

THE ROLE OF INDIAN WRITERS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO DEPICT PERSONAL AND NATIONAL DESTINIES IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN ENGLISH NOVELS

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ABSTRACT:

The present study, especially at the time of global turbulence, vast inequalities and deep conflicts, wherein the ideal of democratic nationhood is under serious threat, is arrested to by several significant facts. At the outset, the Indian novels in English have always been a fruitful mirror of changing individuals and national lives and sensibilities, deeply concerned with the nation's destiny. Transcending native languages barriers, it has formed a truly Indian literature that expresses the quintessential soul of the nation. Secondly the novels selected for this study have been published in the 1990s and after. The Indian English fiction of this period deserves greater analysis not only for its foregrounding of the Indian experience on the global stage, but also for its deeper amalgamation of personal and national histories. The post-1990 era is turning point in Indian history, marked by the influence of economic liberalization and

globalization and by the deeper involvement of the citizen as a more active and powerful agent on the national scene. Hence, the 1990s and the new millennium provides a vantage point for a national events since independence, from an objective distance.

Keywords: - Inequalities, deep conflict, global turbulence, sensibilities, transcending etc.

INTRODUCTION

The novels presented in this study, present a comprehensive picture of the interface between individual and national lives, in post-independence India from 1947, till date. The Indian English novels have always been a fruitful mirror of changing individuals, national lives and sensibilities, deeply concerned with the nation's destiny. The ideal of democratic nationhood is under serious threat, especially at the time of worldwide turmoil, vast inequalities and deep conflicts, the native language

barriers. It is the truly Indian literature that expresses the quintessential soul of nation. The Indian English novels of 1990's deserve a greater psychoanalysis, not only for its foregrounding of the Indian experience on the global stage, but also for its deeper amalgamation of individual and national histories. The post- 1990 era is a turning point in Indian history, marked by the influence of economic liberalization and globalization, and by the deeper involvement of the citizen as a more active and powerful agent on the national scene. Hence, the 1990s and the new millennium provides a vantage point for a national events, since independence from an objective distance. The novels that form the part of this study are written between the periods 1990 to till date. These novels depict the individual and national wide destiny which helps in developing the social and cultural relation that leads to the development of the nation and changes the ideas of democratic nationhood which was under a serious threat. Also the novels reveal its vast sweep over the fates of millions and its gradually increasing totalitarianism, populism and divorce from constitutional values. The narratives of individual and national are inseparable from each other. These Novels represent an era of painful awareness, anxiety and interrogation, an attempt to keep the soul of the nation alive. By exposing the harsh realities of the times, they give new directions and inspiring goals to a hungry nation. The novels that are the part of this study are Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), Meher Pestonji's

Pervez-A Novel (2002), David Davidar's *The Solitude of Emperors* (2007), Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) and Tarun Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* (2009) which exposes the individual and national destiny depicted in Indian society.

In Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*,(1997) the socio-politically volatile Kerala of the sixties and seventies becomes a microcosm of the larger national scene marked by conflicting political ideologies, deep class divides, famine, agricultural and industrial stagnation, unemployment and above all caste and gender discrimination. In her depiction of the subaltern crushed by mighty societal and governmental forces, the novelist rewrites conventional history from the perspective of women and lower castes. Arundhati Roy's documentation of the politics of Communist Kerala and Marxist-Naxalite movements of the sixties and seventies when peasants, labourers, Dalits and unemployed youth were raging against economic inequalities, social injustice and feudalism, analyses how on a national scale, political ideologies disappointed commoners by allying with social orthodoxy and government repression.

Meher Pestonji's *Pervez-A Novel* (2002) offers a comprehensive analysis of India in the nineties- caste and communal politics, the plight of innocent victims of religious riots, the paradoxical co-existence of economic liberalization and narrow-minded communalism. While documenting the impact of the Ram Temple–Babri Mosque religious

conflagration on Bombay, Pestonji exposes the divisive and opportunistic stance taken by politicians and elites which breeds religious intolerance. She also underlines the role of civil society in preserving secularism and her heroine Pervez exemplifies how both individual and nation are transformed by mutual involvement. As she wrote to this researcher, "Destinies (of individuals and the nation) change direction...in periods of upheaval....it is Pervez' own sense of justice misplaced that drives her so that her personal destiny gets enmeshed with national issues. For Pervez it was a wake-up call to identify with groups placing reason and humanity over fanaticism and bigotedness....becomes an agent for social change." While acknowledging the power and beauty of literature, social activist Meher Pestonji believes that more than literature, it is people who can bring about change. She notes those sixty years after freedom, Indians have finally begun to assert themselves as citizens of a democracy, taking responsibility for local governance and forcing those in power to become accountable.

Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) is set in the remote north-east against the backdrop of the bloody Gorkha insurgency. It mirrors the regional secessionisms of the 1960s-1980s which threatened the idea of an integrated India and traces them to developmental disparities and class-conflicts chiefly caused by administrative failures. The novel also deals with the often painful process of emigration to the West in the 1980s in search of better prospects. On the one hand, Kiran Desai

portrays the decadent colonial legacy that has left behind a soulless Anglicized class and has sown the seeds for territorial disputes. She sensitively handles the tormented psyche and undying spirit of ordinary citizens caught between violent regional or ethnic conflicts and tortuous post-colonial dilemmas. Desai makes an admirable effort to canonize all those marginalized by the abuse of power, knowledge and wealth, cutting across temporal and spatial boundaries. By centering subaltern narratives and the conveniently glossed over ugly realities of the twenty-first century world, she seeks justice for the voiceless.

David Davidar's *The Solitude of Emperors* (2007) narrates the journey of a young newspaper journalist in the momentous 1990s marked by economic revolution and communal strife. He indicts politicians, media, bureaucracy, police and elites. The novel innovatively includes a textbook which is meant to educate youth about secularism. The need to mould the young into responsible citizens, the crucial role of socio-economic injustice in fuelling religious fanaticism, the failure of civil society to oppose communal politicians and the need for India. To have a plural and tolerant culture are major themes in the novel. The journey of the penniless rural protagonist to become a business tycoon after slaying his rich master reveals an India gridlocked in corruption, greed, inhumanity and every form of economic, social and political inequality.

Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008) constantly compares the two Indians of astounding plenty and appalling poverty. It takes apart the grand narrative of Indian democracy, the facade of the Indian village paradise, the glittering power of the metropolis of New Delhi and the software miracle in Bangalore. Adiga is cynical, disillusioned and sardonic about India today. He warns of a civil war-like situation born out of the rage of the subaltern. He challenges the nation to cast aside its self-deception and initiate a process of self-examination.

Tarun Tejpal's *The Story of My Assassins* (2009) is a multi-layered novel centered on a journalist who has exposed corruption in the highest levels of governance and the lives of five criminals arrested for attempting to kill him. It becomes a narration of history from the perspective of the downtrodden forced into crime by injustice and inequality. As the founder of *Tehelka*, an organization dedicated to aggressive public interest journalism, Tejpal has led sting operations exposing corruption among the ruling elite. He has had to pay the price for uncovering outrageous scams and scandals and his fiction is influenced by his journalism.

These novels encompass every nook and corner of India, from villages to metropolises. They comprehensively depict varied epochs in Indian history from Partition and independence to the national developments. Their protagonists who live in the shadow of or directly engage with these

national events are men, women and children, ruling elites and poor masses, minorities, subaltern groups and middle-classes. The common strand uniting these novelists is the consciousness use of national history and the fine balance of the private and the public, rooted in their own deep involvement with national issues.

All, these novels suggest the Indian democracy that has certainly expanded and has not deepened in equal measure. These novels also critique objectively the roles played by the citizen and the government in post-independence India, both with regard to what these roles are and what they ought to be. Each novel reiterates the idea of the individual patiently rebuilding what has been destroyed by politics and history, state and government. There are so many stories of the triumphs of individuals over corrupt systems and cruel destinies. The spirit of resilience runs as a common thread through all the novels, uniting the sagas of citizens nurturing liberty and peace, progress and fraternity despite the Partition of 1947, the class-wars and violent secessionism of the 1960s-1980s, the Emergency of the 1970s, the religious riots of the 1990s and the double onslaught of imperialist globalization and religion-based terrorism in the new millennium. Those unable to balance and rebuild, to depend on private initiative when government mechanisms falter, end in failure. As far the government is concerned, the novels reveal its vast sweep over the fate of millions that

has gradually increased in totalitarianism, populism, and divorce from constitutional values.

The narratives of individual and national are inseparable from each other. These novels represent an era of painful awareness, anxiety and interrogation, an attempt to keep the soul of the nation alive. By exposing the harsh realities of the times, they give new directions and inspiring goals to a hungry nation.

CONCLUSION

In the contemporary Indian Literary scenario, Indian writers in English who reflect the truth of Indian reality bear numerous responsibilities in the world of literature. They execute with admirable aplomb as the anthropologists, sociologists, novelists, essayists, travel writers, teachers and slip into global responsibility for establishing peace as the ambassadors. They have excelled the global literary standards set by the post-colonial writers like, Meher Pestonji, David Davidar, Arvind Adiga, TarunTejpal's and, Arundhati Roy.

These have become the colossal central socio literary figures with the substantial bodies of work drawing the global attention. They also have become the only negotiators to mediate the core social and cultural problems of India and other colonized nations. All their major works have enjoyed immense academic attention across the globe and which have invited and produced a great amount of literary criticism. They have created a wide

readership and a strong critical endorsement that reflect the attention of serious academicians and scholars. All the post-colonial and postmodern predicaments are wrestled to demonstrate a high level of self-consciousness, which continue, interrogate the social, philosophical, cultural issues of rape and sexual harassment of innocent women in the contemporary Indian society. Their intellectual insights, conceptual, theoretical and textual experiments have engaged and interpreted the complex colonial and postcolonial situations. They have also established a peculiar paradox of reading and appreciation eloquently responding to the issues of sexually harassed women both in post-colonial and postmodern issues of rape and exploitation on the Indian women in the contemporary society.

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