

Nation, History, and Identity in the Novels of Vikram Chanda, Boman Desai, Ki.Rajanarayanan

Suresh K, Research Scholar, Dept of English, Osmania University, Hyderabad.

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Abstract:

Indian novels in English, particularly novels of K Rajanarayan, Boman Desai, Vikram Chandra, and Vikram Seth, Salam Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Arundhati Rai, are mediated by Indianness and its History, Culture, and Identity. These aspects also possess multi-dimensions of social, political, economic, and cultural conditions in reality. Novelists then captured the conditions of human beings and society concerning certain characters, events, and incidents in their literary writings. Among all those, Salman Rushdie's, Arundhati Rai and K Rajnarayan, etc., depicted India in connection with its Nation, History, and Identity dimension. Vikram Chandra's Red Earth and Pouring Rain, Boman Desai's The Memory of Elephants, and K Rajanarayan's Gopala Puram. Chosen as my primary research texts, which resemble the concepts, Nation, History, and Identity, novels that depict Indian society based on reality and the problems that prevailed in the early years of the post-independent.

Keywords: Nation, History, Identity, Post-colonialism, minority, magic realism, Hindu tradition, social, political, economic,

hybridity, metafictional, memo scan, nostalgic, stubborn land, fertility, vignettes.

Introduction:

Indian novel in English has significance and certain characteristic features which we observe in various writings of Indian authors. We can see that it resembles the description of the social, economic, political, and cultural facts in the reality of times. Writers capture multiple events of people and their societal problems with a new aspect of life. So, it is an act as a bridge, linking the writer with society across time and social contemporariness.

It deals with certain features and theories such as post-colonialism and New Historicism. Post-colonialism is a theory that deals with the effects of colonization on the social, economic, cultural, and thoughts of the colonized people. It is focused on colonial experience mainly from the colonized society's point of view. This theory deals with waste issues of hybridity, otherness, orientalism, multiculturalism, diaspora, globalization, feminism, the quest for identity, problems of exile and displacement, alienation, homelessness, rootlessness, and postcolonial chaos and despair.

It is also essential to understand that Indian English literature can be divided into four distinct heads of Postcolonial discourse: Minority discourse, Diasporic discourse, Feminist discourse, and political discourse. Among these four postcolonial discourses, the first discourse is Minority discourse. The prominent writers of this minority discourse are Rohinton Mistry, and his *Such a Long Journey* is an appropriate example of minority discourse. *Such a Long Journey* is one of the remarkable and best works by Rohinton Mistry which portrays the realistic conditions and political history of the Indian society, especially the life of the Parsi community before and after independence. Mistry has studied India's history and social and political condition well during his stay in Bombay and has adapted them in the novel. Similarly,

Red Earth and Pouring Rain

Vikram Chandra's *Red Earth and Pouring Rain* is a tale of nineteenth-century India with a strong narrative. Sanjay, the narrator of the *Mahabharata*, tells the entire story of what exactly happens in the great battle of Kurukshetra, fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. In the same way, Vikram Chandra creates the character Sanjay, a poet with the same vision as the character Sanjay of *Mahabharata*.

The use of "magic realism" has become one of the interesting theories in this novel. "Magic realism," exclusively used by Salman Rushdie in *Midnight Children*, has been followed by many other writers in the later phase of literary writing.

This novel begins with an incident when a monkey on the rooftop is gunshot by Abhay and is later brought into his house and kept hidden in the bed. It is proposed by Yama, the God of Death, that when he comes to take his soul out from his body, Yama finds that two more entities (as a well-wisher of that monkey) are present there, and they want the monkey to have few more days to live. A bargain is made and is settled on a condition. The condition is that the monkey shall be alive when he entertains his audience by telling them a story. The act of storytelling is expected in the Indian oral storytelling tradition and the tradition of the *Arabian Nights*. The deal gets done between Sanjay and Yama. The bond compels the character, Sanjay, to bring Indian gods to hear stories told by Sanjay himself. Sanjay gets incarnated as a monkey, but when Abhay shoots him after being cured by Abhay's family, that monkey wakes up with his past experiences and memory. Sanjay accepts a deal with Yama, in which he has both divine and human supporters: the elephant-headed god Ganesha, the protector of poets.

In this novel, the monkey named Sanjay has two lives. In the previous life, Sanjay was born as Sikander, a warrior, born in the streets of Calcutta. In the next life, Sanjay is accepted as a monkey. The same monkey whom Abhay Gupta has shot with a gun. Abhay's act of shooting the monkey brings fear into the Gupta family, so they secretly take the injured monkey to their house and nurse it. According to the Hindu tradition and *Ramayana*, Hanuman

was a great worshipper of Lord Rama and shared his lineage with the monkey species.

Vikram Chandra belongs to a category of writers of metropolitans and diaspora quality. And therefore, Indianness serves as a hallmark in their novels. Along with Metafictional writing, Chandra mixes the contents of Indian classics, Indian myths, symbols, and thoughts which have been used as inter-text to suit the contemporary context. In the 1980s, Indian English fiction brought new techniques that shifted from the Gandhian era of village centrism to the city and metropolitans. East-West encounter brings new concepts of hybridity in a relationship by postcolonial critics. Critics like Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, and GayatriSpivakChakravarty have inspired the novelists to write more and more about the cultural encounter between the East and the West and the subalterns in our country.

The Memory of Elephant by Boman Desai

The present novel represents the minority voices in India. Comparatively speaking, the neglected but essential representatives of minorities were out of the domain of critical security even at the national and international levels. This chapter examines the suppressed voices to study and highlight the minority voices. Every author has their uniqueness in representing their voice. Through their writings, they voice specific neglected sections of the community, in this novel mainly focuses on one more Parsi author, Boman Desai. In this way, the focus is on Boman Desai's *The Memory of*

Elephants. Unlike Mistry, who criticizes India's government and Hindu religion's domination over Parsi and their quest for identity. Here Desai proposes to examine and study in detail the socio-political, religion-cultural, psychological, and literary implications of the ethnic nostalgia of the Indian Parsi emigrants. Both the writers deal with the minority section, which comes under the minority literature. Minority writers show the social inequalities of cultural categories like caste, creed, and gender on the one hand and also protest against how these categories are represented in mainstream texts. The minority writers document and write with personal experiences.

Boman Desai's *The Memory of Elephants* (1988) questions the formation of Parsi identity. Their identity is formed on religion, ethnicity, history, and consciousness of elite status. Desai brings several post-modernist qualities and has didactic. Boman Desai is also a leading Indian English writer with a Parsi background. He was awarded the Lewis Prize for Creative Writing during his first year at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago, U.S.A. His first novel, *The Memory of Elephants*, was published in 1988. It focuses on the life of Homi Seervai, a Parsi by religion and a scientist by profession. Boman Desai's protagonist, Homi, lives in a disorienting world. He invents a memo scan that gives Homi the 'memory of elephants, the memory of whales, and the equation of the universe.' As a scientist, he invents a

beautiful machine, which enables him to relive his memories.

The past comes fully alive, and the dead and the living appear together, and Bapaiji, his deceased grandmother, intrudes and interprets what he sees to him. She calls his recapturing of the past the memory of the soul "where all things are written... A memo can of such a nature is scientifically impossible. The invention of it by Homi indicates how deeply the novelist is engrossed in the act of remembering the past, actuated by a solid nostalgic desire to recreate and relive the past. By understanding the Parsi history and his own, he understands the Parsi community, its realities, and their identity formation.

Incidentally, it also holds significance to clarify the many social and political lapses which make the Parsis speak gloriously about their ethnic exclusivity. Again, by dealing in detail with the Parses' ethnic consciousness, the study hopes to widen the discourse of what is called the identity crisis. This worldwide phenomenon has captured the attention of social thinkers and literary writers. It aims to highlight how this quest for a memorable and separate identity exercises a vicious and harmful influence on the homogeneous and homogenizing Indian national unity. Further, the study intends to bring the post-independent colonial consciousness under proper perspective and the problem of the religion-based or language-based minority groups in India.

Image of India:

Desai pokes fun at the dowry system, an evil rampant, particularly among

the working class people who cannot afford enough dowries. Bapaiji, in *The Memory of Elephants*, laughs at Thakor, who tells her that he has to find dowries for two more daughters. The poor Indian has worked for the Pars lady for nearly thirty years, and all she could give him in response to his demand is some worthless advice and free cinema three times a week. Her advice is worth quoting:

Everyone needs money, she said. I had a son. I sent him to the U.K. to study. Do you think I pulled money from the wind? I had to live within my means. It is the only way to learn the meaning of money. Desai seems to have a great reverence for Mahatma Gandhi.

His words kindled the enthusiasm of the young Parsi girls who listened to him, and they wanted to know whether Gandhiji was more significant than God Zoroaster and the King of England.

Women and marriage

Desai's *The Memory of Elephants* records the space of some interesting women characters under different circumstances. Baiji is the most astonishing character in the novel, making a comfortable space both in her family and society. She appears in the memory of Homi and proudly claims:

This reveals Bapaiji's longing to compete with men in all aspects to launch her identity equal to men. Bapaiji's prowess as a woman and ability to get things done in her favor is evident even from her childhood. She plays with the boys her age when her sister Dunmai stays away from them. As a teenage girl, she develops a

good rapport with Adi, who everyone in her town likes since he is from a wealthy family. The Ghadialis were of the priestly class, and we, Dhondis, were not” Hence, class difference prevents Bapaiji’s marriage with Adi even within her Parsi community.

Ki.Rajanarayanan

Ki.Tamil initials are known as Rajanarayanan (Kammavar from Kovilpatti) as Ki. Ra. is a Tamil folklorist and author from India. The People of Gopallapuram) are among his most acclaimed, and **he later won the SahityaAkademi award in 1991.** Ki.Rajanarayanan weaves legend, myth, history, and good old-fashioned storytelling in this beautiful contemporary classic.

Rajanarayanan was born in Idaicheval Chathirapatti village near Kovilpatti in 1922. His full name was "RayankulaShri Krishna Raja Narayana Perumal RamanujamNaicker," which he shortened to Ki. Rajanarayanan.

The fascinating thing in this area of Tamilnadu is around 200 to 300 villages where the soil is primarily Black Cotton Soil and centered on agriculturists, growing cotton, red chilies, etc. The novels, the stories, the writings, and the narrations of Mr. Ki Ra are all set in the villages that we hail from here in this part of Tamilnadu. His works bring back alive the way the towns were the people there, their language, extraordinary lives, day-to-day affairs in work, life, interactions, and incredible nature overall! Having been in my village during my holidays from school or my

travels, I have interacted with our folks and heard Mr. Ki Ra's work come alive.

Gopalle" (Telugu version of Ki.Raa's novel "Gopalla Graamam" occurred at Hotel Jairam, Pondicherry. The book was published by Sri Anjaneya Reddy of Hyderabad and translated by Sri Nandyala Narayana Reddy of Hosur. Who did extensive research into the lives of Telugus in Tamil Nadu? And her husband, Sri Subrahmanyam, was instrumental in holding the successful function at Pondicherry, which the Telugus and Tamils of Pondy well attended. Ki.Raa.was much delighted by the love and respect shown by the T.N. and A.P. people towards him.

Gopallapuram

In the vast Kottaiyar home, the village's most affluent household, where the kitchen fire never burns out and where the doors are always open to visitors, lives MangaiathaarAmmal, hundred-and-thirty-seven years old, an ocean of experiences and stories. Her grandsons, the seven Nayakkar brothers, retire to her chamber to hear her tell and retell old tales about how they fled their homes in Andhra to escape the oppression of a Muslim king to Gopallapuram, where they coaxed a stubborn land to fertility and how they met death and divine grace on the way. Her tales weave the past into the present.

Once upon a time, all stories began in villages, when darkness had fallen, and the cows had tinkled home. Then an old crone, her face lined with wisdom and eyes glazed with the past, would gather around

her little children and ancient spirits and begin.

Gopallapuram is less one family story than a collection of vignettes about a village. A band of dacoits attacks the town and is foiled by quick thinking and a slippery carpet of ragi seeds. A highway robber kills a pregnant woman for her dazzling ear ornament. Village justice brooks no mercy; he is impaled on a stake and lies in mortal pain for days. But his remorse in the last moments of his life turns him into a village legend.

A highway robber murders a pregnant young woman for her jewelry. He is caught and sentenced to death by impalement in Gopallapuram. A community of Telugu speakers migrates to the Tamil country to escape Muslim rule. They transform barren land into a fertile, verdant village. A horde of bandits attempts to raid a town but is foiled by the unarmed, inventive villagers.

Conclusion

This article has studied and traced the Nation's discourse articulated through these narratives and examined these works for their themes and style. It has also mapped the representation of the underprivileged in these works. The texts have been read as contrasting, as well as contesting voices and constituencies that use different rhetorical devices to ultimately.

Create the discourse of the Nation. The style used by these writers and their privileging And presentation of the content indicates their ideology and objectives.

Concern with history has been a continuous preoccupation of the Indian novel in English, which attempts to build the Nation's identity by creating an account for it. One distinct point of similarity in all these primary texts is that they are deeply concerned with the country's history.

The research scope can be further extended by incorporating novels written in India across different *time frames* and taking stories by writers writing an *other regional languages*. One could also look at the new emerging writing coming out from the underprivileged, formerly invisible sections of the society by people who lived beyond the lowest layers of society – like the writing by Tribal.

A study of all these different kinds of writing would yield a genuinely composite picture of the Nation and would construct an alternative discourse of the Nation. And the contemporary novels are the mirror of the age, a mirror that reflects not merely the external features of the period but also its inner face, its nervous system, the coursing of its blood, and the unconscious promptings and conflicts which sway it" Social realist artists attempt to show human beings and their lives practically.

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