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We had gone as far as we could to meet the wishes of Mr. Jinnah, but we could not accept his claim that the Muslim League was the sole representative and authoritative organization of the Muslims of India. In the provinces where Muslims were in a majority, there was no league ministry. It could not, therefore, be claimed that the Muslim League represented all the Muslims. There was in fact a large block of Muslims who had nothing to do with the League.¹

- Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad

According to the annals of Indian history, Indian society was a closed society till the advent of the British in India. Earlier the Indian sub-continent did not witness any all-India upheavals. But when the British arrived in India with their trade policy, religion, education, cultural identity and urban outlook, Indians faced many difficulties. The British created a radical collision paying a way for the birth of several organizations and movements. Such forces were enormous and
they brought a substantial impact on the Indian history of pre-independence period.

Surprisingly until the arrival of the British, Indians never thought of India as one nation. India was just a mere geographical term for a huge sub-continent. It was a confused mass of diverse states where there lived various peoples of different races, religions and castes speaking hundreds of languages. Amidst such diversities, Indian population, with various traditions and cultures, had united itself and was living with a collective entity. In fact, there were no riots among Hindus and Muslims. No doubt, as there was a socio-cultural synthesis, the Hindus assimilated the Muslims long back. In fact, the Muslims' arrival to India was unlike the English's arrival to India. Pramila Garg remarks “Throughout his stay, the Englishman, unlike the invaders of old, did not make India his home, always regarding himself as a bird of passage. To him India was a source of rich and cheap raw materials and a market for his furnished goods." So the British went home when their rule came to an end in 1947. However, the Mughals did not return to their country. In fact, after their stay for many centuries in India, the Muslims lost their concept of home. Historians state that the Mughals, who stayed back in India, even married Indian women and adjusted themselves to Indian way of life.
Muslims came to India in 650 A.D. taking an active part in deciding the fate of future India. The Muslims arrived in three different phases. They came as missionaries in the first phase, as invaders in the second phase and as immigrants in the third phase. The Hindus received them every time. Now Muslims are considered as one of the ancient communities of the nation. However conventional it is, the Muslim population is viewed as the largest minority community. In fact, now they are part and parcel of us. It is said, India would not be India without them. Indian history attests that Muslims have enriched the country’s cultural heritage.

Just as there is a Hindu traditional culture in India, so there is a Muslim traditional culture. This is well reflected in all fields of life. Music, painting, architecture, food and cloths evidence the same. Further, the Mughals expressed their literary abilities in writing and even their women proved to be equally talented, for they too have left behind their literature of high quality. It is worthwhile to note that an unfortunate conversion of Indians to Islam took place for various reasons culminating in the birth of a “heterogeneous Indianized community.”

Although, the act of conversion changed the people’s belief system, the age-old rites, rituals and customs relating to childbirth, marriage and death remained the same. This led to a multi-religious
cultural synthesis. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in his *The Discovery of India* contends that the great majority of Muslims in India were converted from Hinduism, partly because of long contact. Hindus and Muslims in India developed numerous common traits, habits, ways of living and artistic tastes.

The perennial past holds the roots of the present to flourish and forms the future. That precisely accounts for a continued interest on the process, the overlapping historical events coming in naturally to complete the contemporary vistas. Thus, alongside the Quit India Movement, there are patches of World War II, Bengal famine and Gandhian means of Satyagrah and non-violence.

The history of pre-independence Indian English writing is the history of the growth of nationalism, the discovery of past, the search for identity, the revolt against established rules and the struggle for self-government in India. In Gandhian view, it was a struggle for ‘Poorna Swaraj’ or ‘Sarvodaya.’ It was a national upsurge under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi that made the whole country conscious of its present and past and stirred it with new hopes for the future. Meenakshi Mukharjee says, “The most potent force behind the whole movement was the Mahatma who is a recurring presence in these novels, and he is used in different ways to suit the design of each writer. He has been treated variously as an idea, a myth, a symbol, a tangible
reality and a benevolent human being. In a few novels he appears in person, in most others his is an invisible presence." So Mahatma Gandhi influenced the writers of the period obviously.

Since the decline of Mughal reign in India, the Muslim community was in search of its own identity. In fact, identity crisis was a serious problem for them right from the beginning of the British rule. Muslims suffered heavily from the loss of political liberty, religious freedom and cultural harmony. Even after India achieved its independence, most of the Muslims have lost their everlasting association with the nation’s intellectual panorama. With the emergence of a separate nation called Pakistan, many Indian Muslim writers like Ahmed Ali migrated to Pakistan and the ones who remained in India became rootless. So the pre-independence Indian history has its own dark side as it became visible in partition. The British policy of 'Divide and Rule' was a great blow. As a result, the Muslims had to go to a 'new land.'

A historical survey of the socio-cultural development in India proves that some of the Muslim novelists are as good as the non-Muslim novelists of the period. Not to speak of Dr. M. K. Naik has classified the pre-independence Indian English novelists as Muslim novelists and non-Muslim novelists. In general, thematically these two groups of novelists have many similarities. Most of them, whether
Hindus or Muslims, wrote on the themes of social empowerment and political freedom. In fact, it was the burden of time that compelled all the novelists to work together for a healthy and happy milieu. But one can identify the differences between them, only when one studies their novels from the Muslim point of view.

However the creative output of Muslim novelists may not be superior in quality and quantity, it is not too below the line. Their thematic contribution and social observation are of considerable importance. Their literary contribution is remarkable. For instance, a novelist like Humayun Kabir, who has written only one novel *Men and Rivers* (1945) cannot be considered simply a minor novelist just on the basis of number of books. As we know his *Men and Rivers* is a *magnum opus* of the pre-independence Indian English writing. On the other hand, K. A. Abbas who is considered a minor novelist has produced as many novels as Mulk Raj Anand. Ahmed Ali’s works are as intensive in their appeal as Bhabani Bhattacharya’s. Another writer, Aamir Ali’s novel *Conflict* (1947) gives the picture of pre-independence society as impressively as Raja Rao’s *Kantapura* (1938).

Similarly there were some women novelists in Muslim community. Their literary output is as impressive as their men’s. One needs to mention two such great novelists Attia Hosain and Iqbalunnisa Hussain. Anita Desai says, “Attia Hosain’s novel and collection of short
stories are monuments of the past... To read them is as if one has parted a curtain or opened a door and strayed into the past. To read them is like wrapping oneself up in one's mother's wedding sari, lifting the family jewels out of a faded box and admiring their glitter."

Another writer Iqbalunnisa Hussain's novel Purdah and Polygamy portrays women as the victims of social evils. So Muslim women novelists are quite realistic in their writing. In fact, they wrote for social reformation.

However both the Hindu and Muslim writers seem to be similar in their delineation of Indian life, they differ markedly when it comes to their intentions. The Hindu or non-Muslim writers wrote novels with the purpose of establishing a discourse with the West. They wanted to remove certain delusions. Whereas Muslim writers wrote novels mainly to identify themselves with the contemporary currents of native developments and to expose their society to the world. Of course, all writers dealt with national problems like poverty, illiteracy, exploitation, corruption and natural calamities. S. C. Harrex says, the novels of the period are mainly written "within the wider spectrum of the Indian literary tradition, then, the growth of the modern novel has involved a shift in emphasis from religious aestheticism to socio-political concern." In fact, the novels of the period are a kind of registration of protest against the socio-political upheavals.
The purpose of this thesis is to trace the contribution of the pre-independence Indian English Muslim novelists. As we know such Muslim novelists are few. They are at a disadvantage socio-economically. As well as they face identity crisis. So their writings exhibit mainly a sense of survivalism. For example, a critic about Ahmed Ali observes, "Firstly we find him a strict realist who is concerned above all with the social reality of his group. Secondly in terms of content we find in him a sharp satirical critic of the life of his society and at the same time upholder of the cause of social change." So a detailed study of the pre-independence novelists writing in English helps us not only to trace their contribution but also their purposes for writing.

The thesis aims at tracing and discussing the above-mentioned issues. It focuses on the struggle and re-establishment of Muslim novelists on the basis of common literary values. In the process, one comes across different images of India. Most of the Muslim novelists treated pre-independence India as the place of contradictions and dilemmas. Sometimes, because of their divided loyalty, they could not talk as authentically as the non-Muslim novelists. The concept of partition haunted them as a nightmare. The Hamletian dilemma ‘To be or not to be’ was their question. The Muslims even did not know whether the event of India’s independence was a boon to them. They
were rather restless, rootless and frustrated. For instance, “Their presentations had been denounced as reactionary. They could now enter their literary work through a back door, as it were, claiming the function to make readers aware of the frustrations and disorientations.” Consequently, their novels differed from the contemporary non-Muslim novelists.

The Muslim novelists delve more on the theme of their survivalism, identity-crisis and communal violence rather than on national issues. They think that Hindu-Muslim harmony is not yet achieved. Thus the thesis besides being the document of each individual Muslim novelist, gives a comprehensive picture of the conflicts and compromises of Indian Muslims. However the Muslim writers are a few, they have achieved a remarkable place in the multi-cultural spectrum of the nation. So they are of socio-cultural and national importance.

A close study of the Muslim novelists drives home the point that they deal with the themes of partition, Indian national movement, communal riots and the issues of purdah and polygamy. They cover the themes of love and romance involving young boys and girls. Even the clash between the past and present and generation gap are broached upon.
Finally Indian English Muslim novelists of the pre-independence period are as varied in their plot-construction, characterization and narration as any contemporary non-Muslim novelists. So the Muslim novelists should be studied carefully and systematically. M. K. Naik says, “It is time to accept and welcome qualified and detailed literary accounts from all Indian communities on an equal basis of mutual interest and understanding.” The thesis establishes this truth with examples and illustrations. It is rather a critical appreciation and evaluation of the socio-cultural history that enlightened the fiery minds of the period.

Indeed, the thesis discusses these points seriously surveying the contemporary novelists. The six major chapters are dedicated to each individual Muslim novelist presenting a survey of their lives and contributions. The first chapter is a general survey of the important pre-independence Indian English novelists who have paved the way for the next generation of writers.

The second chapter is about Ahmed Ali. It contains the writer's biographical details, family background and his distinct contribution to the field of Indian writing in English. The third chapter is about Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, who was one of the revolutionary and secular minded novelists of the old time.
The fourth chapter traces the life and literary achievements of Aamir Ali, who wrote three novels of literary interest. He was a unique figure. The fifth chapter is about Humayun Kabir who has, because of his classic work *Men and Rivers*, emerged as an outstanding literary genius.

The sixth chapter is about two Muslim women novelists Attia Hosain and Iqbalunnisa Hussain. They are two great women writers of eminence and the thesis records rare information about them.

Here, an honest effort is made to trace the literary reality, appreciate the achievements and evaluate the relative worth of each of the Muslim writers of the pre-independence period. So the thesis is unique in so far it tries to give a faithful record of the pre-independence Muslim novelists with an aim of doing them justice.
REFERENCES:


