

The Portrayal of Native Aliens and Alien Natives in Indian English Literature

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Objectivity of a writer has always been acclaimed as an asset whether he is drawing the characters in a novel, drama or a short story. The art of characterization lies in grasping the crux of the person and assimilates the individual and the universal traits. A portrayal must have verisimilitude if it is to meet the approval of the readers and the critics. Indian English Novelists present three types of characters in their novel:

1. Purely Indian Characters, 2. Indians who have settled abroad or Indians abroad, 3. Foreigners in India and in their Native lands who have come in contact with Indians and way of their life.

This perception of the foreigners presents a kind of bias and the portrayal seems to lose authenticity. Similar seems to be the case with the portraiture of Indians abroad. All portrayals depend on the perception by the creative eye.

I. Aims and Objectives:

Our aim is to study selected characters from Indians abroad called Native Aliens and from Non-Indians called Alien Natives. We plan to discover the bias in perception and point out that all Indians don't behave in the manner presented by the writers. What is the root cause of this failure of objectivity in almost all the writers? Though the terms Native Aliens and Alien Natives is generally ascribed to writers but we are applying these terms to characters of Indian and Non-Indian origin.

II. Review of Literature

There have been studies of various relationships in Indian English Fiction related to husband, wife, brother, sister etc but none has given this angle and so the study is touching upon a new aspect of Indian English Fiction.

We propose to study such characters from Raja Rao, Balchandra Rajan, Arun Joshi, Ruth Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai and Bharti Mukherjee, particularly in the novels viz The Serpent and the Rope, The Dark Dancer, The Foreigner, Some Inner Fury, Coffin Dams. Pleasure City, Esmond in India, Heat and Dust, Wife, Tiger's Daughter, Bye Bye Blackbird, Possession.

The art of characterization is an important facet of creative writing and their art meets its acid test in the portrayal of Indian and Non-Indian characters, Indian English writers of the past and current generation have presented Non-Indian characters and their presentation suffers from the lacunae of objectivity. If we contrast their portrayals of Native Aliens and Alien Natives, we find that whereas they display authenticity in portraying Indian characters, they do not fully succeed in presenting alien natives i.e. the non-Indian characters who came to India or even in their own countries were influenced by Indian view of life and thought. If one portraiture has the soul, the other seems to lack it. It is alleged that Indian English Literature writers can't do justice to such portrayals because their sensibility is mixed and impure. But the fact remains that knowledge of two cultures help a writer to enlarge his point of view. A novel writer tries to see the contra-pulls of naturalistic and mechanistic forces on the individual but he has to keep in mind the basic make-up of the man, which is culturally inherent in him. For example, Indians don't have the concept of individual will and so fail to fashion out their own way of life. Indians don't live all by themselves as the westerners do. An Indian is put in a shell of Inertia and so fail to chalk out their own course of life. Fatalism opiates them in the slumber of indifference.

Indian English writers are not much inclined to bring out the subtle difference between the Indians and non-Indians who form

a motley-medley crowd on the canvas of novel. All writers infuse vitality and life in their Indian portrayals making them human replete with foibles and frailties but fail to present a firmly round character where a foreigner is concerned. Most of such characters are flat. They are without their individual will. They behave as the puppets or idea pegs of the writers and representative of western attitudes. So they don't become round, only projecting the gulf between the occident and orient.

"The novel is an attempt to create a mirror in which the novelist will be able to see his own image. It is fundamentally an attempt at self-creation His real aim is to understand himself....." (Colin Wilson, The Craft of the Novel, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1975. Pg-221)

"To say that literary criticism should be specific discipline of intelligence is not to suggest that a serious interest in Literature can confine itself to an intensive local analysis to the scrutiny of words and images but a real literary interest in man, society and civilization and its boundaries can't be drawn" (F.R. Leavis, Sociology and Literature: The Common Pursuit, London Penguins, 1962. Pg -200)

Literary criticism grows with the successive opening of the tracts of unexplored territory. Manifold are the uses of Literature. To restrict it to mere practical criticism is sheer travesty of truth. Humane analysis of Literature involves question of psychological, political and social forces. Great books and great writers invite such a robust communion *"because they spring from and continue to exist in a world of public interest as well as private imagination"* (Graham Smith, The Novel and the Society, London, Brantford Academy Ltd, 1984. Pg- 10)

Indian English Novel lacks dynamism of characters as compared to the growth of protagonists in Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders and Pamela etc. We see operation within the tradition-oriented society where neither a man's profession nor his marriage is his personal affair. Everything is preordained. Life itself is a boon of past deeds and so concrete characterization requires a steadfast consciousness of the present because characters exist within a specific time.

A character in a novel must not simply be life-like but alive. Life-like characters may be static. Alive characters have an inner core of life. Alive characters have dynamism. An alive character obeys his own laws while life-like characters obey the novelist.

"All novels deal with character and it is to express the character that the novel is formed of..... has been evolved." (V. Woolf)

Our study of the native aliens and alien natives in Indo-English fiction is restricted to a few specific examples/characters from the

vast body of Indian writing in English. It is an effort to highlight the nuances of literary depiction, of contrasting the two kinds of portrayals which are based on the antagonism in between Western and Indian ethos. While the pre-independence writers presented these characters of British origin to ridicule their sense of superiority and based their perception on cultural stand point, the post-independence writers were laden with a latent urge to achieve socialism.

The novelist is not a product of an ethnic ethos so the dichotomy of cultures should not have any effect on him. He must have a worldview.

“One touch of nature makes the whole world akin, but it is in literature that the heart-beats of nation are heard.....while the differences are on the surface the sense of unity flows in an underground river and we duly receive the baptism of rebirth in the fellowship of human faith.” (KRS Iyengar, Indian writing in English, New Delhi, Sterling, 1984, Pg-1)

India has always been a mystery to the Non-Indians and it would be hyperbolic to say that all Indians have understood India as India beguiles in an unbeguiling way. Alien Natives have been birds of passage and prey, and have consistently failed to comprehend the ethos of India. They don't find much to eulogize India. British came to India to amass a fortune, enjoyed unlimited freedom and authority. They held the life of an Indian cheap. They detested its climate, denied its interests, belittled its artistic achievements, abhorred its dark skinned people despised its language. They thought it was impossible to understand India and there was no use in doing so. It is all right but can writers go by or be weighed down by extra-literary pressures. A writer is expected to do justice to his dramatic personae. So the character portrayal collapses in to a diasporic puddle and true memorable alien Indian is not found in Indian English fiction.

“Men are like dogs, when they approach other nations hey smell hind parts”,-“India reacts strongly on foreigners. They either love it or loathe it or do both” –Jhabvala

A writer has to be able to treat the Individual and the social process as part of a dynamic continuum. India can't be kept apart from action of thought and circumstances. Art of character arises from it. It involves problem of human identity.

The conception of the character in European novel is:

“When the unconditioned human organism is placed in a dialectical relationship with a social or moral order.....” (Bernard Begonzhi – The Situation of the Novel, London, Macmillan, 1979. Pg-42)

Characters are not features of a landscape to represent wider truths, to symbolize larger concept. Character is a tree symbolizing all trees. Characters have to be unique and particular and such round characters are few to find in Indian English Literature.

The characters selected for study are:

Alien Natives	Native Aliens
Madeleine (Raja Rao)	Rama (Raja Rao)
Cynthia (Rajan)	Krishnan, Nalini (Rajan)
Clinton, Caroline, Kenny, Mrs.Pickering, Richards, Helen (Kamala Markandaya)	Valmiki, Srinivas, Anusuya, Mira Rukamani (Kamala Markandaya)
Olivia, Judy, Esmond (Jhabvala)	Tara, Dimple, Jasmine (Bharti Mukherjee)

Sarah, Baumgartner (Anita Desai)	Adit (Anita Desai)
	Gulab, Shakuntala (Jhabvala) Sindhi (Arun Joshi)

III. Methodology:

The plan of study would include the survey of the Art of characterization of these writers viz Raja Rao, B.Rajan, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Bharti Mukherjee and Arun Joshi and explore whether there is difference in their attitude to the portraiture of Native Aliens and Alien Natives and whether these characters are round or flat.

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