full of local festivals and ceremonies. But those rich treasures like culture are gradually depleted by poisonous sting of the so-called *Bhadralok* society. The *Malo* people used to adhere their culture during the puja festivals, birth, death, marriage and on the way of their life. No one but *Malo* community could entertain this culture. The obscene orchestra gang enters *Malo* society and axes their cultural identity. As a result, the boys of the *Malo* society started smoking cigarette discarding Hookah, no such respect and devotion to the elders, leading a leisure life without focusing on earning. Despite the adultery and obscene comments of the upper castes people, the *Malos* do not have courage to protest against it. The *Malo* people drop their sense of honour before the new culture. In addition to that, the burden of interest of the loan company completely shatters the backbone of the *Malos*. Helmut K. Anheier (2020, p. 1) in this context comments,

This interaction challenges previously more stable cultural systems, forms of everyday life, and identities, and it does so in very uneven and diverse ways. The triangle of collective heritage, identity, and memory, long assumed a foundation of societies, has become uncertain and is being transformed.

A dispute arises between the *Malos* and the capitalists over the riverbed that woke up in Titash river. Ramprashad jumps to occupy the riverbed that awakened right before his house. Not only Ramprashad but also Karam Ali, Bande Ali and other landless peasants came but no one could possess even a tiny piece of land. The riverbed land which woke up in the chest of Titash were able to take possession of those who owned a lot of lands, the power holders and the capitalists. But the fishermen on the shores of Titash who are the real owners of the land and the water, the hereditary poverty and hostile society do not allow this ownership to be easily established. They have been enslaved for generations to the capitalists *zamindars*. They have no lands of their own. They just survive by selling their labour in other's lands. They have no chance of gaining right of ownership. As fishing in the rivers, ponds, and other marshes start to get highly superintended by the district administrators, the *Malo* community starts losing their rights to the affluent and rich class of landowners and money lenders. The fishermen who used these natural resources over generations suddenly became outsiders. Their rights have been seized and the agreements granted to the new influential class. These fishermen are like formless, groundless who have ownership neither on water nor on the land.

Due to the extensive exploitation by the money lenders and fish traders, the whole fishing community becomes completely rootless refugees and are forced to live inhuman lives. The economically deprived fishing community was eventually forced to surrender to hostile forces. And as the Titash river dries up, the condition of the *Malos* becomes really like fish without water. Not being able to eat, they just keep counting the days waiting for death. Some of the helpless fishermen start moving along the bank of another big rivers. Some of them start working as coolie. In the end, almost everyone in the village leaves and many die of starvation, many of them accept begging as their profession in the distant villages. The painful sound of this surrendered helpless Bengali society on the bank of Titash river still reverberate today. They could not achieve their human identity.

Mallabarman's attempt resonates some other writers also who speak of riverine people. Manik Bandyopadhyay's *The Boatmen of the River Padma* and Samores Basu's *Ganga* highlight the oppressed position of lower-class fishermen as the "other" from the civilized capitalist society. The fishermen are just nominally independent only. In fact, they are just bonded labourers working for the money lenders and wholesalers on *Dadon* (advance loan) system. Prominent Bengali novelists including Adwaita Mallabarman, Manik Bandyopadhyay, Samaresh Basu, Harishankar Jaladas, Lily Halder and so on are influenced by Marxist political ideology and aided by the newer literary forms. They have depicted lives of the subaltern, such as fishermen and boatmen of the riverine delta of Bengal alongside the daily labourers, who were previously excluded as subjects in Bengali literature.

Literature as a replication of society at large represents historical periods, and socio-economic changes and transformations. Considering the argument, it is possible to discuss Marxist ideologies in the concerned novel from theoretical perspective. Marxist theory analyses all human relationships and behaviours that have to do with how economic power is distributed and moves between socio-economic classes in society. In a socio-economic structure, the capitalists are the owners and managers of the productive resources, while the proletariat or workers are only the fictitious labourers who serve these capitalists who own the goods and profit handsomely from their sale. The main factor informing the environment in a society divided along class lines in the narrative is the labour of the fisherman. One's connection to the means of production is the fundamental determinant of one's class (Bhaduri, 2018: 26). This discriminatory division is apparent in the story by the control of the powerful, devious *zamindars* on the poor and illiterate *Malos*, whom they enslave. It is relevant here to understand the concept of human labour and the interrelated role of nature from a Marxist perspective. Marxism makes us to realize the ways in which products of material and repressive ideologies serve to unrealize the people to facts, keeping them submissive to the ruling power system. Here, capital is retained by the higher castes *Brahmins* and *Kayasthas*, represented by Bidhubhusan Pal, Krishnachandra, Ananda Babu and the loan company. The fishermen, socially outcaste, live in a cluster in the segregated village called Gokarnaghat faraway from the civilized Bengali society. Their pathetic plight is exposed by the tattered homes, despicable living conditions, one-time meals and poverty-stricken struggling life. Unequal distribution of property under the sponsorship of colonial capitalism has an individual cultural element attached, displayed in the literature of the twentieth century. A society based on poverty, illiteracy, struggle for survival, and lack of civilisation cannot expect a better life.

The relation of power and social injustice that has been going on for ages is beautifully revealed in Adwaita Mallabarman's novel *A River Called Titash*. The author has depicted the social life of the lower caste fishermen with very real experience in his narration. This book portrays the story of a population of fishermen and boatmen living beside rivers who are exploited and mistreated. Through their struggle and endless labour for survival, these subaltern classes transform the riverine environment into a lively centre of social life. Theoretically, this study shows how the ideological foundations of the literary movement interacted with the tumultuous political climate to make literary critics more aware of how the marginal subaltern population interacted with their isolated environments via the lens of caste and class relations. He gives the voice to the voiceless, oppressed, victimised, and suppressed *Malo* community in Bengali subaltern literature, where each person is capable of questioning unfair hereditary societal norms and finally triumphing. Mallabarman is an example of an alternative literary model that promotes the

reclaiming of human values as well as the development of tolerance and inclusiveness for all members of society, especially the Subaltern Fishing community.

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