The Necropolitical Residue: Re-versing the Metanarrative of Welfare State in Mahasweta Devi's "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha"

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Abstract

A nation-state, as Benedict Anderson rightly proclaimed, is an 'imagined community' invariably galvanized around certain culturally constructed and socio-historically disseminated metanarratives. Infact, the idea of a nation-state is itself an absurd metanarrative forged to gag thousands of dissentious little narratives gushing out of the fringes. Thus, this constant friction between coercive grand narratives and dissentious little narratives epitomizes the dialectics of any nation-state. In order to silence these destabilizing narratives and thereby safeguard their own existence, governmentality programmes often evolve into constrictive necropolitical machines inclined to eliminate selected 'bare lives' by 'conferring upon them the status of living dead'. This violent process is again strategically camouflaged and to some extent justified by utilizing some other metanarratives (modernity and progress in our case) and thus the Mobius strip rolls on. In such a recurring loop of grand narratives, is it at all possible for the subaltern narratives to gush out of the labyrinth so as to move out of the 'bare' gaze? That is precisely what this paper will explore through a close reading of Mahasweta Devi's story "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha". By using Achille Mbembe's idea of 'necropolitics', this paper will reveal how the nation-state strategically produces necrospaces through bio-sampling only to shield its constitutional metanarrative. Complementing Mbembe, this paper will also borrow Giorgio Agamben's ideas of 'Homo Sacer', and 'Bare Life' in order to unmask the concealed agenda of the necropolitical complex. Finally, this paper will focus on the inevitable supernatural turn of these long-ignored narratives (the metaphor of pterodactyl and spirits of communal forefathers in this story) not only as a tactic to capture the attention of a powerful center but also as a strategy of symbolic resistance against the whimsical imposition of another grand narrative called modernity.

Keywords: Bare Life, Homo Sacer, imagined community, metanarrative, necropolitics

A nation-state, ontologically being a socio-cultural metanarrative, often projects itself as a homogenous and monolithic structure galvanized around certain commonly defined social dreams and cultural imaginations. The carpeted reality of any nation state is to engineer a unilateral totalizing structure of life that can be made easily accessible to the 'lawed' utility of statist indoctrination masquerading as a tolerant heterogeneous sovereign body. Butunder this apparently placid surface of national meta-structure lies socio-moral absolutism upon which the hoax of a 'stable' national imagination is dreamt. This is essentially the fear of multiple colliding dreams trying to overshadow each other through constant ideological dialectics. But, it is often one entitled dream ('one' as having the number of the absolute), one privileged narrative that gets strategically hegemonized through coercive political co-optation and (not always violent) cultural appropriation. Thus, it is essentially the dream of a selected few colonizing and hypnotizing the collective consciousness of a nation. This process of narratorial colonization undoubtedly involves both ideological and discursive violence, but more disturbing is perhaps the process of the perpetuation of this narratorial hegemony which more often than not results in the production of 'necrospace' owing to itssubtle yet systematic stifling of all dissentious micro-narratives. But, even within such stifling conditions, is it possible for the marginal voices to break free from the tentacles ofa grand narrative (logo centric truth) and thereby achieve their own agentic voices? If yes, then what can be the possible tactics to resist the hegemonic meta-narratives? That is what this paper will try to investigate by reading Mahasweta Devi's story, "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha" against the grain. The paper will take recourse to multiple theoretical frameworks (like Mbembe's idea of 'necropolitics', the concept of 'Homo Sacer' as propounded by Agamben) in order to address the inherent crisis latent at the very heart of the national metastructure.

Mahasweta Devi's story "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha" thematically revolves around the conflict of appositional yet synaptic narratives – narratives of two asymptomatic universes (that is of the 'modern' world and the tribal world) constantly in friction (and fear) with each other. Through the coming of age protagonist Puran, a news reporter, Devi wonderfully delineates the crisis latent at the very heart ofthe metanarrative called modernity. The story begins with Puran visiting a remote sun-scorchedarea of Madhya Pradesh named Pirtha. The area has been continuously suffering from an extreme famine-related crisis that occurred partially due to low rainfall. Butthe government is not at all ready to declare Pirtha as a famine-infected area as it would stigmatize the government's potent (and fertile) image and more than that, it would unearth the treacherous fact that the famine is actually man-made. At this point in time, a tribal boy named Bikhia draws a strange image of a Mesozoicanimal, Pterodactyl, and claims to have seen it. In no time, the villagers start believing that this prehistoric creature must be the angry spirit of their forefathers which has re-appeared to warn the village against some impending disaster. Due to this, the entire village merges into a strange death wish. At this point, Puran visits the village at the special request of the local BDO, Harisaran so that Puran's newspaper report can draw the inert government's attention to Pirtha. With time, Puran merges with the local culture and also realizes to some extent the utter hypocrisy of 'modern' civilization. Though Puran symbolically comes across the prehistoric creature 'Pterodactyl', he completely fails to decipher its message. In spite of knowing these sensitive secrets about the village community, Puran wisely decides against printing the collected data (specifically the existence of

pterodactyl) as it would have immediately shifted the media focus from theman-made crisis at Pirtha to the supernatural appearance of the prehistoric creature. The story finally ends with Puran's long and detailed report about how the government's careful carelessness has induced the human crisis at Pirtha and what may be the possible solutions to come out of this terrible disaster.

This paper plans to analyse the story in three separate yet interlinked segments. The first part will deal with the government's tactical ignorance of the famine situation in Pirtha with an eye to retaining aforced harmonization of the metanarrative in the public domain. Relating to it, the second part will focus on the state-sponsored 'necropolitics' perpetrated in the name of modernity which ultimately turns the socio-moral ecology of Pirtha into an absolute 'necrospace' where the local inhabitants were no longer recognized as citizens. The third segment will specifically focus on the semantic possibilities of political resistance by the local inhabitants of Pirtha and how far it was successful in the face of all-pervasive metanarratives of the state.

The Narrative Encounter

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the ontology of nation-state went through a paradigm shift as the idea of absolute sovereignty gradually evolved into the Foucauldian notion of biopower. "The ancient right to kill and let live" gradually gave way "to an inverse model …… which can be expressed by the formula to make live and let die" (Agamben 82-83). With this ontological shift, it almost became imperative for any democratic welfare state to ensure the maximum prosperity of its citizens in order to garner maximum public support (votes). With public opinion in play, different economical (and mathematical) body narratives, be it statistical or socio-cultural, suddenly became the truth-making discourse of civic life. The mathematical unit of the state and its citizens are interlinked in the form of a Foucauldian power network that subtly controls mass opinion through a constant mode of recuperative synchronicity under the garb of perfect social health. The state, without fail, propels the idea of a sanitized civic space that perforce excludes bodies-as-extras. These narratives often draw upon each other and the vicious syndicate of different (super) structural metanarratives (Marx) often strangulates the alter-native narratives gushing out of the margins. That is specifically why the battle of political sceptre suddenly becomes the battle of meta-narratives; whosoever can sell the best (transactional) narrative finds itself at the helm of power, often determined by the spectacular capital. Realizing this, every nation-state has started prioritizing material production as the ultimate 'progressive' model with the aid of spectacular capital (Debord) in exchange for a speculative workforce (labour bodies) that involves an automated substitution of labour with capital. Deleuze rhetorically puts this as a society that produces bodies of capital in exchange for workers as factory units. In some sense, Chaplin's Modern Times exposes modernity's play of factorizing a body into different instrumental units of the machine. Devi similarly exposes the state's idea of 'progress' using the tool of social subtraction: mappinga particular geographical space and then re-mapping it as an object of 'abject' with zero visibility. With time, disciplines like statistics, mathematics, climatology, ecology, and others have become the discursive tools for the state authority to safeguard its 'harmonious' metanarrative and thereby retain the status quo of a sanitized social space. This reproduction of the status quo is never benign and often involves camouflaged cruelty as well as suppression of voices from the margins. Thus, it would be safe to assume that the popular grand narratives are

retained often at the cost of multiple dissenting micro-narratives; the sustainable habitats often catalyse the production of 'necrospaces' elsewhere simply because manufacturing a utopia always takes a dystopia to be built outside its exclusive boundary.

This socio-moral subtraction from the state compass happens in Devi's story. The entire village of Pirtha was sacrificed by the state authority in order to safeguard its 'global' metanarrative. The artificial famine condition in Pirtha was intentionally ignored by the government with the help of statistical manipulation. In spite of having a full account of the extreme suffering of the local inhabitants, the government has deliberately refused to officially declare Pirtha as a famine-infected area under the lame (and thanatopolitical) excuse that the number of deaths has not yet met the required parameter for the declaration of famine. The local health workers of Pirtha helplessly lament:

> "We too received news that people were dying constantly, in ones and twos, in Pirtha. I came up. The state government will not declare famine even if people die. It seems that one can only declare famine if a certain percentage dies. How many people live here, that millions can die?" (Devi 121-122)

Adding to this, the government even did not even sanction any official relief as it would have ratified on paper, the famine condition of Pirtha which the government could ill afford. Devi writes, "The Minister of State has warned the MLA, Relief is always famine relief. You are forcing the government to say famine. This cannot be" (Devi 124).

On the other hand, the ground reality, as reported by Puran at the end of the story shows that most of the famine deaths in Pirtha were never actually reported to the police station because deaths over time became '…bureaucratic, and an everyday affair' (Devi 148) in Pirtha. That is specifically why Pirtha deaths never got registered on the statistical data of the government. Eventhe government exploited the discourse of climatology in order to hide the man-made water scarcity of Pirtha. The official investigation team was tactically sent to Pirtha in full monsoon so that the water scarcity could never be proven on paper. The local SDO rightly wonders:

> "Why come in the rainy season to inspect a drought area? You can spend a few hours most agreeably there if you take a picnic basket ……. The Government brought a team of experts. They came in the rainy season. So OK, they said there's lot of water in Pirtha. Nothing can be done." (Devi 100)

Thus, between government documentation (official) and ground reality (unofficial) often lies the chasm of narrativization. The shrewd tinkering of discursive metanarratives like statistics and climatology ensures complete defamiliarization of ground narratives which in turn gettheir validation from flawed diagrams and distorted statistical bar charts (corrupted data). The most problematic part of trusting any meta-discourse like statistics is that it often treats a particular geo-political space as having an apriori condition of life which is of a homogenous and monolithic structure (social adhesiveness that puts spatial bodies into set vector units) that hardly does any justice to the multiple and fractured ground reality. For example, the government's statistical data about Pirtha did have the preconceived notion of homogeneity behind it which completely ignored the economic bifurcation of that region. Consequently, the statistical diagrams never deciphered the conundrum of two Pirthas- one inhabited by the powerful elites exploiting all the government resources and the other crowded by perpetual have-nots. Puran in his report writes:

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> Madhoria, Singh, and Deokia, three families from Bhalpura, Sougandha, and Rajaura, are the actual owners of a few hundred acres here under false names. It is they who take water, irrigation, fertilizer, and pesticide in the name of the tribals. They are also the tribals' creditors. Most of the tribals from at least ten villages work in their fields in season at wages of two to two-and-a-half rupees. They are also rich contractors, working for the government, they are the moneylenders, and because of their understanding with the Forest Department their unlicensed sawmills are growing every day. (Devi 188)

But the government expectedly endorsed this erroneous statistical homogeneity as it knew that the entire metanarrative of modernity and progress would completely crumble down if the pathetic reality of Pirtha gets the light of the day. It is quite obvious that under the gaming of sanitized governmentality, it is actually the ethical sampling of a selected few that matters while the others are marginalized and margins are othered (margin spaces are socio-political manifestations). In the story, Devi writes:

> And undoubtedly many different government departments on the district and state levels are involved in this plunder and robbery in ITDP sectors, and I also saw that as a result the budget in this sector is on the rise. These bosses are buying buses and trucks. The state government obviously does not want such news to be published. Therefore there is so much objection to the word 'famine'. This is just 'drought.'(188)

Harisaran, the pragmatic BDO truly comprehends this systematic crisis and rightly laments, "The primary gross truth, nobody will allow you to say that an atom of the green revolutionary area of the State of Madhya Pradesh is in the 'perpetual famine' zone of extreme backward tribals" (Devi 164).

The primary reason behind this political ineffability again owes back to the biased discourse of statistics. These paralyzed micro-narratives remain perpetually uninformed because "No ratio has ever been calculated from the position of people like Bikhia. The position from which computer, information ministry, and media see the situation depends on the will of the current social and state systems" (Devi 161-162). This unfortunate nexus between narrative ineffability and political impotency often turns selected spaces into absolute necrospaces where the life of the inhabitants often turns into 'death in life'. That is what exactly happened to Pirtha. In spite of being an integral part of national cartography, the entire village of Pirtha becomes a spatial abject, a sutured land where the rights of the local inhabitants were completely nullified by the state-sponsored metanarrative and politically, for the retention of the metanarrative. Much to the credit of a volatile rhetorical spatial spin and the idea of Heidegger's *lichtung* (clearing) as the philosophical condition (of life) bearing a counter narratorial porosity, multiple troubling questions still arise- why and how does the termination effect happen? In order to comprehend this complex political phenomenon, one needs to take recourse to Agamben's idea of 'bare life' which this paper will discuss in the next segment.

The Necropolitical Nation

As discussed earlier, a modern democratic state is, by default, obliged to safeguard the metanarrative of maximum prosperity of its citizens (as obligatory units of spatial voters) to concretize governmental supremacy and make a stately exchange in the market of

international relations. When a particular geo-political region tries tomaximizeits survival (existential ploy) through the production of dissentious counter-narratives, the welfare state immediately returns to its primitive form of absolute sovereignty where the state acts "of itself, on itself, swiftly, immediately, without rule, with urgency and necessity and dramatically" (Foucault 262). In that state of extreme existential crisis, the nation-state never hesitates to eliminate by hook or by crook the primary source of its immediate threat, in fear of any kind of revolutionary escalation or liberalism. Ashis Nandy in *The Romance of the State and the Fate of Dissent in the Tropics* (2003) theorizes thatthe state tries to straitjacket the design of any dissenter intact not simply for its fear of retaliation but to keep the projection of a dissenter as an amoral alien savage that needs to be put off the state list as quickly as possible. This negative circulation of fear by the state is manufactured not only to keep a check on the governmentality programme but also to prevent a subordinate subject from becoming a dissenter in the future. The factorised fear is not simply external but also internal, meaning the sovereign state not only becomes doubly powerful (and thereby truthful) but also injects a mirrored split (doubt) in the mind of any possible dissenter whenever his meaning of a performative sabotage overrides the meaning of social tamability. As soon as the sabotage is planted in the system of the state, the sovereign gaze instrumentalizes the saboteur as unlawfully superscripting the language of social tamability to social animality, thereby mapping the body as a fearful cannibal. Consequently, a selected set of people (panopticon sampling) who are considered as threats by the nation-stateinstantly becomes the 'homo sacers' leading a complete 'bare life', a life exposed to the atrocities of state power.

In our story too, the symbolic alienation of Pirtha from the political map of the country occurs exactly due to this reason. With this realization, Pirtha immediately becomes the symbolic 'alien inside' in the eyes of the nation-state. In his book *Collateral Damages*, the Polish philosopher Bauman analyse show a group of people, due to their ethnic vulnerability can be seen as "alien inside that do(es) not count among the natural and indispensable part of the social organization" (3). In the case of Pirtha too, the entire village has been symbolically turned into analien piece of land inside the national territory which is no longer cartographically recognized as an indispensable part of the national imagination. This point becomes quite clear when Harisaran, the government official wistfully laments, "Puran, how do I put Pirtha on the map?" (Devi 137). Hence symbolically, Pirtha becomes an 'abject' spatial paradox that remains both inside and outside of the national map at the same time. As a result of this, the local inhabitants of Pirtha were no more to be recognized as 'valid' citizens of the nation-state; rather they become the symbolic 'homo sacers' leading a 'bare life' which is "at every instant exposed to an unconditional threat of death" (Agamben103). Metaphorically speaking, Pirtha as ageo-political space becomes no less vulnerable than any concentration camp which despite being under the jurisdiction of a nation-state symbolizes alienation (both internal and external). The tribals of Pirtha are read as savages who rather than reconfirming the socially constructed and normalized metanarrative of the nation-state, strive to challenge it with their dissentious 'multiple' voices. As a result, they were symbolically reduced into an inedible bolus (social regurgitation) as disposable 'bare' bodies having neither essence nor agency. In fact, the entire geo-political space of Pirtha was turned into a 'necrospace' where "vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead" (Mbembe 40).Shankar, a local inhabitant

wistfully proclaims, "You don't understand. The government doesn't want that we live. That's why they don't give us any help" (Devi 129). In fact, in that necropolitical space of Pirtha,"… people did not die; rather corpses were produced. Corpses without death, non-humans whose decease is debased into a matter of serial production …" (Agamben 72). Devi further adds, 'Every year at this time, in villages like Pirtha, Madhola, Derha, Dholki, people die of starvation, of eating rotten scavenged material, of dehydration' (Devi 188).

But, it is not only the atrocities of state power which the region of Pirtha was subjected to; rather the complex socio-economic entanglements of Pirtha invariably gave rise to 'economic elites (in this case the leader of the opposition party) so powerful that, like the state, they…transform(ed) the capital body into a superfluous body in an instant'(Reyes-Zagaand Breña 194). Under the camouflage of relief distribution in Pirtha, the leader of the opposition party tried to manipulate the inhabitants of Pirtha to leave the area permanently so that the space could be turned into a site of eco-tourism which in turn would have undoubtedly furthered his economic profit. Even he strategically forced the malnourished helpless inhabitants of Pirtha to pose in front of his camera against their will. Shankar, the local inhabitant angrily mumbles, "Relief. Take relief, let 'em make fillims. We are hungry, naked poor. That will be known on the fillims. But the fillim won't say who made us hungry, naked, and poor..." (Devi 177).Thus, the Foucauldian concept of 'microphysics of power' is in function here which ensures that 'power doesn't merely lie with the state but gets disseminated with different nucleus" (Reyes-Zaga and Breña 196) like the opposition party leader in this case.

With this incessant shower of multidirectional and multidimensional oppression, the disenfranchised inhabitants of Pirtha not only lost track of 'categories such as dignity and respect but even the very idea of an ethical limit' (Reyes-Zaga and Breña 198). They virtually become inert dehumanized bodies sans "traces of affective life and humanity" (Agamben 56) who have been socio-culturally trained to believe that "nothing is owed to them, not even rain …… they are not entitled to relief, the ancestors' soul has come and gone casting its shadow, therefore unremitting death was their only lot" (Devi 149-153). Gradually, the economic marginalization reached such a stage where the local inhabitants lost even the fundamental right over their own bodies. They were left with no other way but to sell their young girls and children for a mere handful of money. Devi writes about the pathetic condition of truth which mars the fictionalized reality of the state:

> "Everyone comes to see us, to see us, and we get dirty. Our women…..' Harisharan said, 'And a few were sold, shouldn't you have let me know?'………This is not the first time that people have been sold out of Pirtha. As long as we are here, buyers will come." (Devi 137)

With this, Pirtha finally becomesthe space where humanity, morality, and ethics crumble down in the face of 'the struggle for existence'. Thus, the government was fully successful in turning Pirtha into a 'bare' dystopic infertile space 'where peoples pass into populations'and populations gradually pass into 'Homo Sacers' (Agamben85).

The Poetics of Resistance

Coming to the final segment of this paper, it becomes quite clear how ontological violence has been systematically perpetrated on the local inhabitants of Pirtha. Rightly,

Kennedy in his book, *An Ontology of Trash* (2007) reads that "ontological violence is the progenitor of trash and the act of not acknowledging the physical presence of a being is in itself, an act of ontological violence" (Kennedy 144).Thus, turning the people of Pirtha into mere 'faceless presences' sans any individual identity undoubtedly marks an instance of state-sponsored necropolitical conspiracy. Hence, reasonable questions arise-is it possible for the dissentious micro-narratives of Pirtha to build up resistance against the national metanarrative of progress and modernity? If thisis, at all possible, then in what ways do the local inhabitants raise their resistance? Apparently, it might seem that their 'micro' voices of dissent are not so efficient in raising a collective Fanonian consciousness productive as the government remains completely unmoved. But at a deeper level, the potency and portability of their multiple micro-narratives keep the entire village of Pirtha in unison which facilitates their unified dissent against the metanarrative of factorized modernity. It becomes pretty evident when Shankar, the local inhabitant, proclaims with cold disgust, "Can you move far away? Very far? Very, very far?" (Devi 120).

This expression should not be mistaken as a benign semantic supplication of a helpless local inhabitant. Rather it is the unified voice of Pirtha speaking back in utter vengeance as a form of retributive justice. Collectively, Pirtha metamorphoses into an empire of unknown language from below carrying a rhizomatic design with unmapped capabilities which ultimately speaks back to Puran (symptomatic of the dominant language). In defence, Pirtha might not want to translate its slippery concealed narrative into the language of the state but it is enough to create a narratorial tension in the language of development which functions on knowable (empirical) classifications and canny body-sampling methodologies (determinant units of law). In a simpler sense, Pirtha speaks back not only against the individual trespassers of modernity (like Puran) but at a deeper lever level, against the ideological metanarratives enforced arbitrarily on their cultural ethos. The multiple micro-narratives of miracles and the myth of forefathers hovering over Pirtha may seem absolutely superstitious to the rationalized cogito of modern civilization, but to the people of Pirtha, these narratives are what endows them with unique individual identity as well as the purpose of living. Harisharan rightly observes, "Man, they keep on waiting for a miracle. The modern age has given them nothing, if a miracle can bring some good luck into this intolerable existence! A small miracle, something big!" (Devi 144). These mythic narratives actually signify who they really are as an ethnic community and gradually become their symbolic weapon of denial and resistance- resistance against the arbitrary onslaught of developmental modernity of which they have been mere victims. In her novel, Devi writes, 'No one holds the right' to 'rob a people of the supernatural, of myth, what is in their understanding an unwritten history .....' (Devi 178). The celebration of these local myths and miraculous ritualsis, therefore, astaunch epistemic revolt against letting "things fall apart" (Achebe). Honouring the mourning ritual of 'impure' thus can be seen as an active political act of remembrance of everything lost (be it cultural or personal) in the fight against homogenizing metanarratives of modern civilization. Shankar, therefore, laments, "Now we are all unclean, in mourning" (Devi 120).

Thus, though it may apparently seem to be a lost battle for Pirtha, an alternative reading of the language of Pirtha's un-mappable spectrality lies in a fugitive liminal space where the technologized bureaucracy of modern knowledge systems (Puran is an example of such a 'modern' interpellation) fails to trace the corporeality of prehistoric times, the

language of Pterodactyl. A close reading of the Pterodactyl's message reveals a completely subversive dialectic which is in a constant battle with the supremacist language of a grand narratorial nation-state. We find a similar reading in Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004) where the biodegradability of Fokir's spectral agency (even after Fokir dies) creates an effective protective shield against the language of the Empire, in a sense, that protects the linguistic multiplicity of the 'shifting' Sunderbans. Puran's inability to understand Pterodactyl's message finally marks the pathetic defeat of the modern metanarrative that often mimics the speculative 'capital' narrative of the West as a given (proven) condition of national supremacy. Devi critiques the idea of 'modern' social development which often confuses social mobilization with social castration. Modernity's usage of developing a meta construct of 'things' is largely based on institutionalizing binaries and contrasts which often uses and omits human capital (bio-capital) according to the requirements of the nation-state. A routinized analogy of the state in trying to establish its social potency (to its full value) is the usage of the psychic narrative of 'lack'. The state constructs and infects the given state of 'lack' to anyone who is a possible danger to the phallic rationale of governmentality (Foucault). Invariably, a saboteur becomes a doubly alienated (displaced) body in the eyes of the law: at a given instance, s/he is both a savage and a misfit, both a danger and a 'lack'. Devi, however, tries to reuse the idea of 'lack' as bearing a counter-performative mobile function (of speech and body)that bears both textual and metaphysical insurgency. The 'lack' is never static, it is always in motion and binds itself to a host (subject) for the deliberation of a *minus-in-operation*. The 'lack' is in the whole and never an aside. The lack feeds on the whole as a kind of parasitic symbiosis. The 'lack' is fluidic in nature and thereby suits itself to the projection of a counterbalancing mirror. For example, a baby is pushed out of a body as a kind of reactive breakage that informs the birth of a selective flesh. We are always pushing the slip so as to coerce the gaps in order to inform a kind of utilitarian production, and thereby, suturing the future (Badiou). We have no idea about the quality of 'lack'. Is it an ontological construct? Is it a social construct? Is it a material construct? Is it a moral construct? Or, is it a wishful search that latches onto the performativity of the minus? In other words, existence starts at the minus, and bodies are continuously engaged in the lessening of the minus(es). Happiness is a pathological condition of the deferring of the agentic minus, as Zizek summarizes in one of his intellectual developments. So, there is nothing sacred about happiness (Puran as a modern *knowledge-happy*, empirically diabetic symptom) as it falls outside the purview of any minus.The state would continue to portray Pirtha as an infertile (prehistoric) mass of land that 'lacks' modern social nutrition and cultural value (the entire tribal force gets supplanted with topological spatial markers). But, Pirtha finds its own meaning (as ameaning-making text) in an alternative language (vector-space) that continually resists the language of the state in a continuous mode of retributive synchronicity.

The metaphor of Pterodactyl makes do with a new counter-revolutionary argument about time and space where the readers get to read about the region of Pirtha as a*body-in-becoming*, a spectral space whose narratorial intent lies outside the malleable parameters of any kind of lawful recognition. Stefan Herbrechter in *Posthumanism* (2013) analyzes the dimensionality of a meaning-making human in terms of its material situatedness, psychic geography, and sensory mobility that respect the idea of time and location (of a body in action) not as any predestined condition of life but as narrative-seeking alterity in life. The pre-historicity of Pterodactyl challenges the very convention of unilinear

time, space, and action which is simply put, the market's dictation of hyper-production within the context of a meaning-making 'modern' development. The very pre-historicity of Pterodactyl, in the text, challenges the very materiality of 'modern' time with its own uncanny slippery spectrality, where both the corporeal vectors of 'body' and 'lack' inform each other in a conflicting social tension. In the novel, Devi seems to suggest a different kind of language (narrative) uprising: there is nothing called (a) body, meaning a body is simply put, an indefinable mass without any socio-cultural indexing. A body is un-mappable if it stays in isolation and very possibly, its beingness can only be thingified by 'correct' documentation of the state, which in Pirtha's case, is never an option. In other words, if a body is not recognized as a verifiable spatial vector (authentic human) then, the question of 'lack' and 'desire' becomes carnival in scope and nature. In other words, the tribals of Pirtha are saboteurs in their most primal form and the understanding of 'lack' in contrast to 'labor' becomes both a socio-biological weapon and a counter-cultural tool to define the concept of a posthuman narrative. Pirtha metamorphoses into a 'super body' probably due to its liminal situatedness and also because its geographical contextuality lies outside the mapping knowledge system of the state; at the same time, the state loses its logo centric potency of a *truth-in-body* due to its systematic failure to control the uncanny growth of Pterodactyl's carnival. The transmutation of Pterodactyl from a linguistic metaphor to a sensory body radicalizes the concept of time as a *break-from-the-past* narrative into a heterotopic animalistic time where myths and legends give a fitting response to the machines of capital.

Conclusion

The character of Bikhia projects a posthuman call, a macro corporeal vector, whose speech-acts reside in the language of survival, whose textual silence brings out a paradigm shift in the politics of receptivity. During his interaction with Puran, the readers get exposed to the inability of 'modern' empiricism to protect the endangered relying simply on technical and technological expertise. Puran says, 'Our responsibility was to protect them' (Devi 196) which, in itself, defeats the whole purpose. Any empirical study of a region or a clan is meant for dissemination warfare where knowledge (as literary cognition) splits up along with the researcher's self. Puran's language carries the burden of the meta-language of the state. In creating Puran as a textual character who has been schooled by the state, Devi critiques the knowledge-power equation of the state and its seekers: coining new terms masquerading as unsaid (hidden) magic formula(s) in hyper knots, so as to create an illusion of a 'new' arrival, is ultimately what the tactical spatiality of Puran Sahay boils down to. Devi corroborates, "Bikhia has probably understood what the pterodactyl, seeking shelter, had come to say. Puran has not" (Devi195). Puran recognizes the extreme horror and hollowness that lie at the very heart of modern metanarratives and this shuddering anagnorisis completely dismantles his outlook towards 'modern' civilization. Later, he himself acknowledges, "We have lost somewhere, to Bikhia's people, to Pirtha. By comparison with the ancient civilizations modem progress is much more barbaric at heart. We are defeated" (Devi 195).On another level, this is also the defeat of the idea of 'nation' as a meta-construction because for every metanarrative, the success lies in hiding its fictive artificiality and there by projecting itself as the default predestined (sanitized) reality.

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