

Review

Psycho-social Diversification in Indian English Literature

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Perusal of Indian fiction, from Bankim Chander Chatterjee to Arundhati Roy reveals that the fiction writers of the last century have realistically and emphatically portrayed the various shades of Indian psychosocial factors in the form of problems, traditions, values, culture, myths, social evils and also the political, economic and religious changes. This paper has taken up major novelists of the last century who have epitomized real India and its people in one way or the other to understand psycho-social Diversification in Indian English Literature

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INTRODUCTION

Literature is mirror of society at large and its people. May it be British literature, American literature or Indian fiction? The present study is a critical analysis of last century fiction and society in India. Before the middle of the century, the novel, the short story and the drama were practically non-existent in Indian languages. With the introduction of English in India, there was a spurt of translations, and a number of English classics were soon translated into various Indian languages. The English classics were the models for the Indians writing in English. In these classics the Psychological content appears in a wide range of literary forms, from poetry to short stories, plays and novels. However, the most explicit reference to the human mind is to be found in

psychological novels which deal with individuals' inner experiences, thoughts, feelings, emotions and introspections. The novel is a work of fiction in which the characters' thoughts, motivations and feelings are of greater psychological interest than the external action.

Novels place psychological emphasis on characters, their emotional reactions and go deeper into their minds than novels of other genres. Events may not be presented in a chronological order, but as they occur in the characters' minds, memories or fantasies. The psychological content can take different forms in literature. It can be represented symbolically or with the help of metaphors. It can also be found in the structure of the text, the time, the place, the action or even in meter

and rhythm in the case of poetry.

Bankim Chander Chatterjee

Bankim Chander Chatterjee became the first Indian writer of novel in English. He made his mark with *Rajmohan's wife*, published in 1864. It was the romantic tale of domestic life in Bengal village. He passionately presented the Indian culture and put emphasis on renunciation of self-love for the attainment of liberation from slavery in this novel. He stressed patriotism in itself was not sufficient, it should be coupled with a sense of dedication. With a view to guiding the footsteps of the young man he presented a romantic version of the cultural past and pleaded for dynamism through his novels originally written in Bengali: *Kapalkundala* (1885), *Durgeshnandini* (1890) and *Krishankanta's will* (1895). Another Bengali novelist of considerable stature was Romesh Chander Dutt who translated two of his six novels into English: *The lake of Palms* (1902) and *The Slave Girl of Agra* (1909). His major concerns were social uplift and domesticity. Dutt's novels were didactic and aimed at the elimination of social evils. *The lake of Palms* pleaded unconventionally for the union of two ardent lovers, even when the girl was a widow. *The Slave Girl of Agra* was a historical romance which delineated treachery, love and intrigues of Mughal times.

Such were the pioneers in the field of Indian writing in English and their work is largely imitative of British models. But they have taken, Indian Culture, social evils and domestic life of Indian families as their themes. So, the fiction writers (from 1830-1880) showed considerable mastery over Indian themes and sowed the seed which was to grow, flourish and bear fruit in the years to come.

Indo Anglian literature of Nineteenth Century

Indo Anglian literature in the formative nineteenth century period (1820-1940) comprised of poetry, epic poetry and religious literature containing discussions of sociological and political issues. The renowned Indian accomplishments were exoticism, romanticism and translation of Indian classics. The younger, nationalistic and progressive Indians were not appreciative of the popular view of India. Their expectations aroused by the tall promises of the statesmen of World War I were not fulfilled and they became terribly disillusioned as the British refused to grant independence to India. The Jallianwallah Bagh massacre ordered by General Dyer lighted the fire of patriotic zeal and the Englishman and the Indian became inveterate enemies. India was considered as a nation preoccupied with religion and this view irritated the nationalists.

Realism dawned over the Indo Anglian writers after

World War I but there was not much of idealism. An ordinary, matter of fact and a more earthy representation of India was expected and sought for. Nationalists and revolutionaries utilized literature as a valuable tool to dramatize and popularize their cause. Indians seemed to be inspired by the example of Ireland where a nationalist movement inspired a literary renaissance. But in Europe, America and in India too tendentious literature of revolt, social realism was fashionable. There are two ways of looking at Indo Anglian literature : as a more or less faithful mirror of Indian consciousness reacting to the experienced world; and as a part and parcel of the realm of English-speaking literature sharing with England and America, trends, genres and attitude indicating literary uniformity arising out of the shared language and its literary traditions. Consequently the emergence of the Indo-Anglian novel of social realism and social revolution after world war can be recognized as both an Indian phenomenon related to the newly active nationalist movement among the intellectuals and the masses and as a part of the English social realism of the period.

Mulk Raj Anand

Mulk Raj Anand is one of the outstanding novelists of (1920's-1930's) who is humanist to the core, and tried to create the picture of the pitiable condition of poor, oppressed, down-trodden and underdogs of society. In the same stream Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan are pre-independence fiction writers who have portrayed Indian society realistically.

Anand's early and best novels deliberately portray the distress and disability, poverty and penury of the lower classes and castes of India. There is craving for social change motivated by anger and pity. Anand's first three novels: *Untouchable* (1935), *Coolie* (1936) and *Two leaves and a Bud* (1937) form a trilogy. In all the three novels the victim hero belongs to the oppressed and doomed outcaste-proletarian whose fate or destiny is symbolic of enslaved by the capitalist system. Anand is not enamored of the romantic orientalism and seems determined to explode the myth of romantic India substituting in its place his own image of Marxian India – as a cockpit of the class struggle. One of the characters in *Untouchable*, a poet, Iqbal Nath Sarshar criticizes both the Indians and westerners for distorting the real import of the ancient Indian sages.

In both his novels *Untouchable* and *Coolie*, Anand gives an intentional and shocking portrayal of the depressed and downtrodden. In *Untouchable* the sufferer is the latrine cleaner, a genial, athletic boy by name Bakha. In *Coolie*, Munoo, the young innocent abandons his hills in North West India and becomes a servant, labourer and rickshaw puller in the late twenties and early thirties. Anand handles this innocent hero as an exposé

of the corruption of the selfish world before he is crushed by the relentless hand of the same corrupt world. In *Two Leaves and a Bud* (1937) Anand indicates social protest where human motive is explored more ironically and in a complex manner. The coolie Gangu is the hero and a worker in a British owned tea plantation in Assam. He is lured by the specious promises. As in the other two novels, Gangu is exploited. There is worker's rebellion and Gangu's murder by the half mad English overseer. Anand again points his finger at the Indian poor ruined by joint cruelty of capitalism and imperialism.

Anand is considered as one of the most prominent writers of the 20th century who went deep into his characters' minds. Most of the Anand's works are fusion of the stream of consciousness and the narrator's voice. Time is not presented chronologically; it is dependent on the characters' perception, while the focus is on the emotional and psychological processes in the minds of his characters. Thoughts, memories, fantasies and ambitions are presented as they occur, regardless of what readers may consider logical. In some of the novels of Anand uses no limitations to present one of the character's uninterrupted flow of thoughts.

Raja Rao

Raja Rao takes up the theme of British imperialism and oppression handled by Anand in particular way was subjected to a different angle and vision by Raja Rao in his novel *Kanthapura*, 1938. While Anand avoids religion and Indian philosophy as irrelevant to the struggle of economic and political power, Raja Rao employs Hindu mythology, religion and culture in the discussions of national struggle and its revolutionary implications. Raja Rao is concerned with Gandhi's conservatism and his fascinating religious awareness and his essential Hinduism. Anand on the other hand reflects Gandhi's humanism. *Kanthapura* is Raja Rao's exploration of the real nature of India. Metaphysics, history, folk memory, racial self-consciousness are the different under-levels that support a realistic level. He believes and wants us to believe in the cycle of rebirths and in the descent of avatars. He suggests to see life as symbolic, to see the surface reflecting a reality that is beyond. In Raja Rao's view we move once again to the older view of India as magical and mysterious.

Kanthapura is the name of the South Indian village in the novel that symbolizes Hindu India herself. The novel describes how this remote village is stirred into dynamic activity by the impact and influence of Mahatma Gandhi. It also portrays how the village becomes the epitome of Satyagraha and the ensuing violence until it is crushed into silence by the ruling power. In *Kanthapura*, Moorthy is the spokesman of the Mahatma and does not appear to be a real character. The English officials are not

represented with authority and individuality. Violence is perpetrated by the police, the tools of the ruling class. The villagers are the real and lively characters- specially the women who join Moorthy in the great struggle- Rangamma the gentle reformer Kamamma and Ratna and Bhatta who goes over to the British. Raja Rao transforms *Kanthapura* into a timeless entity by comingling the Gandhian revolt with the Ramayana and the Bhagavadgita. Raja Rao's novel suggests a struggle between the conservatism of Gandhi and the socialist aspirations of many of his followers including Moorthy.

R.K.Narayan

R. K. Narayan is a contemporary innovator in the realm of Indo Anglian fiction. We do not find in Narayan the angry protest, satire and revolutionary zeal and tragic proneness of Anand. In spite of rich imagination and comic caricature Narayan's novels faithfully reflect an India as real as Anand's or Raja Rao's. To Narayan South India represented conservative, Hindu Society changing slowly under the influence of the west. Narayan sees such India with a feeling of humour tinged with satire. There is a mixture of traditional holiness with the comfort loving middle class. Narayan's modern India is again a combination of great political activism, permissive sexual morals, the breakdown of traditional family system, American popular culture and rapid half-lunatic culture.

Narayan came to the novel writing through journalism that gave him a confident ease in his English style and an acute observation of daily life in India. In his *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), ambitious Chandran, the hero, of a well to do family and orthodox parents, gets his Bachelor of Arts degree. He is a votary of Indian nationalism and also a respecter of his British teachers.

The three novelists who continued to write after Indian independence but their themes were slightly different. Anand's novel *The Private Life of an Indian Prince* has for its theme the problem of the princely states in free democratic India. But it is lost into a psychological theme of the tragic collapse of the hero's will power, his self-destruction due to circumstances beyond his control. Prince Victor, a weak character, indulging in his own gratification of the sensual desires, wrecks his marriage. He involves himself in sordid political intrigues, abdicates his throne and turns mad.

Modernisation of Malgudi recurs in Narayan's *The Man Eater of Malgudi*. Vasu, a gigantic ex-circus strong man, jail bird, animal hunter, and taxidermist come to Malgudi. He begins a war on animals to export their carcasses after stuffing them. The many facts of Vasu's character afford Narayan chance to be at Indian Five Year Plans, modernization, industrialization, nationalist violence and the shooting of wild animals for sport and profit. Similarly,

Raja Rao in *The Serpent and The Rope* attempts to explain in this long drawn out and complex novel the unique vision that is innate in India's culture, her history, her religion and philosophy.

Major Writers of Twentieth Century

New writers' i.e Khuswant Singh, Govind Desani, Sudhira Nath Ghose and Manohar Malgonker bring in a fresh and new breath of war and heroism as different from the comic irony and humour of Narayan and others. These novelists do not indicate the turbulence, heroism and bloody nature of India since 1939. The novels of Singh, Malgonker, Anita Desai and Kamla Markandaya bring into light the angry winds of change and destruction, death and rebirth.

Khuswant Singh

In Khuswant Singh's, *Train to Pakistan* (1956), the story is that of self- sacrifice of Juggut the dacoit, the local sikh bad man. An imaginary village Mano Majra is epitome of India, with harmony among Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs until the independence of India. Manohar Malogonkar, like Khuswant Singh harps on the tragedy, despair and heroism of Indian independence and bloody partition of the country that followed. Malgonkar celebrates the efficacy of regimental codes in his novel *Distant Drums* (1960). The Army with a great tradition at its back outlives the struggle for independence by its non-involvement in politics in India.

Kamala Markandaya

Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai present a grimmer and more harrowing depiction of Indian life. Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai see the essential tragedy of India in the loss of the truly human, the truly personal under the impact of impersonal or social forces.

Thus both Kamala Markandaya and Anita Desai represent the decades of nineteen fifties and sixties in delving deep into the bitter suffering of the human and personal in modern society exploited by 'processes, machines, and speed by the tyranny of the impersonal. The novels that have brought Kamala Markandaya to the forefront of English writing in India are *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954), *Some Inner Fury* (1955), *A Silence of Desire* (1960), *Possession* (1963), *A Handful of Rice* (1966) and *The Coffer Dams* (1969). Her favourite themes were combined with an extra dimension of India rocked by confusion, violence, convulsive social and political changes. *Nectar in a Sieve* by Markandaya is a pathetic story of poverty in the lives of husband and wife Nathan

and Rukmani. The vagaries of nature, failure of crops defeat them. Industrialization affects them. Two of their sons immigrate to Ceylon. Another becomes a domestic servant and vanishes. The daughter after the failure of marriage turns to prostitution. Family life of Nathan and Rukmani epitomize the lives of ruralites of South India.

Anita Desai

Anita Desai's *Voices in the City* (1965) is a complex novel that deals with the vital problems facing modern man today. In the changing economic situation, more and more men are concentrated in great cities. With the rising tide of commercialism and materialism, man finds himself alone even in the midst of the crowd. Success or failure in one's chosen vocation does not ensure happiness to man and he finds it increasingly difficult to find any meaning for his life in India. The absorbing episodes in the life of Nirode and his sisters in Calcutta are depicted as illustrations of these problems. So, the generations have nothing to do with 'the old guides' and mentors of family rather they are inspired and enchanted by motive of self-discovery and self-realization.

Arundhati Roy

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) presents the plight of two generations of a lower caste family of pre-independence and the post-independence times respectively. Normally lower class people of modern generation are not treated callously as their forefathers, level of contempt of high caste people for them has not gone down even by a jot. Amu one of the female character in the novel shows that women do not enjoy the right of equality with the menfolk even in the upper class families in India. In the present era, Indian women are struggling to acquire the equal status with her counter sex. This way *God of Small Things* epitomizes Indian ways, and traditions as well as cultural and social deformations in society.

Perusal of fiction, from Bankim Chander Chatterjee to Arundhati Roy reveals that the fiction writers of the last century have realistically and emphatically portrayed the various shades of Indian society in the form of problems, traditions, values, culture, myths, social evils and political, economic and religious changes. The paper has taken up major novelists of the last century who have epitomized real India and its people in one way or the other.

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