



Regional Trends in Indian English Fiction – A study of The God of Small Things & Chemmeen.

Author: B.B.Patil, Asst. Prof. of English, GFGWC BAILHONGAL.

- Any piece of literary work is influenced by various factors.
- i) Biographical history of the authors.
 - ii) Socio-Political and Economic conditions;
 - iii) Literary genre;
 - iv) Region or the place
- i) The reader may find the biographical or the autobiographical history embedded in such works. There are various examples but, the pain of such bitter historical experience can be found in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*;
 - ii) Charles Dickens is regarded as the champion in presenting the stark social conditions of England during the Victorian era. The pages of his novel *Hard Times* are a mirror to the poverty and its consequential crime prevalent during his age. One might also read the works of Tasleema Nasreen to find out the status of women in Islam dominant Bangladesh. Leo Tolstoy's work *Heart of Darkness* presents the pitiable condition of poor peasants in Russia under the crushing reign of Tzars.
 - iii) Joseph Conrad championed the adventure novels but with a tinge of travelogues. They were also narratives in the first person, the hero being a piece of inaction, yet the whole action surrounded him. *Lord Jim* is a classic of this genre;

iv) Whenever a reader thinks of a region portrayed in any novel, one would spontaneously think of Hardy's Wessex novels. The Wessex was not only a place for Hardy, but in fact it assumed the predominant role in all his novels. The theme, the characters, the language everything was under the influence of the Wessex.

So, one might certainly agree that a piece of literacy work is not totally independent.

It is a by-product of one or all the above mentioned influences. This is a universal truth and can be found in the works of Indian writers in English.

- The humble task of this paper is to trace the influence of region in Indian English fiction. This would trace the same in the Booker prize winning novel *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy, and the Kendra Sahitya Akademi Award winning classic *Chemmeen* by T.S.Sirasankaran Pillai.
- Both the novels are set in exotic Kerala which is also an extremely orthodox society. The characters in both the novels live in a society pestered with uneducated working class, superstitious, having illicit relationships, competition to survive, challenge the society and fated to death at the climax.
- Both the novels describe the natural beauty of Kerala more elaborately than any other work. They present a panoramic view of Kerala with an eye of a keen observer. The blue coloured magnanimous sea, the golden sea shore, the serene green backwaters, the profuse coconut plantations, the misty mountains, etc., give a live image to the reader. The description of nature becomes the primary source of interest to the reader. The nature assumes the role of a deity, the authors try to find the God in Nature, touching the edges of Wordsworthian concept of God.
- The Katalamma (in *Chemmeen*) is the female Indian counterpart of the Poseidon. The humans are awe struck and look with reverence at her whether she assumes a pleasant look or a roaring fury. She watches her children constantly. She is the benefactor and the task master. Apart from all this, the Katalamma assumes the role of moral policing. She is the protector of the chastity of women and the integrity of men. None of them is permitted to have an illicit liaison. If a woman wavers and enters into illicit relationship, her husband would be devoured by the Katalamma. Thus, that woman would face a permanent ordeal of being a widow. This concept of moral injunction is specific to Kerala in general and the fisherman community in particular.

- Although one would agree that the Aymanam (in The God of Small Things) does not equal the supernatural place of the Katalamma, but it certainly has its magnetism. All the characters of all the generations are attracted towards it in one or the other way. They would roam the world, for example: Baby Kochamma to America, Chacko to Oxford, Ammu & her children to Calcutta, but return to Aymanam at the end. The predominance of Anymanam in their lives can be compared to the Egdon Heath in Thomas Hardy's Return of the Native. It hovers on them, not only during their presence but also during their global wanders. They take birth in Aymanam, they are bred and cultured by it, and they are haunted by it throughout the story. In one sense, Aymanam decides the fate of all the characters in the novel.
- Kerala is famous among the sociologists for its unique matriarchal family structure. Most of the time the married man shifts to his wife's maternal home. Thus, the male dominant families are rare in Kerala. In the God of Small Things, Ammu and Baby Kochamma are so dominant that the male characters like Velutha, Chako and Estha are pushed to the secondary roles and the role of father Mulligan is almost insignificant. When Baby Kochamma's affair with father Mulligan falls flat, she firmly decides to remain a spinster forever and thus becomes a sadist. Ammu too plays with her personal life; marries an alcoholic; divorces him; loves Velutha but finds no solace. In Chemmeen, Karutamma defies the caste barriers and loves Pareekuty. Although this pre-marital affair slides to dormancy when she marries Palani, it rejuvenates in an accidental encounter between the lovers. Both, the pre-marital and the post marital affairs are unacceptable to the society and its deity. Thus, the Katalamma punishes all the concerned; Palani dies on the sea, Katalamma & Pareekuty are found dead on the shore.
- The people of Kerala feel proud that they are the real harbingers of Marxian communist ideals in India. The society has adhered itself to the philosophy or Right to Livelihood and a broader concept of classless society. But one would find hypocrisy in this aspect also. In the God of Small Things, there is a constant struggle, although unexpressed, between Baby Kochamma and Velutha. If Baby Kochamma represents feudal class, Velutha is a child of communism. An accidental presence of Velutha during a communist rally, at which Baby Kochamma is humiliated, results in strained relationship between the two. Velutha is killed for loving Ammu. His death is neither mourned nor regretted. Life, for Baby Kochamma, moves on as usual.
- Thus, the readers would find substantial amount of elements to prove that the region has its ample influence on the literature. Both the stories are set under the umbrella of Kerala.