



ISSN NO. 2320-5407

Journal homepage: <http://www.journalijar.com>Journal DOI: [10.21474/IJAR01](https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01)INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
OF ADVANCED RESEARCH

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Subculture as Resistance: Representation of Thuggee in P. Sachidanandan (Anand)'s *The Book of Destruction*.**Prathyaksh Janardhanan.**

Phd Student, Centre for Comparative Literature and Translation Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Central University of Gujarat, Gandhinagar.

Manuscript Info**Manuscript History:**Received: 18 February 2016
Final Accepted: 26 March 2016
Published Online: April 2016**Key words:**Subculture, Resistance,
Representation.***Corresponding Author****Prathyaksh Janardhanan****Abstract**

Every society produces its peripheries. The dominant societal and hierarchical power structures (national, patriarchal or both) control the agency and the discourse of a society and nation state, thereby silencing sections of the society which are silenced and pushed to the margins. However, these acts of domination and suppression have been always been challenged. The presence of subcultures and the representation of the same can be seen as one of the acts of criticizing the dominant societal and national systems. This paper analyses the novel titled *The Book of Destruction* by the Malayalam novelist P. Sachidanandan (Anand) to argue how, through the representation of the subculture of Thuggee, the novel presents an alternative discourse to the nation and state sponsored violence.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2016.. All rights reserved.

In the *Cultural Resistance Reader* (2012), Stephen Duncombe defines subcultures as a constructed system which is distinct and is in opposition to that of the larger societies. Further, he argues that subcultures are:

“Macro worlds created by those who feel that they do not belong in the world at large....This cultural space offers great political potential for subcultures provide a place to test out new identities, ideas and activities that deviate from the status quo” (135)

This freedom of “self construction” enables subcultures to develop a sense of ownership over what they have created (Duncombe, 135). Subcultures are thus seen to warn the ‘straight’ world of a presence of difference’ (Hebdige, 15). Further, subcultures are perceived as those which interrupts the process of “normalization” and challenges the principle of unity and cohesion and “contradicts the myths of consensus” (Hebdige, 18). In other words, subcultures are one of the forms of cultural resistance against dominant systems. This paper argues how P. Sachidanandan (Anand)'s *The Book of Destruction* (published as *Samharatinte Pustakam* in Malayalam in 2005) represents the subculture of Thuggee to present an alternative discourse of violence, against the macro discourse of the nation and state sponsored violence.

In the context of this paper, nation - state sponsored violence can be defined as the violence such as wars, encounter killings etc. Further, the macro discourse of the nation can be defined as the hegemonic discourse by the nation, which silences many voices and excludes several marginal voices and societies.

To begin with P. Sachidanandan (1936-), who writes under the pen name Anand (henceforth, this paper would refer to the novelist as Anand) is a modern Malayalam novelist, the recipient of Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award for story and novel in 1981 and 1985 respectively, who has written over twelve novels, seven short story collections and many essays on current affairs. *Samharatinte Pustakam* is his ninth novel. The novel originally published in 2005 was translated into *Book of Destruction* in 2012. The novel is divided into three parts: ‘The Gardener’, ‘The Hotelier and Traveler’ and ‘The Tailor’.

The novel opens when the narrator runs into an old colleague (who had been missing for a long time) named Seshadri, in a hospital when the latter was on his way for an operation. Seshadri asks the narrator to meet him. But, he dies during the operation. Before his death, he leaves a note for the narrator, which tells him that the former was a Thug. The rest of the first part focuses on the note and the description of Thuggee. The second part titled "The Hotelier and Traveler" furthers the narrators search when he realizes that there are other secret assassination groups and the narrative progresses through the description of the groups, their style of execution and their belief systems. The third part of the novel assumes mystic dimensions, where the novel ties up these covert organizations with the concepts of destruction and develops it to a mystical level where destruction is portrayed as cyclical and as an inevitable part of creation.

As discussed above, most of the narrative focuses on detailing the modus operandi and ideologies of the secret societies. And, it is through this description that the novel creates an alternative discourse which represents a subculture which in turn questions the homogeneity of discourses, which marginalizes several voices. These aspects would be analyzed in the coming paragraphs.

In the part titled "The Gardener", the authorial voice focuses on the description of thugs as described by Seshadri. One of the key aspects of this narration is the claim that thugs transcend castes, religions, language and regional identities and the fact that only a thug can recognize each other (Anand, 28). Similarly, Seshadri also mentions "Bhavani and Allah the Great" as the guardians of their cult (Anand, 28). Much has already been written about the early Indian nationalist struggles and the creation of a predominantly hindu nation through myths and legends. The emphasis on the transcendence of socio-religious and ethnic boundaries and the worship of both Hinduism and Islam, creates an alternative discourse which questions the elitist nationalist discourse which has been suppressed in the interests of a nationalist elite to create a homogenous 'nation based on Hindu iconography (Sethi,28). This aspect has also been exemplified in the second part of the novel which details a secret assassination group based in Central Asia and owes its origins to a Muslim cult.

Further, the description of thugs and the practice of thuggee questions the mass destruction that happens with or without the intervention of the state. In his note to the narrator Seshadri argues that their cult and acts of destruction can be juxtaposed with the 'entirely new kind of violence that has taken over the world in the last half century or so', where destruction has moved away from the 'arenas of huge armies and nations at war to 'small individualized groups' (Anand, 42). The comparison between the violence meted by the thugs and the state affirms the definition of thuggee as a subculture, wherein it constructs its own practices to question the dominant systems. Thus, the representation of thuggee as a subculture can be read as a counter discourse to the state sponsored destruction and violence.

To conclude, it can be argued that the representation of the subculture of Thuggee in the novel acts as a resistance against the hegemonic discourses of the nation state and its ideological systems. The representation of the subculture questions the ritual of violence and injustice meted on the citizens by the nation state. This is achieved through the description of a cultural system, which believes in an inclusive belief system, where their function as a member within the system is more important than their caste-religious affiliations. The detailed description of the practices of the cult (both the thugs in part 1 and the assassination groups in part 2) creates an alternative discourse which validates the presence of marginal subcultures and consequently question the homogenous discourse of the nation and state.

Bibliography:-

1. Duncombe,Stephen. *Cultural Studies Reader*. New Delhi: Adarsh Books,2012.
2. Hebdige,Dick, *Subculture: the Meaning of Style*. New York: Routledge.2002
3. Sachidanandan.P *The Book of Destruction*. Chetna Sachidanandan (Trans.) New Delhi: Penquin Books,2012
4. Sethi,Rumina. *Myths of the nation : National Identity and Literary Representation* New Delhi : Oxford University Press, 1999