Chapter 6

*Tribal India in Indian Fiction in Translation-II*

**K. Shivarama Karanth: Advocating Preservation of Tribal Culture**

The Kannada writer K. Shivarama Karanth was a contemporary of Gopinath Mohanty. Both of them wrote their masterpieces between the 1930s and the 1970s. Like Mohanty, Karanth also trod different and innovative paths. Apart from being a good artist, Karanth also felt for the neglected sections of the society and like Mohanty, Karanth used literature as a medium to express his concern. In fact, he tried and excelled in a number of art forms that Mohanty did not attempt. As C.N. Ramachandran points out:

Shivarama Karanth wrote about 45 novels, 97 plays, 9 encyclopaedias, 1 dictionary, 6 travelogues, 13 critical works on art, 8 works on science, 2 autobiographies, the second one in 3 volumes, 213 tales for children, four short-story collections, volumes of stray articles. In addition to such prodigious output, he was a painter, Yakshagana artist, and an Environmentalist. (1)

About his multifaceted personality K. Narasimhamurthy comments:

Dr. Shivarama Karanth's mind has ten crazy faces, and he has trodden ten paths. Dance, social service, *Balavana*, primary education, *Yakshagana*, tourism, photography, painting, the encyclopaedia,
K. Shivarama Karanth was born in 1902 in Kota (South Kanara district). He joined the High School at Kundapur in his tenth year. But he could never put his heart and soul in academic studies. He was more interested in reading tales and books of general interest. Among his teachers, there was one Shivaramaiah who was very well read and who had a passion for literature. He instilled in Karanth a love of Kannada literature and motivated him to read the modern Kannada novels such as *Indirabai*, *Vagdevi* and *Maddidunno Maharaya*. During his high school days, Karanth read with great pleasure the translated novels of the Bengali writer, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee. Later, he joined the Government College at Mangalore. He stayed there with his elder brother, who had just begun his law-practice. Even in the college, he spent most of his time in the library rather than in the classroom. It was during this period that he read most of the works of Tagore and toyed, for sometime with the idea of joining Santiniketan. That was the time the Non-Cooperation Movement was sweeping across India, and every young man and woman was fired with the spirit of nationalism and revolt. Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's call, he discontinued his college studies and joined the Independence struggle. Later, he was dissatisfied with the Gandhian
He tried his hand also in Kannada journalism. He and his friend Devanna Pai started a new monthly journal in Kannada called *Vasantha*.

Strongly infused with the spirit of social reform, Karanth turned his attention to the theatre. The next and most important phase of Karanth's life was at Puttur, a town sixty kilometres away from Mangalore. Karanth arrived in Puttur in 1930 and stayed there for more than four decades. He wrote most of his novels and discursive works there. He also began social work, organized training camps for young people interested in social work. He went to villages, studied their conditions and attempted to educate villagers on various issues. During this period, he undertook an extensive survey of the economic and living conditions of Dalits in Puttur. This survey and the close contact with the Dalits paved the way for Karanth's first major and influential realistic novel *Chomana Dudi* (1933) (*Choma's Drum*) on the life of the downtrodden people. Karanth travelled far and wide both in India and abroad. His favourite places were libraries, sculpture museums, architecture and painting institutions. Despite frustrations and hardships, he made immense contributions to Kannada literature and culture. Though Karanth contributed immensely to all these fields, he is known as a novelist with more than ten novels to his credit. Many of them have been translated into English and other Indian languages and have been very popular among the readers.
The novel *Chomana Dudi* (1933), translated as *Choma's Drum*, is Karanth's major work. It is about a landless labourer's aspiration to have a piece of land—a possession that he is not able to acquire till his death. It reflects the exploitation of the landlord and the resultant inner revolution in Choma to liberate himself from mental and physical slavery. Choma, with a family of five children, has a pair of oxen which he had found abandoned as calves in a forest. He raises them, and his sole ambition in life is to own a piece of land and to cultivate it using his oxen. Hence, he doesn't want to sell them at any cost. But caste-prejudices being overriding, his dream of owning a piece of land remains a dream. In course of time, one of his sons dies due to the illness contracted in the coffee estates; another son gets drowned in a pond while the onlookers do nothing to save him since he is an 'untouchable'; and one other son gets converted to Christianity. Added to all these, one day he sees his unmarried daughter in the arms of the manager of the coffee-estate. Completely broken, Choma gets drunk, shuts himself up in his hut, and goes on playing wildly on his small drum till dawn. At dawn he passes away. The significant thing about the novel is Karanth's understanding of the problem. It is to be noted that Gopinath Mohanty also published a novel called *Harijana* in 1948, highlighting the problems of an untouchable family. Unlike *Choma's Drum* which is set in a village, Mohanty's novel is set in the city of Cuttack. But both are concerned with caste exploitation. Another novel *Marali Mannige* (1942) translated as *Return to the Soil* and also as *The Whispering Earth* depicts life in the coastal region. The story ranges through three generations and shows changes in the pattern of life. The
representative characters of the first generation are Rama Aithal, his two wives Parothi and Satthyabhamma, and his sister Sarasothi. Their lives throughout are governed by age-old traditions, customs, and rituals. Rama Aithal’s occupations are the ones that are handed down to him by tradition and he has no choice in them: agriculture and officiating in the religious ceremonies of others of his caste in the village. Since his first wife Parothi is childless, he marries another (Satyabhama) who gives birth to a boy and a girl. Rama Aithal’s is a hard life: paddy cultivation depends upon the vagaries of nature; and people, owing to English education, have begun to lose their faith in customs and rituals. Tired of his hard and traditional life, Rama Aithal decides, for the first time in his family, to give his son modern English education. Lacch (Lakshman), the son of Rama Aithal, represents the second generation, the generation that falls an easy prey to the lure of modernity. In order to get modern education, he has to go from one city to a bigger city. Freed of all parental control and community-restraints, he begins to indulge in gambling and association with women of loose morals, squandering his father’s hard-earned money. Even after marriage, he does not change his way of life; and after his father’s death, he sells off all his property, leaving his mother, his wife and his only son as destitutes.

Rama, his son, represents the struggle, conflicts, and dilemmas of the third generation just prior to independence. Amidst untold hardships (since he and his mother are abandoned by his father) and in grinding poverty, Rama succeeds in getting a good education, culminating in a Bachelor’s degree. But then, like many of
his generation, he suffers from unemployment, and moves from one small job to another. Also, since these are the days of the National Movement under the charismatic leadership of Gandhiji, he—like thousands of other young men—joins the Congress Party and participates in the movement. Finally, he makes a decision as different and as consequential as that of his grandfather—he decides to return to his village and take up agriculture as his profession.

The novel *Mookajjiya Kanasugalu* (1968) (*Mookajji's Vision*) brought Karanth the Jnanapith Award for 1977. Mookajji is an eighty-year old widow. She lives in a South Kanara village. She has an extraordinary gift: when she touches an object its entire history passes before her eyes. Through the vision of Mookajji, the history of mankind for over thousands of years is unfolded. Through this, we see the origin and growth of religious and social institutions. There are two narrators in this work; what the old woman tells her grandson is retold by him for his reader. This novel doesn’t have either a hero or a heroine. In fact, even Mookajji is not the heroine of this work. She is just a link between the past and the present. Mookajji does not believe in the existence of an anthropomorphistic God. She firmly maintains that God is Man’s creation. According to her, beginning with the Vedic period, India has witnessed varied conflicts between races, religions, and cultures, and in consequence of these conflicts between races, religions, goddesses, rituals, customs, beliefs and faiths have been continuously changing. There is no single concept, or ideology or view that can be considered ‘original’ or ‘pure.’ The other important novels of
Karanth are *Sarasammana Samadhi* (1932), *Bettada Jeeva* (1943) and *Alida Mele* (1960). All these works give evidence of Karanth’s concerns for social and cultural problems facing Indian society. The novel *Kudiayara Kusu* (*The Headman of the Little Hill*) also deals with such a social problem faced by the tribal people. It was written in 1949 and translated into English in 1951, but the English translation, titled *Headman of the Little Hill*, got published only in 1979. It has been filmed in Kannada as *Maleya Makkalu*.

In the Author’s preface Karanth narrates how he decided to write the novel. He was concerned with the problem of outside culture interfering with the tribal way of life. He says: “what made me write my novel, were the social problems they faced and the outside interference which they could no longer withstand” (vi). It is to be noted that in the 1940s the question whether tribals should be isolated or integrated with the mainstream provoked a major debate among the intellectuals. The arguments between Verrier Elwin and A.V. Thakkar were part of this debate. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Karanth who had an interest in social problems was certainly aware of the debate and for his part, he was quite concerned about outside interference in tribal life and this is fully demonstrated in *Headman of the Little Hill*. The novel is set in the Western Ghats of South Kanara. There live a small tribal community called the *Kudibis* or *Kudias*. The noted anthropologist Christopher Von Furer Haimendorf, who studied various tribal groups in Andhra Pradesh, traces a number of common features between the Chinchu of Andhra Pradesh and the Kudias.
According to Haimendorf: "they have 'chenchu' like features. They were a self-contained group" (qtd. in Karanth v). Karanth also mentions in the preface:

Though they served in cardamom estates in actual life they were free and independent. They could catch fish or trap and hunt wild life in ever so many ways. They were accustomed to hewing down and burning trees to clear land for the cultivation of paddy. As for food, they were self-supporting. From their landlords they wanted only cloth and salt. (v-vi)

As the novel unfolds we find that the headman has lost his son and daughter-in-law. He takes care of his grandson, Karia. He takes his grandson to the mountains to introduce the forest gods Malereya and Kalkuda. He tells him that their ancestors used to live there long ago. Karanth records this as follows:

That was the place where his people had lived long years ago. That was where he, the Headman, had been born. He remembered those early days, more than sixty years ago, but somehow he could not recall why his elders had abandoned it and moved to the Little Hill. Something terrible must have happened. (2)

Later, Bhatta enters the forest with the intention of starting a cardamom plantation business. Bhatta is an outsider from the plain and is very clever. He is very courteous to the headman as he wants to carry out his plans for the plantation. However, the
headman dies after some months. According to the convention, Karia, the Headman’s grandson, should have been declared the headman, but Bhatta wants Tukra, who is loyal to him, to be the headman. However, the Kudias resent this. Bhatta instigates conflicts among the tribals. Gradually he gains control and claims that he is the real master of the hill. He exploits women and blames the Kudias for theft. Karia with his friends Thima and Giddi goes away to the other hills. In his absence Tukra and Booda, two members from the tribal community, are declared as headmen of the big and small hills respectively. Karia catches an elephant and becomes famous. He also kills a tiger. Bhatta’s son, who is the owner of the little Hills is impressed by Karia’s bravery and asks him to be the headman. This is supported by the Kudias and the god Maleraya blesses him.

The tribal society as we see in the novel is self-supportive. The tribals do not depend upon others for anything except salt and clothes. Karanth says that the tribals have a barter system. They manage their livelihood by using the forest and by working for the landlord. They work for the Ballals, the landlords; they would give the Ballals cardamom and get a dhoti or a blanket or some salt in return. As Karanth points out:

The Kudias had been tenants of the Ballals. It was an unspecified relationship: no law had laid down the duties of these men, who were not exactly slaves, or the responsibilities of the landlord. Once a year, when the present Headman’s grandfather was a young
man, all the Kudias went to the house of the Ballals with loads of
wild cardamom and other forest produce and returned with a dhoti and
a blanket each. The Ballals, kindly people, also gave the Kudias bags of
salt to last them through the year. In that corner of the world, man
needed only two things, which the forest did not provide: salt and cloth.

(11)

But with the change of time, their life also changes. In the novel, Bhatta’s
entry has an adverse effect upon them. Bhatta is not a landlord, but an entrepreneur.
Bhatta comes as an outsider to the hills. He is a Brahmin from the plains and has
ulterior motives. He wishes to possess Kempi and other Kudia women. As Karanth
writes: “Although he [Bhatta] spent full two hours going round the hamlet and the
field on the pretext of inquiring about the welfare of his tenant, he was not rewarded
with a glimpse of the woman whom he sought. For, unknown to him, Kempi had
gone away to the Big Hill with her parents” (27).

His entry into the tribal society complicates life for the tribals. He is a
cunning person and by feigning friendship with some of the Kudias he disturbs their
social life. He does this by dividing them and by spreading misunderstanding among
them, particularly between Tukra and Karia. The alien intrusion aggravates the
conflict in the tribal community.
Karanth points out the change that takes place with the advent of Bhatta: “Within six months, Bhatta not only reigned but ruled over the place. He brought carpenters and masons from Vitla and had a house built for himself on the Hill with the help of the Kudias. Whenever Bhatta came there to pass a few days he brought his gun, the first that the Kudias had seen. He looked a prince when he arrived on the back of a brown horse with a retinue.” Karanth sarcastically points out that Bhatta’s coming “added new graces to the lives of the Kudias. From him they learned the use of kerosene and tobacco. He also taught them the systematic cultivation of cardamom by laying out an estate. He even let some of the young enthusiasts learn to use the gun. ‘Throw your bows and arrows into the fire,’ he often told them”(12). The activities of Bhatta resemble that of a colonizer who adopts different means to rule the indigenous people and introduces systems of behaviour which are alien to them.

There does exist competition and conflict among the tribals, but it is Bhatta who aggravates the conflict to achieve his own ends. He keeps Tukra on his side to acquire knowledge of the hills and to exercise his power over the people. As Karanth points out: “Among his favourites was Tukra. They exchanged many confidences. Despite the disparity in their station they went out together into the forest. Tukra had even seen the house of Bhatta’s mistress. When Bhatta came to the hill, it was with Tukra’s help that his bed was not lonely”(12). Thus, one sees that Bhatta behaves like the archetypal colonizer, first gaining knowledge to subsequently rule over the
indigenous people in the hills. Then he systematically selects one among them and then makes him a good colonized subject. Like a true colonizer, he uses the native resources and exploits the women of the hills. After Bhatta’s arrival the social structure also changes. Karia is made the headman by the people in accordance with the wish of the late headman. Karia, though the headman, has to meet Bhatta and seek his blessings and also express his loyalty to him. This practice is carried out after Bhatta establishes his supremacy. Later, he decides who will be the headman of the hill. But it is not an easy task for Bhatta either. Some of the tribals resist him. Thimma warns him not to interfere in clan affairs. He said: “Marriage or funeral, punishment or expulsion, we have our own rules. In cardamom-picking and all such things we will obey whomever you appoint as foreman, even if it be Tukra. But as for other things, no. We have our Karia and we stand by him” (52). They make it clear that Bhatta might own the hill but the deity is above him. Bhatta does not stop there. He appoints Tukra headman of the hill though Karia is the legitimate heir. When the Kudias are not ready to accept Tukra, he shouts at them. He says that he is the master of the hill and if they don’t obey they will go through hell. He rebukes them: “Scoundrels! Have you the audacity to tell me what I should do? I appoint Tukra to be your headman from this moment. If you listen to him, good; if not, you will repent. Know one thing, whoever wags his tail will get thrown out of the hill” (52).
Through the depiction of the outsider Bhatta as villain, Karanth demonstrates his own liking for the tribal people and their culture and shows his disapproval of the intervention of the outsiders. Karanth also describes the lecherous attitude of Bhatta towards the Kudia women. Bhatta wants to seduce Kempi, a tribal woman. He looks at her lustfully when she is bathing in the river. However, there is an element of romanticization in Karanth who, like Mohanty, romanticizes tribal beauty. About Kempi, Karanth says: “Kempi was the real beauty of the clan, and her eyes were like two lakes. Wherever she moved, with a sari draped tightly round her hips and the end of the upper part tied in a knot to the string of beads round her neck, she stirred up passions” (Karanth 10).

Like Mohanty, Karanth portrays tribal women as children of nature. He describes Kempi’s bathing scene in the river in a sentimental way:

It was pleasant to bathe in the forest streams, especially where overhanging trees parted to let the sun shine through. The water itself was chill but the bather was warmed by the sun. Kempi loved to spend her days wallowing in water. She was more in her element there than in her own home. During such hours of delight she was like a daughter of light and water. She closed her eyes for long stretches of time, listening only to the swish of the stream as it brushed past her skin. Or she jumped from boulder to boulder or caught fish with her hands.
Only when the shadows lengthened did her thoughts turn homewards. (65-66)

In Mohanty’s *Paraja* too we find a similar kind of description where the tribal women are exoticized:

The sisters Jili and Bili were bathing in the sheltered pool. Jili was seventeen and her sister only fourteen. They had the pool completely to themselves. Like all women of the Paraja tribe, they had cast off their clothes and were bathing naked. Jili had her face to the stream and was washing her sari, beating it on the sheet of rock in front of her. Bili squatted in knee-deep water, cleansing her hair with a shampoo of chilli seeds. At times she would dip her head and splash water on it with her hands. On the bank was an earthen pot which she had brought with her to fill. (Mohanty 8)

Karanth’s description of tribal women resembles that of Mohanty’s. Both associate tribal women with nature and speak of them as children of nature. Just as Karanth’s Bhatta asks Kempi to come to the field and wait for him, and to this Kempi gives her consent, so also in Mahanty’s *Paraja* Sukru Jani’s daughter Bili falls prey to the evil designs of the contractor. This kind of depiction is hotly contested by Ivy Imogene Hansdak, a tribal woman scholar, who says that the relationship between man and woman is permissible within the community and it is not extended beyond
the tribes. Hansdak after studying the relationship between Jili and the road contractor in Mohanty’s Paraja asserts: “[…] what is ignored […] is the fact that the tribal girl’s freedom is limited within her tribe. She cannot choose a non-tribal or ‘diku’ ”(43). This is contrary to the popular notion that tribal women are free and outgoing. Karanth also seems to have a similar notion about tribal woman being outgoing when the facts are otherwise.

When Bhatta’s plot to seduce Kempi fails, he asks her to work at his house and then exploits her. Kempi thus degrades herself by submitting herself. But when Bhatta tries to seduce another woman, Giddi, she resists his attempt and Bhatta is beaten up by her husband Thimma. To cover up his guilt and to take revenge on this, Bhatta accuses Giddi’s husband, Themma, of stealing his gold chain.

Bhatta, though an outsider, does not hesitate to intervene in the social life of the Kudias. When he tries to interfere in selecting a headman, Thimma explodes: “Master, if you are in the right, I don’t mind your spitting in my face. But the moment you overstep the limits, I am not the man to obey. You must not interfere in clan affairs” (Karanth 52).

It is a well-known fact that Karanth usually does not favour supernatural elements. He even disapproves of religious leaders. He makes fun of them. About this aspect of Karanth’s ideology C. N. Ramachandran says:
We come across many ‘sanyasis’ or holy men in Karanth’s novels: Krishnananda (Sanyasiya Baduku, 1948), Swamiji (Sameekshe, 1956), Bhagavanji (Jagadoddhara-na, 1960), Abhutanandas (Aala-Nirala, 1962), Ahinnannda (Kevala Manushyaru, 1971), and such. All these characters, without any exception, are portrayed as having run away from home to escape their responsibilities. Having no real wisdom or love of humanity, these holy men lead a life of ease and luxury, deceiving people with esoteric sermons and practices. (34-35)

It is surprising to note that Karanth who has been disapproving supernatural elements, invokes the tribal deity and favours the deity’s command. This is done as the deity gives its verdict in favour of the tribals and is against the outsiders. The villagers have decided to have Karia, the grandson of the late headman of the hill to be the next headman. But Bhatta appoints Tukra as the headman. Because of this confusion, they go to the deity to seek his advice. Karanth describes the rituals performed by the villagers. The villagers go and offer Puja. After the ritual is over, they ask the man who was the vehicle of the spirit as to who is now headman of the little hill. As Karanth narrates:

“We do your bidding,” Chania submitted.

“Do you say you have had nobody all these days?”

Booda meekly said: “You had once made your wish known that the old Headman should be succeeded by his grandson.

We have chosen accordingly. But because he has still
not come to age, we have asked Chania, the eldest among us, to do the work."

Tukra intervened: "What, Booda, why are you keeping back the full story?" He flashed eyes of hatred at Booda.

"I shall come to that ... We of the village have made these arrangements but our master has ordered that Tukra should be the headman."

"Master! Which master? Whose master?" Kalkuda bellowed.

Tukra explained: "The master of the garden, he who gives us salt and cloth. Do we not have to obey him?"

"Master, Master, Master!" Kalkuda repeated.

[....]

"These hills are mine. They have been mine since the beginning of time. If you do not want me, tell me, and I will go. And when I go I will rain a rain of blood. But if you choose to obey me you will live and prosper [....] Headman of the Little Hill, who is he? The dead man's grandson shall [he] be. He is not a child. None else may usurp his right."(58-59)

This is how Karanth indicates his own authorial opinion in favour of the Kudias and their tradition, over a newcomer who claims to be the ruler of the tribal people.

Karanth who usually has an agnostic attitude towards supernatural power praises the deity in order to keep the tribal tradition intact. In order to reinforce the traditional
way of living he glorifies their bond with the local occupation and the local lords.

He glorifies the forest gods and says:

Kalkuda of the Little Hill was not like other deities. He was not placid like the Gods and demons down the valley. Delay of a day or two in celebrating their feasts would not annoy them and they were ready to forgive little lapses in the rules of worship. But Kalkuda was not a spineless deity. If he were, he would not have held sway over the ravines where men were afraid to step, would not have ruled over the distant hills and demanded tribute from the Kudia tribe. In the days before the Company Government, Kalkuda had even received a human head once in five years. (4)

The other person who comes to the hill is Valli Braganza, the Coffee Estate owner. Braganza comes to the hills for two months after the rains and again for the fair of the corner village. He is a Christian and wants to preach the message of his God to the Kudias. He raises a cross on the roof of his own hut on the Big Hill and whenever he finds time, he tells the Kudias of the greatness of his God. Braganza, being a Christian, does not have any belief in the tribal gods and rituals. He asks them to give up forest gods such as Kalkuda, Panguti and Kalkutiga and follow the cross. His plan is to build a church and appoint a priest. However, he finds himself lonely there. His constant companion on the Big Hill is Choma, without whom he does not venture out in the forests. Choma’s daughter Giddi fills water in Braganza’s pot. He
asks Choma to send his children Giddi and her brother to his own place. Though Choma and his wife don’t like the idea, they cannot say no to the master. He promises that he will bring them back for the fair. Braganza comes for the fair, but does not bring Choma’s children back. He says that Giddi is down with fever. Choma is not comfortable with such an explanation. He himself wants to go to Karkala to see his daughter. To his dismay he finds Giddi in the best of health, but with a strange garb, and her brother has cut his long hair, and evidently both have been converted into the religion of the padres. Choma’s sorrow knows no bounds. He insists on taking them home with him but they refuse to come. He feels the sky has fallen on his head. His wife shares his pain. But they cannot tell their neighbours. Later, they do bring the two children and the villagers angrily set fire to Braganza’s hut on the hill. Braganza has changed their names to Pauline and Paul respectively. When Braganza is separated from Pauline, he is furious. Giddi is carrying Valli’s child in her womb. About Giddi too Karanth says that she has willingly consented to the relationship. As Karanth puts it: “The brief months of elation now appeared unreal and she even thought that Braganza had never existed, although deep inside her she pined for him” (95). Karanth, therefore, again misrepresents tribal mores, because tribal women, contrary to popular representation of them, are not free in the way Karanth makes them out to be.

Braganza is a typical character type in Karanth’s novels. In *Choma’s Drum* we find the same problem of religion highlighted by Karanth. In *Choma’s Drum*
Choma’s younger son Kuruva falls in love with Mari and this is seen as something inauspicious. His marriage is not attended by his father and sister or any family members as he is declared a “renegade” (Karanth, Choma’s 83). In the same novel Michael is a Christian character portrayed by Karanth. He is the landlord’s accountant. He seduces Bili just as we find Braganza the Christian planter seducing Giddi. Mari’s family has been depicted as cunning and crafty. When Kuruva cultivates friendship with Mari, her parents are happy about it because “Mari’s aged parents connived at their amorous affairs, thinking that their daughter’s marriage would lift some burden off their shoulders” (Choma’s 59). Karanth does not approve of the Christian proselytization among the tribals. As a well-wisher of the tribals he is for the protection of the indigenous culture of the tribals and wants it to flourish. However, it must be said that Karanth looks at Christians somewhat narrowly as people with the sole aim of converting others. He fails to see any other good works done by them and does not enquire if their activities are desired by the people concerned for their own good. After all, Karanth himself is an outsider just like the Christian Missionaries, and it seems improper for an outsider to decide what code the tribals should follow.

Bhatta and Braganza are stereotypical outsider characters. They are the embodiments of the colonizer. Their entry into the village results in complete cultural havoc in the community. Because of their entry two members of the village i.e., Thimma and Giddi, have to leave the village. They leave the village after Bhatta’s
futile attempt to molest Giddi. Thimma knocks down Bhatta. Karia joins them later. Here the tribal has to go out because of the outsiders, and tribal society suffers from the resulting disequilibrium.

Karanth's technique of characterization is also in keeping with his romantic view of tribals and his outsider status. His characters are either perfectly good or perfectly bad, and are drawn with broad brush strokes. All outsiders—Bhatta, and Braganza—are bad characters and bring disharmony amongst the peaceful tribe. Tukra, right from the beginning, is the cunning villain, and Karia by contrast is shown as honest, brave and truthful, and the hero. He has all the good qualities of a headman. It is also interesting to note the reactions of the two women who are affected by the outsiders. While Kempi feels guilty and dies ultimately of her liaison with Bhatta, Giddi aborts her child by Braganza after being married to Thimma in order to show respect to the community and return to it.

Karanth in this way shows that the intrusion of a new culture into the traditional tribal society will cause disaster to the tribal culture. In the novel, the Kudias find the new culture alien and disturbing. It results in degradation of their traditional values. The deaths and other sad events that occur are the result of disrespect for the tribal values. Kalkuda, the forest deity, acts as conscience keeper. Whether the deity can speak or whether it exists at all is debatable, but it does figure as a character in the novel. The deity is the upholder of truth. It gives the tribe
direction. Whenever, the Kudias are in doubt they approach Kalkuda. Whether in deciding on the person who is to be the headman of the Hill or in determining whether Thimma and Giddi are guilty, Kalkuda gives the right judgement. For the Kudias, Kalkuda forms an integral part of their life. In important events like birth, marriage or death, they seek Kalkuda’s blessings.

Karanth describes their rituals, celebration of festivals and other cultural events in positive terms. He lays emphasis on the sociological features. In the Kudia society there are very few women compared to men. Karanth makes it a point to dramatise this in the novel. Booda tells the headman that “Tukra should not have two women while there is a scarcity of girls in the Hill. Is it right he should have two wives?” (30). However there seems to be an excessive emphasis on their traditional customs, conventions and rituals, and this makes the novel an anthropological piece. One also notices Karanth’s own ideology obtruding in the story. For instance, Giddi gets her child aborted to reinforce her fidelity to her innocent and faithful husband, and the community is definitely broadminded enough to accept her back from Christianity.

However, Karanth is not as meticulous in describing minute details of the tribals’ life as Mohanty is in his novels. No doubt, Karanth has visited the tribals, but Mohanty’s long association and research on tribal life and culture comes out prominently in his novel, and this solidity is something that Karanth’s novel lacks.
However, both Mohanty and Karanth appreciate tribal culture and attempt to write about them: this is itself an act of courage in these times. Both celebrate tribal vigour and beauty. Mohanty narrates and appreciates the youthful and energetic body of Tikra in *Paraja*; Karanth does the same in his novel by depicting Karia as a courageous figure. Karia in the novel shows his bravery by catching an elephant and killing a tiger. Nevertheless, both the novelists point out the limitations of the tribals. There are characters who have a number of shortcomings. Being social reformers, the novelists express concern over the degradation of tribal culture on account of their contact with the outside world. The exploitation of the tribals by the outsiders disturbs these writers. Karanth’s attitude towards the outsiders in the novel is that they are exploiters, cunning and greedy, and this self-seeking is evident in several instances. Both the novelists write for the sake of the preservation of tribal culture and heritage. Whereas these two writers emphasise the need for the preservation of tribal culture, Mahasweta Devi’s concern by contrast has been to stress the need for the assertion of tribal rights. The next chapter shows how her writings attempt to present tribal reality and how tribal rights are asserted.