

The Depiction of Images of Women in Indian Writing in English with a Particular Reference to Mulkraj Anand's UNTOUCHABLE, COOLIE and TWO LEAVES and A BUD

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Abstract: *Indian Writing in English is not a recent genre; it is as old as British, American, African and Common Wealth Writings in English. The depiction of Characters, Women characters in particular, differs from Country to country. However portrayal of male dominance over women is a common feature in all these writings including Indian writing in English. The portrayal of images of women by Indian novelists like Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Devi Chaudhurani, Torudutt, Anand, Narayan, Raja Rao; Bhabani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markendeya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desi, Nayanatara Tara Sahgal, Shoba dey, Arundhati Roy, Vikram Seth, Chetan Bhagath, is not uniform. It differs from novel to novel and writer to writer. The writer of this paper seeks to investigate how there is a vast difference between the portrayal of images of women and the real conditions in which women are forced to live. In reality they continue to live in awful conditions of subjugation, desperate dependence and above all denial of domestic, social and economic freedom by men. Mulk Raj Anand's presentation of images of women can be considered more realistic than those depicted by other writers like Narayan and Raja Rao. The image of Sohini, Bakra's sister, in 'Untouchable' is woefully so pathetic that she is the symbol of oppression. She represents caste exploitation as well as sex exploitation as a priest attempts to seduce her when she goes to clean the latrine in the temple. Though she is very beautiful, she does not have adequate clothes to protect her beauty from the hungry eyes of the male passersby. So she becomes the victim of sexual exploitation.*

In 'Coolie' two women characters Gujri and Biwi Uttamkour are exposed exploiting Munoo, the hero. Parbati, a pathetic character in the novel, is kind hearted and religious and she shows kindness and affection to Munoo, but she weeps when her husband is taken away to the police station.

In 'Two Leaves and a Bud' Anand depicts the pathetic state of women characters under the colonial exploitation Sajani, Gangu, the hero's wife, who represents the fastidious village women whose whole life had been spent cleaning and washing and cooking and cleaning again looks after her husband, Gangu, but she herself gets infected with malaria and dies.

Hunt, the Assistant Plant Manager, tries to seduce Gangu's daughter, Leila, in the tea garden. She shouts and runs back to her hut. Hunt follows her and calls her out. He shoots his revolver in the air. Meanwhile Gangu rushes to the Spot and gets killed by Hunt.

The Writer of this paper seeks to present how the depiction of images of women in earlier novels in general and in Anand's aforesaid three novels in particular could be critically interpreted for academic and research debate.

Keywords: *Portrayal, male dominance, subjugation, desperate dependence, realistic, pathetic character, colonial exploitation, fastidious infected.*

1. INTRODUCTION

If colonialism forced Indians to depend desperately on the British rulers for Social and Political needs, Post Colonialism compelled them to look towards the British imperialists more and more for educational and intellectual needs. Thus the post colonialism has had a great deal of adverse impact on Indian Writers writing their works in English. Despite their tenacity and determination to retain their individuality and self identity, the writers from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee down to

Chetan Bhagat have come under the influence of post colonialism in one form or the other. Though their plots, characters, situations and themes were Indian, they could not totally avoid the traces some of the British Writers of Colonial and Post Colonialism.

If we look at the Indian Writers in English in the Colonial era, as KRS Iyengar points out, we can find the beginnings of Indo-Anglian fiction that can be traced to the work of Bankim chatterjee (1838-1894) who wrote a novel, Rajmohan's wife in English, though written with Indian Setting had touches of European Writers. Chatterjee also wrote a few novels in Bengali which was subsequently translated into English among which, Anandmath and Devi Chaudhurani were the most important. Toru Dutt also wrote a novel in English Published under the title 'BIANCA' in 1878. Khetrupal Chakravarti's novel also written in English was published under the title SARATA and HINGANA in 1875. Almost all these novels written in English could not be avoided the shades of English novelists in one way or the other in their presentation.

Among the Indian Writers writing in English in the colonial period of pre independence days, Mulkraj Anand and R.K. Narayan were the pioneers of Indo-Anglian fiction. Anand's first novel entitled 'UNTOUCHABLE' was first published in 1935. Besides 'UNTOUCHABLE' he wrote eight novels forming into an important body of Indo-Anglian fiction which are furnished hereunder chronologically.

- Coolie (1936)
- Two Leaves and a Bud (1937)
- The Village (1939)
- Across the Black Waters (1940)
- The Sword and the Sickle (1942)
- The Big Heart (1945)
- The Old Woman and the Cow (1960)
- The road (1961)

Infact Anand planned a series of seven novels which can be considered to be his fictional autobiography. Anand is a pioneer of sociological novel and in all his nonvels he sought to indict the Social evils like untouchability, Social and economic inequality, discrimination of women, poverty, hunger, slavery. All these evils which were rampant in colonial days continued to prevail in Indian Society even till to-day in one way or the other.

Mulk Raj Anand belonged to North India, while R.K. Narayan belonged to South India. Narayan whose mother tongue was Tamil also mastered English language. It is interesting to note that his first novel, 'Swami and Friends' was published in 1935, the same year in which Anand's first novel 'UNTOUCHABLE' was also published. In this novel the setting was an imaginary South Indian town called Malgudi. Later Malgudi became as a constant setting for many of Narayan's novels and well known to all the novel readers. Narayan's contribution to Indo Anglian fiction is very significant through the novels enumerated here under.

1. Bachelor of Arts (1936)
2. The Dark Room (1938)
3. The English Teacher (1945)
4. Mr. Sampath (1949)
5. The Financial Expert (1952)
6. Waiting for Mahatma (1955)
7. The Guide (1958)

KRS Iyengar aptly observes that "the novels of RK Narayan show a sense of comedy in addition to his awareness of the tragedy of the human situation."

Though Indian by birth, upbringing and education, Narayan as a writer writing in English whose comprehending reality of European novelists could not make him come out of the influence of their writings. In this context, Iyengar prints that like some British writers Narayan is neither an intolerant critic of Indian ways and modes nor a fanatical defender of them. He is chiefly a writer

of tragicomedies of circumstance, mischance, and misdirection. At his best, as in "The English Teacher", Narayan presents smiles and tears together, smiling through the tears in things and receiving the rainbow splendor of life"

2. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

One of the most remarkable characteristic features of Indian Writing in English is the rise of a large number of women novelists who have immensely contributed to the body of Indo-Anglian literature in terms of their Quality and Quantity. Among the more productive women novelists the names of Kamala Markandeya Anita Desai, Kiran Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Arundhati Rai and Shobha Dey deserve to be mentioned. An interesting point to note about all these novelists is that they belong to post colonial period of post Indian independence.

Kamala Markandeya's first novel, 'Nectar in a Sieve', published in 1954 is set in a South Indian Village where life seems to have remained the same as it used to be in olden times but which is now invaded by modern technology and industry. The novel, Dickens' 'Hard Times', depicts the poverty, the misery and the Squalor in which the villagers have been living and are still living. Rukmani, the protagonist of the novel who is also the victim of many sorrows is the narrator of the novel. 'Some Inner Fury' is Kamala Markandeya's second novel published in 1957. In this novel too the heroine, Mira, whose life is sad and tragic represents the trials, tribulations and sufferings of an Indian woman in a typical Indian Village. Both 'Nectar in a Sieve' and "Some Inner Fury" are truly tragic novels. 'A Silence of Desire' is her third novel published in 1961 and her fourth novel 'Possession' in 1963 in which the setting changes from India to England and America and then back to India showing the influence of Europe and West. 'A Handful of Rice' appeared in 1966 and The Coffers that appeared in 1969 are her last two novels. In 'Possession' the theme is folly and futility of the average human desire of possession. In 'A Handful of Rice' the novelist depicts how for a handful an average human being has to wage a war. As Iyengar observes, the theme of Kamala Markandeya's last two novels is nothing less than the "Quiet desperation" in which most people in a city or a country side are condemned to live, and the pettiness and the horror, the pity and the heroism which come into play in their lives."

Anita Desai is another great name among the Indian Writers Writing in English. She wrote 'Cry, The Peacock', published in 1963 and "Voices in the City" published in 1965. Exploration of sensibility as Jane Austen in her novels like 'Sense and sensibility' is the main theme of her novels. According to KRS Iyengar, Anita Desai added a new dimension to the achievement of Indian Women Writers."

The name of Nayantara Sahgal is secure in the list of Indian Women Writers Writing in English in Post Colonial Period. Her depiction of Women characters were true to life as they existed in feudal set up of pre independence days. "A Time to be Happy", "This Time of Morning" and "Storm in Chandigarh" can be considered to be a trilogy because they portrayed the life of certain families in Northern India that took part in freedom struggle and also the dominance of bureaucracy inherited from British rulers in the early post independence inherited from British rulers in the early post independence days resembling the way of life, characters and situations as depicted by the British novelists like Bronte sisters and Jane Austen.

Vikram Seth is one of the greatest Indian Writers Writing in English in post colonial India. As a novelist he is Unique in more than one way; he has revived the poetic novel with a new dimension. Though he is an Indian by birth, he is alien by temperament. His two novels The Golden Gate and A Suitable Boy stand out as outstanding contributions in the field of Indo-Anglian fiction with a difference.

Besides being a novel in verse, the Golden Gate presents Yuppie life style in Northern California of the United States of America. In the novel Seth tells us the Story of a Young man who fails to sustain love and companionship in his life. John, the protagonist, who is lonely and under depression craves for meaning and happiness to find fulfillment.

In the novel, Seth satirises romance and romantic relationships. As the novel is in the form of a series of sonnets, most of the sonnets echo the feelings romantic passion. He presents the physical consummation between John and Liz which is short lived and illusionary.

“Everything just great in bed, yet nothing shared inside your hear”. (TGG 9.36)

John and Liz meet on a winter Sunday are in bed by Thursday, but part before summer is out. The initial stages of the relationship between them are formed by continuous talk and hunger for dialogue, as they decide to give up. But when they enter into an intense sexual relationship, they lose out their hunger for conversation which brought them earlier together. The relationship between Liz and Phil lacks in physical attraction and sexual excitement. John takes a very brief period of ease with Janet before her sudden death in a car accident. They go into sexual relationship only after they have begun to communicate honestly with each other. Janet's death becomes an important moment in the hero's search for ultimate satisfaction and beauty as he tries to come to terms with his past. He is all alone, isolated and lost. There is none to console him except the departed voice of Janet who is no more. Emptiness leads to nothing but to emptiness. Modernity longs for Physical comforts and there is no time for intellectual and spiritual growth. The modern concept of living is to make everything fit into its own priorities and as a result a terrific disruption takes place. Thus modern man has become vulnerable to all such influences.

Seth's 'A Suitable Boy' deals with the love affairs of the heroine in the back drop of partition and increasing Hindu-Muslim Communal Violence. The main plot of the novel is based on the question of finding a suitable partner.

Lata, the heroine of the novel, takes the opportunity of selecting her husband from among three men who are wholly different from one another in their appearance and disposition. Kabir, a Cricketer, dashing and handsome is the first suitor, but he is a Muslim. Amit Chatterjee, a Bengali Brahmin a poet and novelist, sophisticated and rich is the second suitor. The third suitor, Haresh is an energetic young man determined to make a career for him in the shoe manufacturing industry. Lata enjoys the pleasure of Kabir's companionship. Though she has a desire to marry him, her religion and traditional family has come in the way. So she decides to marry Haresh in whom she finds a suitable partner. Seth highlights the restrictions imposed on women in Post Colonial India.

In the Post Colonial India Shobha De's Place is special in as much as she has contributed altogether twelve novels all with a difference. Among all these novels "Selective Memory" is most important as it gives total picture of the Writer herself.

Shobha Rajadhyaksha, the original name of Shobha De, belongs to a Sarswat Brahmin family in Maharastra. A graduate in psychology, she made a name as a model and later took to Journalism in 1970. She founded and edited three popular magazines, STARDUST, SOCIETY and CELEBRITY. Now she is a free lance writer and columnist for several news papers and magazines.

As the Maharani of Muck or the Princess of Porn, she is India's most commercially successful English language Writer. At 62 she is a traditional mother to six children. As she believes that sex sells as a popular product, she dares to write lusty, obscene sex scenes. Though she believes in some of the Indian traditions, she flees from marriage.

In 'Selective Memory' she has projected herself as a daring daughter a homemaker, a wife and a worried mother. In general Shobha De is a glamorous woman who lacks in the commitment of social cause. In 'Selective Memory' she emerges as a new woman possessing a mischievous charm and immense capacity to judge and understand other people. She is at her best at depicting the ties of human relationships.

Unlike other writers who depicted abject urban poverty and Quaint Village life, Shobha De pictured India with much difference.

“My books put an unflinching gaze on upper middle class India, she says, is out of that class.”

In the prologue to her Selective Memory' she says,

“For a woman, a book in progress is like a secret lover. She has to hide from her family, steal time to go back to dream about.”

Selective Memory is suggestive that a human mind likes to retain everything that is valuable, poignant and painful.

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Shobha De presents her brand of feminism through the character of Anjali in her 'Selective Memory' when she says, 'Men feel terribly threatened by Self-sufficient women. They prefer girls like me – dependent dolls. You should try it – see how much more you can get out of him. In De's Self-help book for women, surviving Men' the Smart Woman's Guide, she tells us "Thrive a man to any level of competence. Women should use these formulae –

- (a) Food
- (b) Sex
- (c) Food and Sex."

3. CONCLUSION

If the writers of colonial and post colonial periods depict the images of women under the influence of British and American Writers, Anand alone depicts the characters of both men and women with a particular vision and reality. They are normal, simple credible human beings unaware of their Social Condition. In the preface to the 'TWO LEAVES AND A BUD' Anand says "All these characters and other men and women were the reflection of the real people I had known during my childhood and youth. They were the flesh of my flesh and blood of my blood." In the untouchable' too Anand depicts the character of Bakha with a vivid reality. A Sweeper by vocation, he is treated like an animal. People throw things at him the way they do to the animals. The climax of inhumanity is that a mother throws a slice of bread at him from the top of her house.

If Anand deals with social disparity between the high caste and the untouchables in Untouchable, Coolie deals the economic disparity between the rich and the poor. Edgell Rick Word, a Western Critic aptly observes.

"With Coolie we are plunged into much more complicated world, a world where apparently everyone is free to move about and earn his living at whatever trade or craft he pleases. For the Untouchable may be chided or kicked if he offends the laws of caste, but he has place in the system. Munoo, the central character of 'the Coolie' in his drifting from job to job from his native hills to plain, we get the most Vivid panorama of life in India to-day". (Dhawan ed 78)

P.K. Rajan in his comparative study of Untouchable and Coolie observes that "For Munoo it is an individual's Quest for freedom in a Social System of ruthless exploitation. The Society of Coolie is one in which chief form of exploitation is capitalist though the feudal exploitation still remains. Munoo, in his Quest for freedom, is squeezed dry by the machinery of capitalist exploitation until he meets his tragic end." (Rajan 15)

Thus Anand has a claim to be regarded as a Writer of independent creativity in Indian Writing in English.

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