

THE UNCERTAIN WORLD OF POORNACHANDRA TEJASWI AND THE REPRESENTATION OF POST GLOBAL CAPITAL IN *JUGARI CROSS*

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Abstract

The onset of globalization has resulted in large scale changes in Indian societies. If there is euphoria about its unlimited possibilities, there is also an apprehension about its destructive mode of operation. It is argued that neo liberal forces would crush local economies, and set the power of corporate sector to dictate day today life worlds of native people. An important writer in Kannada Poornachandra Tejaswi has articulated about the onslaught of greed, inverted moral values and the power of the crony capitalism in his novel *Jugari Cross*. The text foregrounds unethical economic and moral choices of people and its ugly result.

Keywords: globalization, large scale changes, local economy, corporate sector, Tejaswi, Jugari Cross, crony capital, economic choice

Introduction:

Kannada prose narratives from the beginning of early twentieth century have always negotiated with issues which are related to life worlds of native people. Issues related to the onslaught of modernity and tradition, the question of ownership of land, gender related issues, caste violence, corruption and displacements in society; colonialism and English education are some of the critical areas of negotiation in above stated narratives. If Masti Venkatesh Aiyangar's stories – along with other issues - deal with east-west encounter and the resultant transformation in society, Shivarama Karantha has dealt with plural life world of Karavali region. The modernist literature dealt with intense scrutiny of moral and ethical fabric of individuals. Poornachandra Tejaswi began his literary career during the period of this modernist period of Kannada literature. His early narratives like *Swaroopu*, and *Niguda Manushyaru* bear witness to this statement. However, he came out of the rigid shackles of modernist trends and started writing in an entirely new mode of writing which is at once path breaking and revolutionary. He accused modernist writing in Kannada as elitist, away from reality and too academic. Tejaswi also accused modernist writers as practitioners of western symbolist mode of writing and vowed to have a new simple language in his stories.

Tejaswi's narratives are unique in Kannada literature for many reasons. He was the person who had multiple interests in his life and integrated his interests in his stories and novels.

He had interest in pure science, philosophy, photography, fine arts, music, computer technology, nature, environment, hunting, fishing, bird watching and wandering. Most of the times, his narratives exhibit multiple strains of his varied interests. However it is impossible to separate one from the other and as he famously stated, his writings must be viewed as all inclusive (samsleshane) and not as separate, analytical writings. Here one can record that he was influenced by Kuvempu's Poorndristi (complete vision), Ram Manohar Lohia's Socialism and Shivarama Karantha's adventurous experimentations. As he was a prolific wanderer, his narratives have a unique picaresque quality. He refused the artificial construction of center-margin bifurcation and wrote from the periphery. Therefore, the elite and the low characters appear simultaneously in his stories. For e.g. In his story *Aristotle and Chinkra Mestri*, the celebrated Greek philosopher Aristotle is equated with a non-descript character Chinkra! Again, in the novel *Carvalo*, a privileged scientist Carvalo was treated on par with a simple country bumpkin Mandanna. Thus, in Tejaswi's narratives, privileged and the marginalized exist and co-exist simultaneously. In other words, he refuses stereotypical bifurcations of center-margin, good-bad, privileged- marginalized, important- unimportant etc. This at once looks like post modern belief indeed!

The other important feature of his narrative is the inseparable mix of humor and the serious & philosophy and science. Like Malayalam writer Vaikam Basheer, Tejaswi is known for unique use of the literary tool- that of humor- to negotiate with the serious. This, along with the use of simple kannada language has made him a widely read popular kannada writer. In a language where literary texts have a marginal presence in publishing industry, this is another contribution of Tejaswi indeed. This is not to argue that he is a populist light writer. Rather, his narratives represent cultural negotiation with contemporary society. He was the one who gave up urban, academic life of Mysore and settled in a remote hilly region of Mudigere in Chikmagalore district. This voluntary choice of returning to the soil is a very important cultural choice. As India in post independent era unobtrusively moved towards cosmopolitanism, Tejaswi narrated subaltern experiences in his writings. The representations of semi urban cities like Mudigere, Kesaruru which are not at the centre of the discourse of development, are very important in pan Indian literature. In India, there are thousands of cities which are neither purely urban nor are rural. In Indian literature-whether in English or native languages- the representation of such cities is extremely rare. The experience is chaotic, anarchic, and irrational. We see inverted life worlds of normal people!!

Tejaswi's world is characterized by the existence of an uncertain world- a notion later explored by post modernists. He always viewed this world with suspicion, doubt and the element of mystery always fascinated him. Absolute truth or reality was rejected in his representations and there is a scope for multiple representations. In a philosophical way, he has rejected the egotistical view that man can solve all the mysteries of this universe. The enlightenment Cartesian dictum 'I Think, therefore, I am' is rejected in the narratives of Tejaswi. He believed that the continuous exploration of truth and reality is rather tentative and the human effort- with all its possibilities- has its own limitation. Thus, in the celebrated novel *Carvalo*, the attempt to solve the mystery of flying lizard remains an unresolved mystery. When the lizard escapes from the narrator, he proclaims that "let it go anyway". His other novel *Inscrutable Mystery* is characterized by series of paradoxes and ambiguities. For immature but enthusiastic college students, solving female love becomes an inscrutable mystery. Again, in the same narrative, there is a long debate about the nature of the relationship between literature and reality. Does literature reflect reality or does reality control literary representation is widely debated upon. In

the story Krishna Gowda's *Elephant*, the behavior of the Elephant remains a mystery for people. The very name of another story is *Rahasya Vishva* (Mysterious Universe). Thus, the unknown, unfamiliar has always fascinated the imagination of Tejaswi.

This brings us to the important philosophical questions raised in the novel *Jugari Cross*. First of all, this novel was produced in early 1990es- a period which marked the beginning of LPG era in India. Though Tejaswi overtly refused to see this novel as a representation of post Globalization Indian experience, the text certainly reflects unethical economic choices of modern urban India. In fact, it opens with the incident of extra ordinary rise in the price of cardamom, whose real cause is unknown and mysterious. Many people predict many things but nothing is uncertain. The representation of uncertain world is the hallmark of Tejaswi's narratives. The whole money transaction is controlled by a certain Big Boss whose identity is once again unknown. The life of local people is affected and they are connected to the global market. The transactions in semi urban Mudigere is no more in the purview of local people. As Shiv Vishvanathan once remarked, "from now onwards all roads will lead to Coco-Cola"!! The global capital has unmistakably taken over the happenings of native residents. The extra ordinary rise in cardamom price has put local merchants in a fix as they cannot generate huge amount of money required for the purchase of cardamom. Local economy is destroyed beyond repair. The incident of the "Fall of Medaravalli" is an excellent example for disintegration of the local economy. In this brilliant chapter, Tejaswi describes how the people of a remote village lost battle against the onslaught of modernity and technology. Medaravalli was famous for weaving baskets which was in great demand for agricultural activities. Farmers had to book in advance for the purchase of these hand woven baskets. Slowly but surely when the baskets made by artificial rubber-produced in large number in factories- entered market, the demand for hand woven baskets decreased. As the time passed, there were no takers for natural baskets. The result of this drastic transformation was that, Medaravalli's economy which depended solely on this was crushed. The people who knew no other profession had to move to big towns and became coolies. This experience proves the unlimited power of the technology- a tool used by colonialists to prove their superiority.

Greed and neurosis grip people. The protagonists of this novel Gowry and gone case Suresh are trapped in an anarchic universe and are totally confused about the happenings in real life. The description of the inverted world, the control of Big Boss, greed for diamonds, black market transactions, drug trafficking, global connections are all the result of unethical economic choices of post global India. In a symbolic dialogue a panic stricken mundy merchant babbles that the connection of the telephone wire at the other end is mysterious and terrorizing. He can only recognize the telephone receiver at his end and the other end might be connected to Amsterdam or pathala (Hyades), or even inferno!! This statement at once describes post global scenario or it could be a very philosophical statement about absurd and a-logical existence of our life. The very possibility of the impossible is so shocking.

There is all-round uncertainty and mystery in the novel. The text employs a trademark detective novel technique for its articulation. Who killed a prominent resident of Mudigere is mysterious. The sudden disappearance of people who have gone to the river bed is also mysterious. An old manuscript given to the protagonists Gowry and Suresh looks like a secret document written with double entrende for getting diamonds! The train journey to their native village reveals ugly face of the underworld. The entire malnad region has become a *jugari cross*. The harmonious relationship between man and society is lost. The moral and ethical questions are pushed to the background. Ugly capital controls everything. The displacement and

transformation of culture and society is beyond imagination. Here, the text attains the level of mythology. It cannot be treated as a simple romantic text about drug addicts and black marketers. Rather, the text throws up important cultural questions about the reason for such drastic, unethical changes in a serene malnad region. Sickness of society is analyzed by raising such fundamental questions. The waste of energy, the paradoxes of economic choice, the failure of institutionalized government machinery, absurd human existence are all interrogated in his narratives.

As if to answer such fundamental issues, Tejaswi himself gives us few possible answers. In *Jugari Cross*, there is a celebration of unadulterated energy and youthfulness of Gowry and Suresh. These two are not stupid fellows or ignorant people. They are innocent, adventurous and selfless. Money never matters for them (unlike others). They are youthfully irresponsible and defy normal codes of decadent society. More importantly, their behavior is quite natural. They are not caught in the vicious circle of caste. Even the exaggerated income of the cardamom never distracts them. They, in fact, are the foil to the entire greedy society. It is argued that Tejaswi has celebrated youth energy in his discourse. In another novel *Inscrutable Mystery* there is purity of love between two young lovers- Rafi and Jayanthi(they look like Adam and Eve!). In *Carvalo*, there is simplicity of a rural idyllic person Mandanna. In his last novel *Mayaloka* there is ever agile Karate Manja. These were the people, who in spite of sick caste ridden society have shown existence of their own. Modern, caste free rational point of view is always fore grounded in Tejaswi- a result of Lohia promoted socialism.

To conclude, the discourse of Tejaswi articulates important debates of India in the last one hundred years. From philosophy to pure science, he has experimented and integrated several issues in his writings. Without being parochial or jingoistic, he has articulated the onslaught of modernity and post global capital.

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