

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

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CHAPTER I**1.1 John Masters: An Introduction**

John Masters is a prolific and much-acclaimed contemporary writer of adventure stories and historical fictions. John Masters, one of the significant Anglo-Indian writers, was born in Calcutta on October 26, 1914 in India. His father and predecessors served in the British army. His parental relations were in India and they served India since 1805. He was educated at the Royal Military College, Sandhurst. He joined a regiment in India in 1934 and served in India until his retirement as Lieutenant Colonel in 1948. Shortly afterwards he went to the USA where he returned to writing and soon had articles and short stories published in many well-known American magazines. He has received acknowledgement more as a narrator of exciting stories than ^{as} a novelist. But there is much more to Masters than the superb storyteller and that is his historical novels on India. His novels, which are recollected skillfully, are emerged out of the past. He

used his racy and narrative quality along with history cleverly. As a result his novels are long; enjoyable and old-fashioned in the admirable sense that tells ^{an excellent story} an excellent story but at the same time ^{is a} factual document. His novels were widely read in the 1950's and 1960's.

His novels deal with major historical events like the Mutiny of 1857, the First World War, political violence and the end of the British Raj. His Historical fiction falls in the line of historical fiction from Sir Walter Scott to Paul Scott and leaves it for reader's consideration.

He recreates significant and mythical Savage families in his novels. They are shown to be in India since seventeenth century. Jason Savage, for instance, is a youth who runs away from his home and reaches at the Coromandel (1955). William Savage, a district officer emerges to put an end to the evil of thugee in The Deceivers (1952). Rodney Savage, the son of William, an army captain, fights through the Mutiny in 1857 in

Nightrunners of Bengal (1951). Robin, the son of William in 1880, spies against Russian infiltration in The Lotus and the Wind (1953). Peter Savage, the son of Robin is Deputy Commissioner in Punjab in 1905 becomes the hero of Far, Far Mountain Peak (1957). Rodney Savage is a Lieutenant Colonel in Bhowani Junction (1954) and To The Coral Strand (1962). He depicts Indian culture in the Venus of Konpara (1960). His military heroism ^{is the best than any other heroism in the} novels, Krishna Ram; the hero of Ravi Lancers (1973) is a unique example in this respect.

John Masters has sought, in his novels, to recount some aspects of the complex history of the Raj in India from the beginning to the end through the fortunes of one family, the Savages, which gives a sense of continuity to the whole period.

Masters deliberately maintains the history of three centuries to link characters and their adventures in his novels. Naturally, he takes liberty, with history, landscape, characters as he imagines and feels. In such fictitious context he treats

his protagonists as he likes. So what is the truth behind it is to be examined and shown the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised.

1.2 Brief History of Anglo-Indian Fiction.

The British people, during their prolonged stay in India from 1458 to 1947, had established strong and permanent bond of relationship with India and her people. When we look at this long cherished relationship, we find that thousands of British were born and brought up in this country and though they strove to regain their English roots, by their occasional visits to their motherland, they found it difficult to shake off the influence of India on their mind and heart. British were, thus, subject to the influence of two far different cultures and civilization. This amalgam of two different cultures gave rise to the vast body of literature, which is called the 'Anglo-Indian Literature'.

This unique branch of English literature is strongly marked by Indian colours. Some

scholars and critics have tried to define Anglo-Indian Literature from different points of view. For instance, E.F. Oaten says:

Anglo-Indian Literature, as regards the greater part of it, is the literature of a comparatively small body of Englishmen who, during the working part of their lives, become residents in a country so different in every respect from their own that they seldom took root in its soil. On the contrary they strive to retain English in thought and aspiration... Anglo-Indian literature, therefore, is for the most part, merely English literature strongly marked by Indian local colour.¹

Referring to the definition, it can be said that Oaten has not given the clear-cut distinction between Indo-Anglian and the Anglo-Indian literature. Bhupal Singh, the Indian scholar of great distinction, has also tried to define the term Anglo-Indian literature in the following words:

Broadly speaking it (Anglo-Indian fiction) includes any novel dealing with India, which is written, in English. Strictly speaking it means fiction mainly describing the life of Englishmen in India. In a still narrower sense, it may be taken to mean novels dealing with the life of Eurasians who now prefer to be called Anglo-Indians.²

Both these definitions not only disregard the complexity of the process of acculturation involved in these writings but

also ignore the historical dimension this literature has, besides, it includes different set of writers as Anglo-Indian writers. According to Oaten, it is literature written by Englishmen living in India, giving a strong local colour to their writings. And Bhupal Singh widens the definition to include Eurasians meaning to English as well as the German, the French and also the Asians.

For John A. and Leena Karkala, Anglo-Indian means a person of Eurasian origin. For them Anglo-Indian literature, from British point of view, has been literature produced by Englishmen, while on active service in India, but essentially recounting their Indian experience.³ It also includes literature produced by British citizens, but who essentially remained British in their way of life and attitudes. According to Allen J. Greenberger, the term Anglo-Indian literature refers to the literature written by Englishmen in India.⁴ Anglo-Indian literature, as I refer to, is the literature created by British men and women, to show their concern and understanding of India, during their

imperial service in this continent. The works in Anglo-Indian literature had been products of some leisure, which the writers could get during their official leave or even after their retirement. Many of the books were published in England due to the lack of facility in India and mainly because it was written by British writers and addressed to the readers of their own race.

Initially, Anglo-Indian literature was the literature full of travel books and stories of adventures. The closing years of Warren Hastings' Governership saw the real birth of Anglo-Indian literature. Lord Macaulay, during his four years' stay in India, recommended the English language as a medium for all higher education in India. Some Indian reformists like Raja Ram Mohan Roy,  advocated the need of English learning for the Indians. In addition to that several British officers in the Army and Administration gave up their services and devoted themselves to education and literature.

The first half of the 19th century witnessed the birth of Anglo-Indian fiction in proper sense, which is one of the vigorous branches of literature. Generally it is supposed that the tradition of Anglo-Indian fiction begins roughly from 1890.

According to Allen J. Greenberger, the authors of Anglo-Indian fiction fall into three periods- the Era of Confidence; 1890-1910, the Era of Doubt; 1910-1935, and the Era of Melancholy; 1935-1960. The writers in the first period, the Era of Confidence, represented the image of a confident and secure Empire. These authors believed in their position as rulers and treated Indians as subordinates. In the second period, the Era of Doubt, writers expressed the common feeling of doubt and also mentioned the loss of confidence in their writing. For the writers of the third period, the Era of Melancholy, the Empire was dead. India was no more an alien country for them. For many of those, it was birth place and for thousands, as ashes of their forefathers had become the place of pilgrimage.

The major development of the novel form took place from 1890 and during the three decades following this year, as there was the emergence of women authors of light fiction. Mrs. Fanny Penny, the first of the early romance writers, depicts the life, struggle and service of the European and American missionaries in India. Mrs. Penny's The Outcaste (1912) is the story of Ananda, who is a converted Christian. Ananda, who is deserted by his friends and relatives, has to face several problems and passes through several hazards. The social hatred, created due to the novelist. Her important works are The Mixed Marriage (1903), The Rajah (1911), The Swami's Curse (1922), etc.

According to the British, in their early contact India was the sun-baked, ^{and the} disease full country of snake-charmers. They thought and found everything mysterious. This attitude and theme of horror is the chief concern of Mrs. Alice Perrin's writings. Her major works are East and Suez (1901), The Row of Silence (1920), Government House (1927), etc. Most of

her novels deal with the British social life in India.

The third novelist of the early romancers is Mrs. B.M. Croker. Her novel, A Family Likeness: A Sketch in the Himalayas (1901) bears the story of an English lady-Juliet, who, while collecting sticks for ~~x~~ fire, meets a *fakir*, who wants to use the girl as a sacrifice for the god in a ruined temple. Her other important works are Someone Else (1885), The Happy Valley (1904) In Old Madras (1913), The Pagoda Tree (1919), etc.

Maud Diver is another novelist of great distinction. She is known for her sympathetic study of the Indian princess in Royal India. In her novels she shows her deep sympathy towards the Englishmen in the various military stations. Her uncle, Henry Lawrence, who served as the commissioner of various districts, was one of those few British officers who were loved and respected by the Indians. Her major works are: The Great Amalet (1908), Desmond's Daughter (1916) and Lonely Furrow (1923).

Flora Annie Steel occupies an honoured place among all the novelists of Anglo-Indian literature. She took interest in the women's education in India and had an opportunity to serve with Kipling's father. For most of the time during her stay in India, she lived in Punjab and wrote a novel, From the Five Rivers (1893). Her other novels are Voices in the Night (1900) The Adventures of Akbar (1913), etc. She left India in 1889, but she returned to India in order to do research for her mutiny novel, on the Face of the Waters. James Douglas, the hero of the novel, wants to put ^{an end} ~~stop~~ to the false rumours. He suggests thrashing those people who were industriously ^{by} ~~circulating~~ the story of bone dust flour and such other rumours. He thinks that the British were in 'a blink funk' Edmund Candler is another writer of great merit. His famous novels are The Testimony of Bhagwan Singh and Siri Ram, The Revolutionist. His novel Siri Ram, originally thought to be a memoir by an Indian, caused great debate in England.

Rudyard Kipling, who was born and brought up in India, is regarded as the most

influential British author to write about India. He worked as a journalist in India and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. His works, for the first time in English literature, made India a major theme. As an Anglo-Indian novelist, he is known for his works, Naulakha (1892), Kim (1901), and two volumes of short stories.

E.M. Forster's A Passage to India (1924) is a landmark in the history of Anglo-Indian fiction. It deals with the problems, which arose out of the concern of two different cultures, the English and the Indian.

Though there are several other writers who have written about India, it is only Paul Scott, who has made significant contribution to the body of Anglo-Indian Literature. His The Raj Quartet is regarded as a seminal contribution to the post-colonial Anglo-Indian literature.

1.3 Bhowani Junction: An outline

The story of Bhowani Junction takes place in 1946 against the background of the mutiny of Royal India Navy. The story throws light

on the thoughts and feelings of the Anglo-Indian about themselves, Englishmen and Indians. The story contains the efforts of Victoria Jones, an Anglo-Indian girl, to find her own identity and that of her Anglo-Indian community during the period between the last year of British Rule in India and the dawn of India's Independence.

Bhowani Junction gives us a feel of the atmosphere of tension and uncertainty at the end of the Raj. However, the main focus of the Anglo-Indians on the eve of Independence.

The rising tide of Indian nationalism caught the Anglo-Indian community rather unprepared. Numerically insignificant, they presented a particularly tragic problem midway between two cultural worlds, under the peculiar conditions of their origin and socio-cultural development. They could never really get to know the west to which they aspired to belong, nor did they have any emotional ties with India where they really belonged. The sudden decision of the British to withdraw from the country and the rapid transformation of the cultural scene in the land posed very

Incomplete sentences.

serious problems for the community, involving question of identity and survival among people whom they had always hated more than the British. The Anglo-Indians made it point to Indians 'wogs' or 'niggers'. They felt angry, helpless and betrayed. In Bhowani Junction, the narrative is divided among the three protagonists, a story of communist sabotage, terrorism and political agitation in the exciting days of the Quit India movement serves as a background for a search for identity on the part of Anglo-Indians in a rapidly changing India.

Patrick Taylor, the district traffic superintendent at Bhowani Junction, is typical Anglo-Indian who refuses to see the writing on the wall. Proud of his old school he ^(comes) from St. Thomas's at Gondwara an Anglo-Indian School in danger of being closed down and symbolic of the fate of the entire community, he remains steadfast in his hatred of the Indians whom he continues to call wogs. He gets the shock when he finds that Victoria, his girl friend, no longer feels the same way about Indians.

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Victoria Jones, an Anglo-Indian railway girl, is the attractive, brown-eyed, dark-haired heroine of the story. She has been away from Bhowani as an officer with the women's Auxiliary Corps for four years and has acquired a different, more mature perspective. She tells Patrick that things are changing fast and that they should not keep their eyes closed. But Patrick and other Anglo-Indians at Bhowani refuse to listen to her; they do not think that the English can ever leave them. And if they do, Patrick declares that he will go with them.

In the meantime, Bhowani is swept by the storm of political agitation and violence. The supposedly non-violent Civil Disobedience Movement launched by the Congress in the wake of its Quit India demand was not always without violence, for it was often infiltrated by extremists such as communists or fascists. K. P. Roy is presented as a representative of these extremist elements who are using the Congress wallahs are represented by the local Congress boss Surabhai who is preoccupied with democratic

ideals and human rights. Each time Surabhai arranges a demonstration or strike, something goes wrong; in the end he himself falls a victim to the forces of terrorism that he unwittingly help unleash.

Victoria, who is deeply affected by the course of events, gradually attempts to identify herself with India. This drift towards India is strengthened by the clumsiness of Patrick as well as the unfeeling attitude of the British, Colonel Savage, her boss, never misses a chance to put her in her place while the other British officer, Macaulay, takes her for a tart and tries to rape her. She kills Macaulay and at that time when she does not know where to turn for help, Patrick's young Sikh assistant, Ranjit Singh Kasel, comes to her rescue. She now attaches herself to Ranjit.

Victoria had been searching for her roots for a long time. Now she thinks that she has found where she should belong. Much to the horror of her family, she throws out her Western clothes and puts on a sari. She becomes engaged to Ranjit and prepares to

adopt the Sikh religion in order to marry him. However, she is always conscious of some distance between her and Ranjit despite her devotion to him. During the elaborate ceremony of her initiation into the Sikh folk, she realises that she does not really love Ranjit and that a change of religion cannot alter her Anglo-Indian identity. She thus runs out of the *gurdwara* and that is the end of her search for her Indian roots.

Her father receives Victoria with tears of joy hoping that she will someday marry a real Englishman such as Colonel Rodney Savage. She does capture Rodney; not as a wife, but as a mistress, for being an Anglo-Indian she is not good enough to be his wife. In the end, Victoria goes back to her own people, to Patrick Taylor, whom she finally marries.

Patrick too changes in the end. He realizes that the Indians are not going to settle old scores after Independence, and he accepts a managerial position in a big cement factory at Cholahat. After all there will be a place for them in independent India. In

this painful acceptance of the new circumstances, both Victoria and Patrick typify the agony of the entire Anglo-Indian community at the end of the Raj.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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- 4.Greenberger, Allen J., The British Image Of India, London: OUP, 1969.