

TRYST WITH DESTINY : GUILT AND SHAME
IN
ANGLO-INDIAN AND INDO-ANGLIAN NOVELS

by

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Abstract of the Dissertation

The last phase of the Indian struggle for freedom and the transition of India from the colonial age to the era of freedom has attracted many talented novelists -- both British and Indian -- in recent years. The present study is a thematic analysis of some of the Anglo-Indian and Indo Anglian* novels published during a quarter century after the Indian liberation (1950-1975). The authors included in this study are: Paul Scott, John Masters, Gerald Hanley, Philip Woodruff, Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan, Manohar Malgonkar, Kamala Markandaya, Falachandra Rajan, Nayantara Sahgal, Khushwant Singh, Attia Hosain, Chaman Nahal and Raj Gill. These authors have been studied here with a view to analysing the feelings of guilt and shame that appear to have provided the prime impulses for this considerable body of fiction on the nineteen forties in India.

Chapter I, "Introduction," looks at the means available to fiction as a strategy for expiation. In addition to the usual tools of the literary critic-- analysis of plot and imagery -- an attempt has been made here to explore the possibilities of using the scapegoat and sacrificial characters in fiction as clues to the expiation of guilt. The scattered observations of critics with a

* Following other writers in this field, I have used the term "Anglo-Indian" to denote British writing on India and "Indo-Anglian" for Indian writing in English.

sociological and psychological bent have been drawn upon to formulate a basis for a systematic use of "scapegoats" and "sacrifices" for the analysis of guilt in the novels.

It has been generally recognized that certain characters in fiction, the villains, are the equivalent of communal means of expiation insofar as they tend to concentrate the evils that their society wishes to atone for. Having created symbolic scapegoats in the "villains" of literature, the author banishes them to the scapegoat's fate of death or some other variant of death. Besides these scapegoats, there are also the sacrificial figures of literature who represent the best in their society, who can also, on the analogy of religious martyrdom, be sacrificed in order to purge the guilt of their society.

The need to confess one's sins and to expiate them through literary strategies forms a part of a wider phenomenon in the Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian novels dealing with the forties in India. It is part of a need to forge a new identity following the historical transition in 1947 when India became independent. Indian independence meant a break with the past for both the British and the Indians: the British had to search for an image of themselves as a nation freed of the taint of imperialism, while the Indians had to work out a post-colonial and post-

Partition identity. Expiation of guilt is instrumental in this quest for reidentification in these novels.

Guilt or shame which is felt for various acts of commission and omission in the novels is analysed in the next few chapters of the dissertation. Chapters II and III, "The Ruler and the Ruled" and "The Ruled and the Ruler" examine the complex reactions of the ex-ruler and the ex-ruled in the post-Independence years inasmuch as these are reflected in the Anglo-Indian and Indo-Anglian novels. Considering the novels in the light of the psychology of the colonialist and the revolutionary, I have suggested that some of the paradoxes and ambiguities in the novels may owe their origin to the unconscious ambivalences of the authors.

The colonialist's guilt for exploitation finds expression in various ways in the Anglo-Indian novels. I have traced the most important of these manifestations which forms the central literary motif of Paul Scott's Quartet to its source in an archetype of colonialist literature. Similarly, once the presence of the guilt of the revolutionary is recognized in the Indo-Anglian novels, the self-denigration and the scapegoating of the leaders of the revolution are explicable. R.K. Narayan's

tolerant irony and self-criticism, Khushwant Singh's pungent satire, and Manohar Malgonkar's sense of Indian inferiority can then be seen as different manifestations of an unconscious guilt. The chapter "The Ruled and the Ruler," besides dealing with Indo-Anglian authors in whom guilt predominates over pride, also takes up for consideration those novelists who treat the politics of Indian liberation with a mixture of pride and guilt.

Chapter IV, "The Rulers Who Were Ruled" is concerned with the plight of the native rulers of India, who are seen to be one of the chief sources of guilt in the fiction on the Indian transition. The British guilt here is for abandoning the princes who were their special charges, while the Indian guilt is for the overthrow of their former rulers. The British sense of shame for having failed to honour their special treaties with the Indian princes finds repeated expression in the Anglo-Indian novels. The Indo-Anglian novels once again demonstrate the fact that rational convictions regarding the necessity of a revolution are no safeguard against ambivalent feelings towards the deposed rulers.

Chapter V, "The White and the Black" is devoted to the examination of yet another area of guilt -- the racial guilt -- in the novelists. A regret for

the attitudes of white superiority and the consequent aloofness of the rulers as also a sense of shame for the perpetuation of inter-racial barriers to understanding and human fellowship are evident in Anglo-Indian novels. Besides this guilt for racial segregation, there is also the deeper guilt of miscegenation which expresses itself in the sense of British responsibility for the predicament of the Eurasians in India. Indo-Anglian novels have not dwelt on the theme of racial relations at any length.

Chapter VI, "The Hindu and the Muslim" analyses the fictional presentation of Partition, the catastrophic conclusion of the British rule in India that made the transition of 1947 a cataclysmic one, leaving a sense of shame in the minds of all who were concerned with it. The British sense of responsibility for the division of the country and the genocide that followed upon its wake on both sides of the border, however strongly felt, cannot equal the sin of fratricide that is felt by the Indian novelists, who write as the party directly involved in the massacre. After some effort at scapegoating, the Indo-Anglian novels finally purge themselves of this sin through confession and a plea for forgiveness.

The concluding Chapter of the dissertation is devoted to a more detailed examination of the specifically literary means employed by both groups of novelists for the dramatization of guilt, shame or pride. Sexual symbolism, for instance, has been employed by both groups of novelists; but the nuances of the symbolization serve to pinpoint the variations in the attitudes of the authors. Some of the more prominent symbols in the novels are also analysed here.

An appendix supplying the political background of the novels has also been provided.

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- III. THE RULED AND THE RULER
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