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# DECOLONIZING THE IMPERIALISM: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STRUGGLE AND RESISTANCE OF ADIVASI COMMUNITIES AS DEPICTED IN RANENDRA'S 'THE LORD OF THE GLOBAL VILLAGE' AND HOWARD FAST'S 'THE LAST FRONTIER'

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## **Abstract :**

*This comparative study examines the representation of indigenous resistance against imperial and neo-colonial forces in two significant literary works: Ranendra's "The Lord of the Global Village" and Howard Fast's "The Last Frontier." Through a critical analysis of narrative strategies, thematic concerns, and the portrayal of Adivasi and Native American struggles, this paper explores how both texts function as instruments of decolonization, challenging dominant historical narratives and asserting indigenous agency. The study investigates the convergence of anti-imperial resistance across different geographical and temporal contexts, demonstrating how literature becomes a site of counter-hegemonic discourse. By examining the socio-political conditions that precipitate indigenous uprisings, the cultural dimensions of resistance, and the role of literature in preserving subaltern histories, this research contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations about postcolonial literature, indigenous studies, and the decolonization of knowledge production.*

**Keywords :** Decolonization, Indigenous resistance, Adivasi literature, Comparative postcolonial studies, Counter-hegemonic narratives, Neo-colonialism

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## **Introduction :**

The project of decolonization extends beyond the political independence of formerly colonized nations to encompass the dismantling of colonial epistemologies, the recovery of suppressed histories, and the assertion of indigenous worldviews. Literature has emerged as a crucial terrain for this decolonizing work, particularly through texts that document and celebrate indigenous resistance to imperial domination. Ranendra's "The Lord of the Global Village" and Howard Fast's "The Last Frontier" represent significant contributions to this body of resistance literature, each chronicling the struggles of indigenous communities—Adivasi peoples in India and the Northern Cheyenne in North America—against forces of displacement, exploitation, and cultural annihilation.

Despite emerging from distinct geographical, historical, and cultural contexts, these

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texts share fundamental concerns with indigenous sovereignty, the violence of imperial expansion, and the preservation of cultural identity in the face of overwhelming opposition. This comparative study examines how both novels function as decolonizing texts, interrogating the mechanisms of imperial power while centering indigenous voices, perspectives, and modes of resistance. By placing these works in conversation, this paper illuminates the transnational dimensions of indigenous struggle and the role of literature in challenging colonial legacies.

### **Theoretical Framework: Decolonization and Postcolonial Literary Studies :**

The concept of decolonization has evolved considerably since the mid-twentieth century wave of political independence movements. Contemporary scholars recognize decolonization as an ongoing process that must address not only formal political structures but also the epistemic violence inflicted by colonialism. Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues for the "decolonization of the mind," emphasizing how colonial education systems and cultural imperialism continue to shape consciousness even after political independence. Similarly, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's work on decolonizing methodologies highlights how Western research paradigms have historically served colonial interests, necessitating indigenous-centered approaches to knowledge production.

Postcolonial literary criticism provides essential tools for analysing how texts participate in decolonizing projects. The Subaltern Studies collective, particularly through the work of Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, has challenged elite-centered historiography by foregrounding the agency and consciousness of subordinated groups. Spivak's famous question "Can the subaltern speak?" raises crucial issues about representation and voice that remain relevant to discussions of indigenous literature. While Spivak's analysis suggests the difficulties subaltern subjects face in achieving audibility within dominant discourse, resistance literature demonstrates how marginalized communities have consistently articulated their experiences and demands, though often through forms unrecognized by hegemonic institutions.

Frantz Fanon's analysis of colonial violence and resistance provides another crucial framework for this study. Fanon demonstrates how colonialism functions through both physical violence and psychological domination, requiring equally comprehensive forms of resistance. His concept of decolonization as necessarily violent and total—a complete calling into question of the colonial situation—resonates with the radical resistance portrayed in both novels under examination.

### **Historical Contexts: Adivasi Struggles and Native American Resistance :**

Understanding the literary representations in Ranendra's and Fast's novels requires examining the historical conditions that generated indigenous resistance movements. The Adivasi communities of India, comprising numerous distinct ethnic groups with diverse languages, cultures, and social organizations, have faced systematic marginalization since pre-colonial times, a process intensified under British rule and continuing into independent



India. Colonial forest policies dispossessed Adivasi communities of traditional lands and resources, transforming formerly autonomous peoples into exploited labor forces. The Permanent Settlement and subsequent land revenue systems disrupted traditional land tenure, while forest conservation laws criminalized customary practices.

Post-independence development policies have frequently replicated colonial patterns of displacement and exploitation. Large-scale development projects, including dams, mines, and industrial facilities, have disproportionately affected Adivasi regions, resulting in massive displacement without adequate rehabilitation or compensation. This neo-colonial exploitation has provoked sustained resistance, from the Naxalite movement to contemporary struggles against mining corporations and displacement projects. The Adivasi resistance movement encompasses diverse strategies, from armed insurgency to legal challenges, cultural assertion to environmental activism.

The Northern Cheyenne experience documented in Fast's novel represents a parallel trajectory of displacement and resistance within the North American context. Following military defeats in conflicts with the expanding United States, the Northern Cheyenne were forcibly relocated in 1877 from their Montana homeland to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. This removal policy, part of a broader federal strategy to consolidate indigenous peoples onto reservations and open tribal lands to white settlement, resulted in catastrophic conditions. Disease, malnutrition, cultural dislocation, and the trauma of forced removal decimated the relocated community.

The 1878-1879 exodus led by chiefs Dull Knife and Little Wolf represented a desperate attempt to return home, an assertion of indigenous sovereignty against federal policies that treated Native Americans as wards of the state rather than autonomous peoples. The Cheyenne's successful evasion of superior military forces over 1,500 miles of hostile territory demonstrated both tactical brilliance and absolute determination to reclaim their homeland. This historical episode exemplifies indigenous resistance as simultaneously practical struggle for survival and principled assertion of rights to land and self-determination.

### **Comparative Analysis: Narrative Strategies and Representation :**

Both Ranendra and Fast employ specific narrative strategies to center indigenous perspectives and challenge colonial narratives. Ranendra's novel utilizes a multi-vocal narrative structure that incorporates Adivasi oral traditions, folk songs, and communal storytelling modes. This formal innovation serves a decolonizing function by validating indigenous epistemologies and challenging the dominance of Western literary conventions. The novel's language incorporates Adivasi terminology and conceptual frameworks, refusing to translate indigenous worldviews entirely into dominant linguistic and cultural codes. This linguistic resistance mirrors the political resistance of the communities depicted, asserting the validity and complexity of Adivasi cultures against simplifying or demeaning stereotypes.

Fast's approach in "The Last Frontier" differs in employing conventional narrative



realism while shifting sympathy and identification toward the Cheyenne. Though writing within Western literary traditions, Fast subverts the genre conventions of frontier literature, which typically center white settlers and portray indigenous peoples as obstacles to progress or exotic others. Instead, Fast portrays Cheyenne leaders as the protagonists, depicting their strategic thinking, moral deliberations, and justified grievances. The novel includes perspectives from military officers pursuing the Cheyenne, but these serve primarily to expose the contradictions and injustices of federal Indian policy rather than to justify conquest.

Both authors confront the challenge of representing indigenous communities without appropriating or distorting their cultures. Ranendra, writing from within the Indian context and with direct engagement with Adivasi communities, brings insider knowledge and political commitment to his portrayal. Fast, as an outsider to Cheyenne culture, relies on historical research and a commitment to anti-imperial politics. The differences in authorial position raise important questions about voice and representation that contemporary indigenous studies scholarship continues to negotiate.

### **Themes of Resistance: Land, Culture, and Sovereignty :**

Central to both novels is the connection between indigenous peoples and their ancestral lands. This relationship transcends Western property concepts, encompassing spiritual, cultural, and ecological dimensions. For Adivasi communities depicted in Ranendra's work, forests are not merely economic resources but sacred spaces integral to cosmology, social organization, and cultural practices. Colonial and post-colonial states' treatment of forests as state property available for exploitation represents not simply economic dispossession but an assault on indigenous ontology. Similarly, Fast's portrayal of the Cheyenne emphasizes their profound connection to the northern plains. The forced relocation to Oklahoma represents not merely a change of location but a severing of relationships to place that sustain Cheyenne identity and spiritual life. The decision to risk everything to return home reflects the centrality of land to indigenous existence, a determination that land rights are worth dying for because life without homeland is not truly life.

Both texts also emphasize cultural resistance alongside physical struggle. The preservation of language, ceremony, social structures, and traditional knowledge constitutes a form of resistance against cultural genocide. Ranendra depicts Adivasi communities maintaining cultural practices despite state efforts to assimilate or modernize them, while Fast shows the Cheyenne preserving their social organization and spiritual practices even under conditions of extreme duress. This cultural resistance challenges colonial projects that seek not merely territorial control but the total transformation of indigenous peoples into subordinate subjects within colonial or national frameworks.

The concept of sovereignty emerges as crucial in both texts. Indigenous assertions of sovereignty challenge state claims to absolute authority over populations and territories within national boundaries. Adivasi movements demanding autonomy and recognition of



customary laws contest the Indian state's monopoly on legitimate authority. The Cheyenne exodus similarly represents a rejection of federal authority to determine where and how they must live. Both struggles assert indigenous rights to self-determination, challenging the legitimacy of states built on indigenous dispossession.

### **Violence, Resistance, and Moral Economy :**

Both novels grapple with the role of violence in resistance struggles, a theme central to decolonization theory since Fanon. The indigenous resistance depicted in both texts includes armed struggle alongside other forms of opposition. Ranendra's portrayal of Adivasi militants confronting state forces and exploitative corporations does not romanticize violence but presents it as a response to structural violence—the violence of displacement, exploitation, and cultural destruction that states and capital inflict on indigenous communities.

Fast similarly depicts Cheyenne military actions not as savage violence but as strategic self-defense against a genocidal campaign. The novel carefully documents the broken promises, deliberate starvation, and military aggression that indigenous peoples faced, establishing the moral legitimacy of armed resistance. Both authors challenge dominant narratives that characterize state violence as legitimate law enforcement while condemning indigenous resistance as terrorism or criminality.

The concept of moral economy, developed by E.P. Thompson and adapted by James Scott to analyze peasant resistance, illuminates the ethical frameworks underlying indigenous struggles. Both Adivasi and Cheyenne resistance rests on conceptions of justice that prioritize collective survival, traditional rights, and reciprocal obligations over abstract legal frameworks imposed by colonial or national states. The struggles depicted are not merely instrumental battles for resources but assertions of moral visions that challenge capitalist and statist logics.

### **Gender Dimensions of Indigenous Resistance :**

Both novels, though to varying degrees, address the gender dimensions of colonial violence and indigenous resistance. Colonial and neo-colonial exploitation has specific gendered impacts, with indigenous women facing compounded oppression as both women and members of marginalized communities. Ranendra's text includes female characters who participate actively in resistance movements, challenging both patriarchal structures within Adivasi societies and external oppression. The portrayal recognizes how indigenous women bear particular burdens under colonialism while also contributing crucial leadership to resistance movements.

Fast's treatment of gender is more limited, reflecting both the historical record's focus on male military leaders and the conventions of mid-twentieth-century historical fiction. However, the novel does acknowledge women's roles in sustaining community and culture during the exodus, recognizing that resistance encompasses not only armed conflict but also



the daily labor of maintaining social reproduction under extreme conditions. Contemporary feminist and indigenous feminist scholarship would push for more centered analysis of women's roles, but both texts at least gesture toward recognizing gender as relevant to understanding indigenous struggles.

### **Neo-colonialism and Contemporary Relevance :**

Ranendra's novel explicitly addresses neo-colonialism, examining how global capitalism and development ideologies perpetuate colonial patterns of exploitation despite formal political independence. The "Lord of the Global Village" of the title represents transnational capital and the development apparatus that justifies displacement and resource extraction as necessary for progress and modernization. This critique resonates with contemporary scholarship on globalization as a continuation of colonialism through different means. The novel's portrayal of collusion between global capital, national elites, and state apparatus illuminates the structural barriers to decolonization. Formal independence proves insufficient when economic structures, knowledge systems, and power relations remain fundamentally colonial. Adivasi resistance thus confronts not merely local oppressors but global systems of domination, requiring solidarity across communities and transnational organizing.

Fast's historical novel, while set in the nineteenth century, remains relevant to understanding contemporary indigenous struggles. The patterns of displacement, broken treaties, and resistance documented in "The Last Frontier" continue in current conflicts over pipeline construction through indigenous territories, uranium mining on tribal lands, and ongoing battles over sovereignty and self-determination. Reading Fast's work today illuminates the deep historical roots of contemporary indigenous movements and the continuity of colonial violence despite changed political forms.

### **Literature as Decolonizing Practice :**

Both novels demonstrate how literature functions as a decolonizing practice through multiple mechanisms. First, they preserve counter-memories that challenge official histories. Dominant historical narratives typically center colonial and national perspectives, portraying indigenous peoples as passive victims or obstacles overcome in narratives of progress. Resistance literature recovers indigenous agency, documenting struggles that official histories minimize or distort. Second, these texts create identification and empathy with indigenous perspectives, potentially transforming readers' understanding of historical and contemporary conflicts. By centering indigenous characters and viewpoints, the novels invite readers to question naturalized assumptions about state authority, property rights, and development.

Third, resistance literature validates indigenous cultures and worldviews, asserting their value against colonial characterizations of indigenous peoples as primitive or backward. The sophisticated social organization, ethical frameworks, and ecological knowledge portrayed in both novels challenge developmental ideologies that justify dispossession as necessary for bringing civilization to savage peoples. Finally, these texts participate in



building transnational solidarity among indigenous peoples and with non-indigenous allies. By documenting struggles across different contexts, resistance literature reveals common patterns of oppression and resistance, fostering recognition of shared interests and the possibility of collective action.

### **Conclusion :**

This comparative analysis of Ranendra's "The Lord of the Global Village" and Howard Fast's "The Last Frontier" demonstrates how literature participates in the ongoing project of decolonization. Both texts challenge colonial and neo-colonial narratives, assert indigenous agency and sovereignty, and preserve counter-memories of resistance. Despite emerging from different geographical and historical contexts, these novels reveal fundamental commonalities in indigenous struggles against imperial domination: the centrality of land to indigenous existence, the importance of cultural preservation, the moral legitimacy of resistance against structural violence, and the assertion of sovereignty against state encroachment.

The comparative approach adopted in this study illuminates the transnational dimensions of both imperialism and resistance. Colonial and neo-colonial exploitation follow similar patterns across contexts, dispossessing indigenous peoples to serve capital accumulation and state expansion. Indigenous resistance movements similarly share strategies, ethical frameworks, and visions of alternative futures based on justice, reciprocity, and sustainable relationships with land.

As decolonization remains an incomplete and contested project, literature continues to serve crucial functions in challenging colonial legacies and imagining liberated futures. Contemporary indigenous movements worldwide draw on the traditions of resistance documented in texts like those examined here while developing new strategies appropriate to current conditions. Scholarly engagement with resistance literature contributes to decolonizing knowledge production by centering indigenous voices, validating indigenous epistemologies, and supporting ongoing struggles for justice and self-determination.

Future research might productively explore additional comparative dimensions, examining other indigenous resistance literatures from contexts including Australia, Latin America, and Africa. Deeper engagement with indigenous literary criticism and theory would enrich analysis beyond Western postcolonial frameworks. Investigation of the reception and circulation of resistance literature, including how indigenous communities themselves engage with such texts, would provide valuable insights into literature's actual impacts on political consciousness and organizing.

Ultimately, the decolonizing potential of literature depends not merely on textual representation but on how texts circulate within broader social movements and political struggles. Reading Ranendra and Fast today reminds us that the struggles they document continue, requiring ongoing solidarity, critical analysis of power structures, and commitment to the radical transformation that genuine decolonization demands.



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