

**CHAPTER V:**

**CONCLUSION**

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As has been stated earlier, <sup>the</sup> present dissertation is an attempt to assess John Masters' historical novels particularly Bhowani Junction and Nightrunners of Bengal.

The first chapter, which forms an introduction, tries to highlight the novelistic career of John Masters. It also

71. takes a brief historical survey of Anglo-Indian Fiction. The second chapter deals with

a theoretical aspect of the historical novel.

It tries to point out various definitions and characteristic features of the genre. The

third chapter studies John Masters' Bhowani Junction as a historical novel. And the forth

chapter considers Nightrunners of Bengal in the same context.


The conclusions which follow are based on a detailed discussions made in the forgoing

chapters. It has been observed that John Masters' knowledge of British Indian History is limited only to the two events that are

the Royal Indian Navy's Mutiny which took place in 1946 and the rebellion on 1857. Though John Masters has made a very limited use of Indian history, he appears to be historically accurate in dealing with these events.

It becomes pertinent at this stage to examine John Masters' concern with history as far as his novelistic vision is concerned. For example John Masters has made use of the traditional conventions of the art of novel writing. Also his plots of both the novels are well organized and compact. His characters, both Indians as well as British, operate on the human level. He makes use of symbols, metaphors and other novelistic devices.

As far as his characterization is concerned, it is seen that he makes use of some real as well as fictitious characters. Among the fictitious characters like Patrick Taylor and Victoria Jones and others, there are the real historical personages like Gandhi and Subhas Bose. The success of John Masters lies in the fact that he makes a fine



amalgam of these persons. For example, we never felt Gandhi as a fictitious person though he is presented with the fictitious characters in the novel.

The subject matter of John Masters invites comparison with another significant Anglo-Indian novelist named M. M. Kaye who also deals with the historical event like 1857 rebellion. M. M. Kaye refers to the event of Indian rebellion in her celebrated novel Shadow of the Moon. There appears to be much similarity between the historical concerns of both the writers. They select the same events to provide the basic structure to the novel. For example, both of them have dealt with a story of greased cartridges, the mysterious distribution of chuppattis and the story of Mangal Pande etc,

According to both the writers, *Bairagis*, *Gurus* or *Fakirs* played very important roles in the rebellion as far as the above-mentioned events are concerned. For example, like M. M. Kaye John Masters blames the *Gurus* in the following words:

The voice said, "This is the night. Shiva -or Allah--- has promised destruction, and this is the night. The silver Guru said, 'until god's promised destruction strikes the wicked,' who are the wicked? We are the wicked because we have not defended our gods. The English have hanged Brahmins, stripped our Princes, attacked our gods in their temples--and we have done nothing. We have helped them. Now they are going to kill us. They do not need us anymore.<sup>1</sup>

Both the novelists present British officers as innocent creatures. For example, in Nightrunners of Bengal Caption Savage reports about the greased cartridges in the following manner:

I spoke to my company beforehand, reminded them how along we'd known each other--- was it likely that I or any of us was going to try to destroy their religion? - asked them to trust me.<sup>2</sup>

In the same way British officers in Shadow of the Moon, are shown to be ignorant about the cartridges.

John Masters and M. M. Kaye are comparable in other matters also. John Masters concentrates on the British characters and treats Indians as secondary figures. Many times the sense of humiliation towards Indian comes out of their expressions. For example, Joanna in

Nightrunners of Bengal finds her son in the hot sun and requests her husband:

Rodney, put his hat on please, he'll get sunburn and brown, like a subordinate's child."<sup>3</sup>

John Masters thinks of Indians as cooks, watchmen, Sepoys, and ayahs. He talks in favour of those Indians who support the Company Raj and sacrifice their lives for the sake of the British. On the whole, it can be said that as far as John Masters' attitude towards India is concerned he appears to be biased towards ~~the~~ India and the Indians. But as a historical novelist it can be said that he has very finely blended the historical truth with the universal truth.

**NOTES AND REFERANCES**

1. John Masters, Nightrunners of Bengal  
(London: Michael Joseph Ltd., 1955), pp.  
210-11
2. Ibid. , P. 204
3. Ibid. , P. 18