

A STUDY OF FICTION - AN ANALYSIS

Dr. Vikas Jaolkar

Prof. & Head

Department of English

Govt. Hamidia P.G. College, Bhopal

Tanuja Sharma

Research Scholar

B.U. Bhopal

Abstract

The study of the emergency of the novel in India has to be more than a purely literary exercise. The factors that shaped the growth of this genre since the mid-nineteenth century arose as much from the political and social situation of a colonized century as from several indigenous though attenuated narrative traditions of an ancient culture that survived through constant mutation. English education & through English an exposure to western literature were by far the strongest influence at work. It is not an accident that first crop of novels in India in Bengali and Marathi, appeared exactly a generation after Macaulays Educational Minutes making English a necessary part of an educated Indians mental make-up were passed. Yet to regard the novel in India as is sometimes done, as purely a legacy of British rule.

Key Words : Indian, Independence, Indo English, Society, realistic.

Introduction -

The emergence of the pre-independence Indo English novel out of its early romantic phase into social realism runs parallel to the gradual intensification of the national movement for freedom. The Socio-political situation existing in the country is faithfully mirrored right from the early phase of reformist exuberance to the growth of a revolutionary consciousness among the common masses of India. They had to wage a two pronged battle – one for their emancipation from the politico economic exploitation by the foreign rulers, and the other against the colossal weight of outdated traditions, hide-bound casteism, blind conformism to religious dogma, and other social ills.

Socio Political Impact -

The first world war also had its impact on the writers. It brought them face to face with the actual reality. This impact on the Indo-English writers was two fold : (i) They now sought to portray more realistic, less idealized and a more earthly presentation of life in their works, (ii) The writers, inspired with a nationalistic fervour found in literature a convenient medium to

dramatize and popularize their cause. They felt that nationalism and liberty were prizes worth fighting for. The struggle for independence in India was not merely a political struggle but an all pervasive experience that became a part of the life of almost all the sensitive and enlightened Indians. It is this coincidence which is responsible for a flowering maturity of the Indo-English fiction in the 'thirties' during which period the freedom movement percolated to the very grass-roots of Indian society. Parallel to this struggle for political freedom was another one on the social plane. It was a fight against superstition, caste system, poverty illiteracy and many other social ills. No Indian writer, writing in that decade, could avoid reflecting this upsurge in his work. The Socio-political movement of the entire nation, also inspired the Indo-English writers. They had the added advantage of western liberal education with the intensification of the struggle for national independence, the Indo-English writers rightly realized that literature too had a vital role to play in it. The constructive programmes launched by Mahatma Gandhi and other national leaders deepened the political and social consciousness of the writers.

Along with the nationalistic fervour the other movements like socialism, communism, fascism etc., also became an obsession with the angry young intelligentsia of the times. These political ideologies, already popular in Europe and China ; emerged in the country in the 'thirties as a reaction to the prevailing conditions : oppression and tyranny of British imperialism, gross futility and waste brought by the World War I, economic exploitation of the poor and under-privileged class, illiteracy and evils of the caste system. Besides this, the visit of Tagore and Nehru to the Soviet Land and the formation of the All India Progressive Writers' Association in the 'thirties made the writers portray the Indian peasantry in the hope that social transformation of society could be feasible only through mobilizing the opinion of the under-privileged classes the economically exploited, politically subjugated and socially oppressed Indian populace.

Of the three great names that have left an overwhelming impact on the twentieth century writers-Gandhi, Marx and Freud. Gandhi's impact on Indian writer is obviously more direct and widespread.¹ Moral and intellectual in its nature, it worked as a liberating force and "not only widened the range 'of the writer's sympathy but also heightened its intensity. The Indo-English novelist, receiving a powerful ethical stimulus, began to see his country not in terms of self-adulation or glorification of the splendid past, but in terms of self-analysis, of facing the reality, of being acutely aware of the problems that beset his country.

The impact of Pre Independence Era -

The impact of Gandhi on the Indo-English novelists of the pre-Independence era can be discerned not only in their selection of themes but also in their presentation. No more attracted by high flown, artificial, oratorical style, they now sought to write in a simple and direct, compact and incisive manner, shorn of all-superfluities and flamboyance.

Since the primary aim of the Indian novelist in English has been the portrayal of society, it would not be out of place to have a comprehensive view of the social background against which these novels were written. Dividing the history of indo-English literature into five periods, Iyenger characterizes the period between 1920-1947 as the era of the Gandhian revolution and the modern heroic age. Not that the Indo-English Novelist was doing something unique by selecting his theme and narrating it against the contemporary social background. Almost a similar attempt was made by writers in other regional languages of the country as well. Further it was not a sudden overnight break from the old. Old tendencies, old themes, old technique and

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old traditional sentimental, didactic novels continued to exist. But the appearance of the realistic novel with a purpose is what identifies the 'thirties during which the Indo-English writer like his counterpart in the regional languages, soon realized that his salvation lay, not in reproducing the imitative voices of his colonial masters, but in seeking the strength and fertility of his own cultural sensibility and socio-cultural experience. This resulted in the creation of a socially meaningful literature, remarkable for its intellectual maturity, technical sophistication and artistic vision.

This decade of the 'thirties was indeed a blooming period for the Indo-English fiction. It saw the appearance of the first novels by the big three : Anand's *Untouchable* (1935), Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935), and Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938). In them can be discerned a marked improvement on their predecessors in technique, form and style. Anand modelled his novels on the contemporary European and American novelists, 'borrowing the stream of consciousness technique from James Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence, psychological analysis and social realism from Zola, Dickens, Tolstoy and Dostoevsky. Narayan sought to deal almost exclusively with the lower middle-class families of Southern India with gentle, sympathetic irony in a tragi-comic mode, whereas Raja Rao dwelt on the Puranic Harikatha tradition of storytelling, and made an old village granny unfold the narrative in autobiographical form. This form of narration effectively useful in analysing a situation-and unravelling the multi-faceted personality of a character.

With the appearance of the first novels of these three eminent writers in the thirties, the Indo-English novel may be said to have ripened into maturity.) These writers brought in new themes, new techniques, new style and new approach to the novel.

Of the Indian creative writers –Tagore, Premchanda and Sarat Chandra seem to have influenced Mulk Raj Anand directly. Tagore's universal humanism and idea of brotherhood, Premchand's sympathy for the underdog and Sarat Chandra's deep understanding of the heroic sufferings and essentially noble heart of the humble folk-all these seem to have influenced the artist in Anand, and this influence can be traced throughout his creative works. By portraying the rural India's poverty, ignorance, privation and perpetual suffering on the one hand, its enduring heroism, purity of heart and fellow-feeling on the other, Anand can be said to have achieved in artistic terms what Premchand could not encompass in his works, From the thematic point of view, he did something new combining all that was best in-the-East with that in the West. From the point of view of form and Technique it is Anand, again who first experimented in this field.

To Anand, therefore, should go the credit of furthering the, Humanistic tradition of Tagore, Premchand, and Sarat Chandra and bringing the form of the novel in line with the contemporary developments in Britain and France. In his novels we can see the recitalist oriental manner of story telling being, replaced by the western dramatic technique of fiction.

Coming to Nayantara Sahgal we find that in all her works fiction and non-fiction, the impact of Gandhian ideals and values is clearly seen.

Gandhi's clarion call to the Indian women to participate actively in the freedom movement made them conscious of the much needed liberation and equality of opportunity in social, political and personal life. This need for woman's liberation and her urge to be considered as an equal and honourable partner of man seems to be one of the central concerns of Nayantara Sahgal's novels.

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Gandhi's campaign for Quit India Movement, Tagore's views on universal brotherhood, and John Steinbeck's preference for depicting the immediate and acute problems of the time, seem to have influenced Bhabani Bhattacharya also, and these influences are clearly discernible in his writings.

With these writers, the novel can be said to have stuck deep roots in the Indian soil, By imaginatively treating the con-temporary themes, these novelists have sought to explore and interpret India significantly in its various aspects-social, economic, cultural, political and the like.

One can level the charge that such novels neglect the fate of the individual in a particular human situation, and that these do not deal with a personal and private predicament. But it must be remembered that dealing with a social milieu such novels are more concerned with presenting the entire picture of the society rather than with individual's personal history. The characters in these novels tend to be, therefore, types rather than individuals as is true of the nineteenth century socio-political novels of England. The indo-English novelist, like any good creative writer, writes with a social consciousness born of the phenomena enacted around him. He is essentially a realist who moves around the society and experiences the crisis and tensions of the struggling classes. It is this that arouses his deep creative impulse and ultimately makes him a writer. Critics may argue that since the Indo-English novelist is mainly concerned with the contemporary or topical events in life, his work ceases to have a universal appeal. But this is hardly so.

Conclusion

Ever since the debut of the big three during 1930s, novel as a genre has continued to dominate the literary scene. The Indo-English novelists have produced a considerable body of fiction from the point of view of both, quantity and quality. The second World War, the independence and the partition of the country were other historical forces that gave further impetus to the Indo-English novelists. There was enough material in the society torn by communal Frenzy, political manoevrings, social disparities and corruption in bureaucracy for the thematic treatment by the novelist to stir the imagination of the countrymen to a new awakening. And this could best be done through the medium of the novel. The Indo English novelist, like Shelley, well realized that so long as the imagination of people is not stirred, the seeds of reform will keep lying on the road to be trodden upon by the unwary traveller.

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