

A message of Globalization: An Analysis of Contemporary South Asian English novels

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Abstract- South Asian region is facing the challenges of political instabilities, social unrest, insecurities due to whatever is happening in political scene since last few decades. Present study focuses on the trends of globalization in South Asian English novels with reference to Indian, Pakistani and Afghani novels. South Asia is particularly the most targeted region due to its geo-political and strategic standing in global scenario. Moreover stereotypical notions such as nationalism, fundamentalisms have compartmentalized people of this region in suffocated cabins of cast, creed, religion, nation and culture. In such a critical time a piece of literature can no longer remain a mere piece of story that serve to entertain, rather it is morally bound to fill the gaps in order to break boundaries that lead to destruction. Amitav Gosh a renowned Indian novelist in his novel *The Shadow Lines* (1988) negates the concepts of national, social and cultural boundaries. *Our Lady Of Alice Bhatti* (2011) is a Pakistani novel by Muhammad Hanif in which he finds common grounds between two religions on the basis of humanity and nature. Afghanistan born Khalid Hosseini's *And the Mountains Echoed* (2013) is an attempt to transcend national, cultural and geographical boundaries to promote globalization. These authors give importance to human and humanity and challenge stereotypical boundaries, hence giving way to globalization. The researcher will analyze texts in the light of Michel Foucault theory of power and knowledge. Present study aims to find contribution of South Asian English novels in bridging the gap in the very continent particularly and across the continents generally.

Index Terms- Postmodernism, Power, Knowledge, Globalization

I. INTRODUCTION

South Asian novels in English have always been a source of cultural, religious, moral and traditional enrichment. The innovations to which it is subjected show that the writers are curious to explore their writing capabilities as well as to portray different themes. A shift in thought pattern was recognized after Second World War, and literature was placed in a new category as "Postmodern Literature". The destruction caused by Second World War and science effected novelists in the same way as lay men. The age became the age of insecurities, instabilities and chaos that is reflected in South Asian literature now. Literature is reflection of the age in which it is written. Novelists like Khalid Hussaini, Amitav Gosh and Muhammad Hanif ponder upon the insecurities and struggle to unite the humanity amid physical,

social, territorial insecurities. Amitav Gosh protests against the man made /enforced boundaries of nation, cast, creed, and identity in his novels. Author has got the power through knowledge according to Michel Foucault theory; South Asian English novelists are using their power to construct a world of peace where man is a true companion of man without giving a thought to social, cultural and religious boundaries. Amitav Gosh does not totally negate the notion of nationalism rather he says that it is an institution to be held prestigious, but not on the cost of causing destruction. He prefers globalization over nationalism. *The Shadow Lines* is the novel in which Gosh gives the message to cast aside cultural, regional, territorial, religious and physical differences aside and join the hands through bond of humanity. The characters like Tridib, Prince form a true relation with one another bringing west and east together.

II. FOUCAULT CRITIQUE ON POWER AND KNOWLEDGE

Michel Foucault was a French theorist and philosopher. Foucault theory gives the idea of power and knowledge in literature. Power generates the discourse and controls truth. The theory propagates the idea that power and knowledge are linked with each other. Foucault challenges the notion that power is always with the authoritative rather he says that "Power is everywhere." (Foucault: 93). He says that power is not always destructive but it is constructive, it generates discourse, and knowledge. The concept of power given by him in theory is entirely different from the earlier concept i.e. power is used to subjugate physically, rather he states that it is a technique to be exercised. According to him power generates discourse based on truth and these truths are socially constructed, actually made by society. The truth for one society may not be truth for other. He gives a new idea regarding power that it is no longer limited to the political authorities. Foucault does not stress much on economic aspect of power rather he makes it clear that by exercising power is to control social action, to construct or reconstruct thinking, to change mentality. As Dreyfus argues about Foucault concept as "Power is the way the everyday practices of individuals and groups are coordinated so as to produce what people can think, do and be (Dreyfus 2)."

III. CONTENT ANALYSIS

South Asian novelists use English by their choice to address wider global audience. *Our Lady of Alice Bhatti* is a novel in

which Muhammad Hanif as the author has deployed power through the character of Christian nurse Alice at Sacred heart hospital. Alice Bhatti is below ordinary by her status in the novel, her low cast, being a girl from minority, tag of spending considerable time in prison makes her presence an “absence” in the social set up of hospital. Alice by her power of spiritualism uses the knowledge of religion and recovers dead baby, almost a miracle quite unexpected from low class lady like her. She controls people by her unseen power and they come to get spiritual treatment from her and not from medical staff. Hanif being a Muslim defends Alice, a Christian lady full of virtue it’s a step towards creating a homogeneous global world where every religion is practiced freely on its values. Hanif rightly believes that every religion is based on a purpose to make this world a peaceful place for living, but so called social, cultural, religious boundaries serve to trap and create gap between humans. Hanif as an author generates a discourse that produces the knowledge of accepting Christian as virtuous as any other religion can be. As he states depicts through the character of Alice that she refused to entertain the immoral demands of one of the male attendants of a patient during her night shift duty. The attendant used the power of pistol to harass her and make her obey his demands. As it is stated,

“The barrel of the pistol hits her face and Alice is slapped again, hard. She still thinks she hasn’t done anything to deserve this, but she has made up her mind to go through with it (Hanif 89)”.

It was her power that when she was forced to subjugate to physical desires of male attendant of a patient she despite being “powerless” as a nurse inflicts pain on the man with blade without giving a thought to the dire consequences afterwards. Father of Alice: Joseph Bhatti though a Christian but knows Islamic ayahs and he recites these in the time of need, it shows that he believes in both the religion truly. This is the message of tolerance, flexibility and to respect every religion.

From Foucaultian perspective it is clear that power is not always the entity of authority rather an ordinary person can show power and control authority as Alice does. In *The Shadow Lines* Amitav Gosh has propagated the idea of a world that has no formal boundaries of nation. Tridib is the character who by virtue of power decides to live life of a free man, to whom all the world seems a single country. All the characters in the novel mix up with one another without thinking of nationality and social position to give a message as they are brothers and sisters in global world. Amitav in an interview revealed that the riot lead by Hindus against Sikhs made him think that nationalism and religious fixation leading to destroy and tear away the spiritual bond of humanity. This was the inspiration behind *The Shadow Lines*. “Social problems like hindu-muslim riots are seen through the eyes of Tridib, Thamma and the narrator (Baskaran, Indu 48).” Khalid Hosseini in *And the Mountains Echoed* transcends the geographical, cultural, social and national boundaries by starting from Afghanistan, than to Kabul, Paris and California. These novels are a sign of hope amid physical, national, territorial and cultural insecurities. The novel portrays that how groups of people from different nationalities are brought together by virtue of fate and they form a strong unbreakable acquaintance. This is the power that is used by them to construct a peaceful relation by their knowledge of social requirement i.e.

peace and stability. The author by his power generates a discourse that gives the knowledge to the reader with what he/she can identify her/himself. As stated in Express Tribune a leading English news paper “And The Mountains Echoed” is a story of reinventing oneself, it resounds with each one of us”.(Kazmi, Express). In a way Hussaini tries to undo what war did in Afghanistan, it has not only caused the mental and physical distances but also a great damage beyond recovery. “Afghanistan, buried under layers of war, that Hosseini unearths.(The Daily Beast). Hosseini by power of generating a discourse imparts the knowledge to global audience that Afghanis are not always terrorists; similarly he shows a friendly human side of English men by engaging them in bond of humanity with natives of Afghanistan. In a way Hosseini makes an attempt to remove perception of the people from both divide i.e. Afghanistan and America (East). The characters of Abdullah, Saboor, Pari, Suleiman, Nila and Nabi exercise their power and control their social relation. Parwana and her sister use their power to challenge traditional values that serve to block their way to self grooming, so they by theory of power and knowledge control their social action. Pari marries a foreigner named Eric and they both develop a good friendly marital relation, Pari is contended where she is living very far from her home land. It is the bond of humanity, love and care through which they both are tied with each other and she feels complete. “The old feelings she has always had- that there is an absence of something- has dulled (Hossini 224)”. The South Asian writers are using power of their writings and they influence people to come together to construct a peaceful living place.

IV. CONCLUSION

South Asian writers strive to promote globalization through their novels. They stress on the recognition of easy things, while boundaries create complexities. Michel Foucault theory of power and knowledge changes the concept of power, as it was thought earlier to be in possession of authoritative people but now through these novels we come to see that power is at hands with lay man, power lies with author, and power lies with reader. The *Shadow Lines* show that how ordinary people show their freedom to breach the power conventional ideas of nationalization and move forward to form unbreakable friendship. Through Foucault theory of power and knowledge the South Asian novelists have transformed from mere writers into maker of peaceful world by generating discourse of humanity. Writers are governing themselves to produce their version of truth. South Asian writers are deploying power not to gain dominance but to bridge the gap between the people of global world positively. These selected novels specifically and many other contemporary South Asian English novels are addressing not only local but global audience and removing misunderstandings developed by political, geographical and national differences.

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