

CHAPTER-5

CONCLUSION: A VISION FOR REFORMATION

Indian authors have established and carved their niches in the minds of Indian and Western readers. They have a very unique style of writing characterized by satirical comments, fluidity of language and a melancholy touch. The changes from socialism to individualism, spiritualism to materialism reflect a transformation from tradition to modernity. Indian fiction from its beginning has witnessed socio-cultural, economic and political changes from colonial to post colonial era. The novelists shifted their stance from public to private sphere, dealing with pangs of anxiety, alienation, detachment, involvement, guilt, restlessness, loss of faith and values, curse of industrialization and materialism, growing hostility among people which all have been explored. The writers, honestly and systematically reflected the revolutionary changes in human outlook, personality and lifestyle. They envisaged the coming of new system, new social order with extraordinary possibilities. Thus, the writers started exploring a plethora of writing styles and themes. Some of the writers settled abroad and divided their time between India and abroad have contributed immensely to the rapidly developing genre.

Two of the writers under this study Suketu Mehta and Vikram Chandra are settled abroad while Chetan Bhagat has the first hand experience of living and working outside India but he seems comfortable enough to resettle in India and has established himself as a prominent writer.

The second chapter of the study which deals with Chetan Bhagat relates that he has inaugurated a new era of English fiction which exposes the life of young technocrats working with multi-national companies, enjoying the culture of malls and multiplexes in metro cities. In his first novel *Five Point Someone*, he questions the Indian education system, its value, importance and relevance. It fails to provide opportunities for all round development of human personality. Bhagat, being an insider both at physical and mental level, exposes the experiences where the expression of independent knowledge is not given due importance even in an IIT institution. These institutions despite being seats of learning are not conducive towards establishing security and happiness in the minds of youngsters. The negative tendencies of depression, suicide, immorality, ragging all reflect the sickness in education system.

Mahatma Gandhi wanted an education system which followed the age old cultural values of the country. After Independence, Gandhian legacy was not followed properly by those in power. They used his name for promoting their own political will but his ideas were generally ignored. The people who were in power were so charmed by the western education and ideals that they did not change the colonial pattern of education. Anything that was rooted in Indian culture was snapped by the politicians from the education system. All moral and cultural links associated with secular outlook were trashed down.

In the novel *One Night at the Call Centre*, Bhagat shifts his stance from IIT campus to professional call centers. He tries to reconstruct the working conditions of workers who are forced to survive in the oppressive work culture. It conveys the

depressing consciousness of each character. The message is clear, that life is full of challenges and one must face it with inherent faith in God and humanity. The transfer of materialism can be steered clear only through spiritual realization. The narrative moves through two spheres private and professional. Both these worlds collide and fragment without any trace of synthesis.

The power structure determined by money has radically changed the world order. Life is being governed and guided by consumer choice. There is an American domination of economic power which is affecting the sensibility of those who are working in the call centers. Riginald Bibby in his work *Fragmented God* argues that “religion has a neatly packaged consumer item taking its places among other commodities that can be bought or bypassed according to one’s consumption whim” (32).

There is exhaustion and disgust with the filth of the corporate sector, Vroom in the text convinces by saying, “Our government does not realize this, but Americans are using us. We are sacrificing an entire generation and servicing their call centers”(199). There is criticism of the psyche of politicians who remain indifferent to the sentiments of public. The government needs to follow the working of the call centres and other private enterprises, rather than ignoring the hard realities, the western countries extolling and exploiting the less developed or developing countries.

The mall culture is fully exhibited in the novel. The protagonists are observed roaming around and spending time in malls enjoying, rejoicing, dining and shopping. They have acute modern fashion sense and tastes, visit discs, hookah

bars, smoke, drink but are also bogged down by work pressure and demanding lifestyle. They represent western traits but somehow down the line, their attitude and thinking is traditional. They still cherish their family values, customs and ideals, irrespective of their status in the society. The divisions between Bharat and India are not yet marked clearly and their positions are highly vague and rudimentary as there is continuous exchange between the two.

Bhagat deals with the psychology and life of weaker sections in the novel *The 3 Mistakes of My Life*. There is passion for business and cricket which gradually mingles with religion as is depicted in the relations of three friends. The three friends take the role of a mentor of a Muslim boy. The boy improves under the training but one's consciousness is gripped in community prejudices. There are no reconciliatory mechanisms in Hindu – Muslim rivalry for which the boys have to pay the price.

The novel explores the problems of unemployment, frustration, religious frenzy, poverty which can only be tackled with persistent and planned efforts. The religious saints and politicians are actually promoting the politics of discrimination and corruption. He advises the weaker sections to come out of vote bank politics or sham religious culture which are spreading communal hatred, prejudice and divisions.

The fourth novel *2 States : The Story of My Marriage* shifts the focus to the issues of family, marriage and personal relationship. The two states denote the two dimensions of the personalities of the main characters, Krish and Ananya, their personal selves and the social prejudices existing in the minds of the parents of

both communities. In the novel, Bhagat explores the possibilities of new modes of feminine consciousness. He provides his women their identity and voice and liberty to express their own choices. She dresses in her own way, is intelligent, drinks, relishes non-vegetarian food, open to sex, even though she belongs to a Tamil Brahmin family. Ananya maintains a rare balance while Krish is not able to control his passion.

The exposure to multi-national companies has opened the route to multi-racial marriage but then, they destroy the traditional structures or there is a tussle between the old and new. The scene shifts from one region to another finally reaching conciliation. The marriage takes place with the blessings of the elders.

Besides the main theme, Bhagat also tackles the issues of work culture in the multi-national companies. The money politics is practiced here also. The manager tries to grab the clients and their accounts by providing inaccurate information about particular schemes. If the schemes flopped out the blame rests on the fresher's. Ananya's father, who is not so fluent in the use of technology, finds it hard to compete with the youngsters and yet again the dirty politics, within the organization overruling the rules and his promotion is ignored. The fragmented world of phobias, nervous back down, frustration, materialistic pursuits all have been convincingly portrayed. Bhagat constructs the image of dynamic, intellectual and confident women who has the distinctive traits of femininity, modern bent of mind and the ideals of Indian womanhood.

In this new millennium, information technology and globalization have changed the established patterns of behaviour and modified the structures of

professional life, personal life, values of morality, economic structure and the commitments of life conditions. New challenges and ideals have paved the way for the new arenas to reconstruct the human experiences in the new world order. The novelist has tried to focus on these ideals which are prevalent in metros.

Bhagat ridicules the politicians for manipulating the sentiments of common man. The common man, the representative of Bharat is bogged down by poverty, unemployment. In an effort to sanskritise or modernise himself, he becomes a pawn in the corrupt system and becomes a part of it. The system where the rulers are few and the poor are many. The reformation is possible only with the reformation of economic structure.

Although, humorous and autobiographical in his depiction, Bhagat appeals to young readers about various social ills and incongruities that disturb the foundation of the society. He stresses on the need of education for the upliftment of the masses. His argumentation and presentation appear sketchy and unrealistic in some episodes but on the whole he has attained a cult position in India because of his best seller novels.

Vikram Chandra has presented a spectacular Bombay which is powerful and witness to the daring terrorist attacks. It represents an endlessly remarkable and striking possibility of human encounter. In the third chapter, Bombay or Mumbai emerges as a city shot through violence, outraged with distinctions of religion, ethnicity and class and which is haunted by love and desire to which there is no recourse.

In *Love and Longing in Bombay* one gets an insight into various types of cultures and society existing in India. The reader discovers rich women at the very top of the society and also sees into the life of a servant, who belongs to the opposite scale of society. The author conjures up a hybrid discourse of India with glittering Mumbai - sophisticated people, exclusive class, arty parties and on the other side, there are gritty policemen, love angles, the struggles of common man and gay relationships.

Mumbai is a city that evokes many images. The ghost story reflects the unfulfilled desires of an army man who has literally forgotten to live and enjoy his life. His cherished dreams and reality, erupts itself in the form of a phantom. Elite class is fighting amongst themselves to savior their prestige and reputation but it is not that possession of wealth means an escape from worries or stresses in their lives. They have their own series of complexities inching towards them while the working class is working hard and bearing with their own sort of struggles to face the competitive world. Both the elite and weaker sections are struggling, chasing their own dreams, the disparities which rule their world merge together to create the glittering metropolitan world of twenty first century. Present generation man has been imitating western lifestyle of living and adopting their vision of comfort. The society has become little liberal, more prone to sexual indulgences and loosening of morals is exhibited. The martial relations have become stressed and man feels at a loss, in lacunae to which there is no ending. Gay relations, extra-marital relationships, incestuous relations, sex crimes have become prevalent. The established system has rotten out. The so called reputed, elite intelligentsia is

groping into darkness and the poor people are following their footsteps. The whole system is bounded by chain of corruption but despite all that, it has enriched the society with more elaborative gender roles, freedom to live in one's own way, acceptance of different cultural traditions by people and more liberal interactions within communities. Still, one can find the caste-class distinctions, rejection of inter-caste marriages, communal hatred etc. It points to the glaring fact that the society is trying to acclimatize with the new values but the traditional element cannot be rooted out.

Sacred Games is a thriller related with crime and detective story. The confrontation between Sartaj Singh and Ganesh Gaitonde forms the crux of the whole novel. Vikram Chandra declares at one place that he wanted to get a sense of the place as people lived in it, in the turn of the century. So, he has tried to keep his characters close to reality like Sartaj Singh sitting around in a traffic jam which is quite a common site in the metro cities. One experiences various points of view and variety of ways of looking at it and it catches something along the way, the lives of the people who reside and live in Bombay. It has interweaving narratives and voices which reflect the role of money and corruption in the society. The city of Bombay, itself becomes a character in the book.

Chandra has incorporated stunning images of a world which is sitting on the edge of catastrophe. Gaitonde, a Hindu don is drawn into the unholy world of local politicians and communal tensions. Gaitonde's origins are painful and explain why and how, the dreadful injustices of small town life shaped him to be a monster that he has become. His wealth increases and he becomes attracted to the world of

Bollywood and glitz. He is a failure in relationships. His family, friends- all leave him one by one, taken away by cruel jaws of death. He finds solace only in his true friend, Jojo which is beyond any physical attraction. He falls prey to gurus and Machiavellian governments who use him to meet their own purposes. He understands the horror which is about to explode and wants Jojo and himself out to survive the ordeal but something else is destined, which leads to conclusive ending.

Sartaj Singh is disturbed by his stressful life. He has undergone divorce and wants a direction in life, which is provided by Mary. He helps reveal the mystery of nuclear bomb while Gaitonde, Parulkar move out of the picture. The partition saga is enlivened before us, the escapades which the people have to face while shifting their places. It is deeply emotional and touching and provides a glimpse of the changing times.

Thus, one needs to keep pace with the changing norms in the society, in order to be part of the modern world. One who does not strive or make efforts for continuous growth or development lags behind or is disillusioned. The part played by Babbanji is an adequate example of simple living, who tries to catch up with the fast paced world but his struggles are never ending.

The fourth chapter which relates Suketu Mehta's ambitious project *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found* presents the divergent facets of the city life that are interlinked – the dreams and misery, violence and corruption, the filth of the underworld and the glitz of Bollywood. It is a narrative non-fiction work which fuels the imagination of the readers.

It starts as a personal journey which is a learning exercise. Bombay is a city enmeshed in communal violence, gang activity and police brutality. Mehta becomes a part of the lives of gang members, police officers and members of extremist political parties establishing a relationship with them. Mehta meets people who are drawn to extremities. Ajay Lal, Satish and Sunil live on the extremes of violence, Monalisa and Vidhu Vinod Chopra thrive on the extreme of spectacle, Honey is on the extreme of the gender; the Jains go beyond the extreme of abandonment. The people live out the fantasies of normal people and their work affects all other spheres of their lives. They can never leave the work at the bar, or the police station or the political party office. His interactions with many of the protagonists of the Bombay bombings and resultant riots are horrifying. He meets the malevolent Hindu extremist party Chief Bal Thackeray which gives a revealing insight into the corrupt underbelly of the city. The meeting with Chotta Shakeel, Mumbai mafia don and a close associate of Dawood Ibrahim is a shocker. The gangster is believed to be behind terrorist attacks in Mumbai. He becomes very close to a Mumbai bar girl Monalisa. It points towards the access he had to each of his subjects. The story of teenaged, street dwelling poet, Babbanji is heart evolving and touching.

The survival of Indian nation depends on Indian culture abided by values. Indians are slumbering down in a state of mental enslavement. Leadership is circumscribed by caste, region and religion prejudices. In the vote based politics, there is little scope for strong role models and national credentials. This has led to the growing anger and discontent against those who are controlling and governing

the political, economic and geographical situations, as this brings about a weak system at the centre. There is a remarkable difference in the attitudes and relations among city people and rural folk. The pace of agricultural revolution does not match with the pace of cyber revolution and hence the migration takes place. The resources promoted in India need to contribute to the growth and sensibility of common man. The cancerous growth of corruption in politics, police and other arenas contains the seeds of the destruction of the society. The rights of minorities, weaker sections and lower castes need to be protected. There is lack of the responsibility of the government towards the growing corruption.

All said and written, Mehta's vision in dealing with India's image is of someone who is settled abroad. He suffers from the elite symptom and only reflects the dark side of the picture. No doubt, the life of a poor man is a continuous struggle in the metropolitan area but all is not wrong. The positive impact of globalization can be witnessed. The poor people are trying to adopt new ways and raising their standards. There is shift in the status of women as they are working in the political, business and social areas. There are changes in the familial relationships, particularly among males in terms of the right of the wife to work outside and there is sharing of household work by both partners.

Neglected and poor members of the society like Monalisa and Honey are earning for their survival. Jain family have their own culture to follow. Police, politics and mafia the nexus exists to demean the common people who are exploited. The problems in the cities are en-massing as the population is increasing but then the structure of Indian society is undergoing a metamorphoses due to

westernization, industrialization and politicization and the society is quickly gearing up to emulate and adopt those changes.

Thus, the impact of globalization and new culture is far reaching. It has taken a leap into the world of common man who is also sensitized by the spectacular phenomena happening in the world, in the cities. These people crave for new streams or channels opening in front of them. Some of the channels are legalized and follow the norms of the society while the others are illegal methods which provide them an easy access to money. They need to follow their inner voice to identify the right ways and means.

The metropolitan world has provided stiff competition to the traditional market. Now, one has access to quality product and that too at low prices. People lobby themselves for big brands available at one place which has blown the shutters down for small indigenous markets. It also holds out promise of improved productivity and higher living standards as many Indian companies are going multinational. It has thrown up new challenges like growing inequality across and within nations, volatility in financial market and environmental deterioration.

It has increased the recognition of human rights. The unprecedented mobility and interaction of people from different countries have dented local cultures of people the world over. Transnational work force and large scale immigrants are dispersing different cultures in various countries leading to a unified world culture which is a mixture of various regional cultures. As a result, people are coming closer to sharing similar values, aspirations, attitudes and

lifestyles. Local culture, spiritual practices and core social values are getting replaced and a new meaning, a new sense is being given to human life.

Earlier, well defined religious practices were blindly followed but now the spirit of reasoning has weakened the established practice. Moreover, interpretation of different cultures has inter-mixed the religious practices. Like Diwali, Holi festivals are observed by non-Hindus as well.

Women have challenged the male domination in all spheres. Males were supposed to be the bread earners but today women are working in all spheres of Indian economy. Western culture has given new meaning to the life of Indian youth. They want to lead an independent life with both the partners working, the dynamics of the Indian family system is also changing.

Many changes are visible in the contemporary society as the world's culture is shrinking and expanding at the same time due to pervasive technological advances that allow for instantaneous sharing of culture but critics are afraid that the growth of global village will enhance conflicts and fragmentation between cultures and lead to cultural domination by more developed or superior countries. Westernization is not necessarily an imposition of culture but an opportunity for less developed country like India to incorporate their culture with the western culture. Globalization is the process of natural evolution and progression of how people interact and profit from advanced capabilities to communicate. The vision created is of the multicultural village where ideas and practices can be freely exchanged and appreciated. The cultural exchanges are for the betterment of the

society or an individual not for promoting cultural monopoly. The need to accommodate the positive trends has to be practiced.

The fictional discourse was earlier understood to be governed by the singular perspective of a dominating character. All the fictional details exhibited a unified world view presented in the work of art. All other voices were subordinated as the character assumed to carry the ideas of the writers. The major function of this kind of writing is to expose and criticize the subjugation of man by man in any form. Then, the writers concentrated on the decolonization of the social groups oppressed in the name of class, caste, gender and race. This kind of fiction is purposive and political as it involves giving voice to plurality, multiplicity and heterogeneity in life. Similarly, various characters under study represent multiple voices and mass appeal. The complications faced by different characters in the metro cities are perplexing and tiring and reflect multiple problems. The problems faced by people, be it elite or low class are all the same but the difference essentially lies in the ways of tackling the situation. An individual who finds himself isolated has to work to strike a balance between modernity and tradition. It is just the difference in the approach, mind sets, power system and money value which has created the divisions. The gap can be bridged by following the secular, socialist approach, where divisions of religion, caste-class regulations and poverty alleviation procedures can be followed; and equal opportunities to the poor and weaker sections can be provided or we can say the ideal Ram Rajya can be created. As R. Balashankar narrates what Dr. Veerappa Moily, former Law and Justice Minister reflects in his book *Shri Ramayana Mahanveshanam* about Ram Rajya :

At the heart of epic there are three distinct cultures; the Lankan culture of acquisition, pleasure and power, the Ayodhya culture of artistic and academic progress and the culture of Kiskindha... mostly tribal and backward in terms of development in the modern sense. Initially, there is a friction between the three cultures. However, when they become allies of Rama, and fuse into one great culture- the culture of Ram Rajya. (n.pag.)

Literature has always been suggestive and evocative. It aims at awakening the dormant spirit of people, irrespective of form and style. The common man's expectation of Thomas More's *Utopia* in post-independence India has ended up in smoke when politicians, bureaucrats, anti-social elements and cultural propagandists indulged in malpractices. The greatest danger to the unity comes from those ideologies which seek to divide the people. Indian population need to have access, to quality education to channelize their minds in the right direction. They need to foster a culture, not religious or political context for a future for peace and prosperity. It should not be destroyed in futile exercises of political one-upmanship. This attitude will lead to minimizing the rural-urban divide and also bring about a renaissance of the nation. The metro culture has brought about astonishing changes in the lifestyle and culture of people as is glorified in the texts. The key is to adapt the favourable ones and work on it. A strong India or Bharat lies in the hands of people who believe in the service of the nation as the service of the self, where the identities of Bharat and India are merged into one.

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