

A THEMATICAL STUDY OF CHAMAN NAHAL'S SELECTED NOVELS

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Abstract:

Literature is the treatment of experience through the medium of words, the quality of the literature depends on the kind of experience handled. The works of great literary men stem from high consciousness. No literary work can achieve its true aim of expanding the consciousness and increasing the awareness, if the author does not rise to the spirit and carry the creative power to kindle fire in others. Chaman Nahal, the most renowned post – Indian Historical novelist, sharpens the sensibilities of the readers by forecasting the spirit of the times.

Keywords: Literature, post – Indian, Historical, Chaman Nahal

Introduction:

Indian writings in English which depicted the freedom struggle, sociopolitical discontent and Gandhian principles of non-violence shifted to the theme of holocaust of partition, after the attainment of independence in 1947. This horrendous tragedy of partition gave rise to a new corpus of literature. The blood-curdling colossal event stirred the minds of the Indian writers and as a result of it, a number of novels were written. Most of the writers witnessed this gory catastrophe that gave vent to their expressions in the form of novels. The tragedy of partition which resulted in complete chaos and destruction provided the writers with rich source of treasure for their pen.

Writing is a popular and powerful medium of expression. Indian English Fiction is started as a small plant but attained great recognition and branched off into many directions. It is not

difficult to trace its slow but steady progress from the initial stage to the realistic one. It has touched every aspect period from the ancient to the modern, and level from the village to the international level. It is due to the spark of Indian English Literature that we have achieved two Nobel Prizes in the field of Literature. Literature is a lake which reflects the changing society. It presents opinions of a society. It is affected by the social, political and cultural panorama and affects them as well. Literature is directly connected with the human heart, mind and soul. The writer is bound to present his contemporary time and society in his works.

The novel phenomenon in Indian English Writing is new but became popular very soon. In Indian literature, other forms of literature were quite old as their foundations were laid down centuries back but the novel as literary genre was new to India. Poetry, epics, drama, short stories and fables have their old literary history. Novel was actually the last to arrive on the Indian English literary scene. It was only during a period of little more than a century that the novel-the long sustainable piece of prose fiction-has cropped up and taken root in India. A novel occurrence in the literary history of India has made the most significant position in the contemporary world of writing. It was in Bengal that a literary renaissance first manifested itself, but almost immediately afterwards its traces could be seen in Madras, Bombay and other parts of India. Indian English novel had begun almost with the introduction of English in Indian Education system, though earlier efforts by Indian writers were overshadowed by those in regional languages. Novels have kept on appearing at a steadily increasing pace and undoubtedly the future of Indian English novel is full of hope and promise. There has been an ample indication of vivacity, variety, humanity and artistic integrity that have ornamented the Indian English novel.

Indian novelist in English, Chaman Nahal has to his credit eight novels. His novels in chronological orders are “My True Faces” (1973), “Azadi” (1975), “Into Another Dawn”(1977), “The English Queens” (1979), “The Crown and the Loin Cloth” (1981), “Sunrise in Fiji” (1988), “The Salt of Life” (1990) and “The Triumph of Tricolour” (1992). He has portrayed Gandhiji in his Gandhi Quartet. Nahal’s Gandhi Quartet comprises of four novels, “The Crown and the Loin Cloth”, “The Salt of Life”, “The Triumph of the Tricolour” and “Azadi”. This article deals with the impact of partition on love in Chaman Nahal’s novel, “Azadi”. “Azadi” is a master piece of Nahal’s creative genius. Nahal being a native of Sialkot had himself witnessed the horrors and

holocaust created by communal frenzy. The story of the novel covers the period from the announcement of the Cabinet Mission Plan on June 3, 1947 up to the period after the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi on January 30, 1948. This momentous event of history focuses its impact on few individuals and the family of Lala Kanshi Ram, a grain merchant. The country's partition throttles down the love of young lovers like Arun and Nur and later on his love with Chandni.

Chaman Nahal is one among the Indian writers in English who has been denied justifiable attention. With an exception to *Azadi*, his other works remain insufficiently analysed. Nahal's short stories and his critical works suffer the same indifference while his latest contribution to juvenile literature, *As a Novelist*, Nahal has invited attention to critical works in the form of reviews, thematic analyses, interviews and articles and journals.

The novels of Chanman Nahal provide interesting reading and the critical works indeed enrich the understanding of his themes and style. Nahal's works do not just entertain or instruct but change the perception of the readers, thereby strengthening, ennobling, and enlarging the affirmation of the meaning of life. Nahal strongly influenced by the inner reserves of strength and power of Gandhiji which emanated from his moral convictions and devotes a quartet to exemplify Gandhian principles. This tempo of India in the first half of twentieth century is wonderfully captured in his works. The attitude of the people towards individuals, community, family, religion and culture find vivid realistic reflection. Nahal's themes which range from the individual and the social, to the nation and the international levels are replant which his essentially positive view of life nurtured by the Indian mind steeped in dharma. Nahal views life as a series of challenges and makes his characters overcome them to re-assure his faith in the goodness of life.

The spectrum of consciousness for celebration of life in Nahal's novels has not been specifically dealt with. Critics have indulged in analyzing themes of affirmation, the Indian sensibility, the use of history, and the Gandhian aspect. Nahal's novels provide ample scope for a clinical study of various types of Consciousness in men at different premises. The characters awaken to particular Consciousness and display remarkable commitment to life and its worth.

The study, *A Thematical Study Of Chaman Nahal's Novelshighlights Nahal's artistic skills as a novelist, his high purpose of awakening the value and faith in life, which is dormant in man. He is greatly concerned with the materialistic preoccupation of modern man and the growing malaise of values. The analysis examines the above said concerns in his novels*

*The Dimensions of Consciousness discusses the compulsion of artists and philosophers to represent contemporary problems and their essential role in moulding a better society. The growth of the historical novel has been traced and Nahal's unique place in the order is highlighted. Biographical details are drawn from his autobiography, *Silent Life* along with other sources to provide an insight into his artistic acumen. Instances that have inspired Nahal to present life-like situations are identified from his own testimonial statements.*

*The study establishes the hypothesis that the various experiences of the characters unfold the dimensions of consciousness pointing to the new directions of recreating life, affirming its meaning. The study seeks to look afresh at the problems and see how they can be created a new in the light of the experiences of his characters. It examines Chaman Nahal's attempt at awakening consciousness of the readers to the social problems and to scrutinize his view of life at the individual, national and the cosmopolitan levels, not excluding his moral, social, philosophical and psychological delineations in another plane. Towards this purpose, eight novels have been taken for study: *Sunrise in Fiji, Into Another Dawn, The English Queens and My True Faces* and the four novels included in *The Gandhi Quartet-The Crown and the Loincloth, The Salt of Life, The Triumph of the Tricolour and Azadi*.*

*Individual Seeking Meaning in Life explores Nahal's treatment of the individual and his conflicts with the family, society and the nation. Chaman Nahal devoted considerable space to family as an institution. *The Gandhi Quartet*, supplies ample scope for analyzing the responsibilities of an individual, *Into Another Dawn* analyzes the highly sensitive individuals seeking meaning in life. *Sunrise in Fiji* focuses on the spiritual famine concealed by materialistic splendour. The individual in relation to family, the civic sense aroused during the freedom struggle, personal discipline as advocated by Gandhi, the East West encounter in respect to individuality are the other concerns of the chapter.*

The second chapter explores Nahal's treatment of the individual and his conflicts with the family, society and the nation. The third chapter presents an analysis of Nahal's presentation of the collective psyche.

The sensitive issue of partition delineates the whole saga of struggle for Independence based on Satyagraha pointing toward awakening of the collective consciousness. As families, as communities, and as a nation, the background provides immense opportunity for the novelist to bring about a spectrum of awakening at various levels. The other prospective fields of communalism, the presence of extremists and moderates among the freedom fighters, and the sensitive issue of Partition are analysed. The chapter assesses how the dawn of freedom becomes a nightmarish "false dawn of freedom and "a wiped-out dream", with the horrendous experience of the holocaust of communal violence, besides emphasizing the need for religious harmony. The chapter analyzes The Gandhian Quartet, which is rich in the colonizer and the colonized attitudes for the collective sensibilities. Nahal's skill at dealing with the diasporic sensibilities in novels like Sunrise in Fiji and Into Another Dawn and the comical treatment of the imitative English consciousness in The English Queens are also examined. The chapter highlights that Nahal's concerns stem from a code of stable ethical and cultural values.

Reflecting Gandhian Thoughts concerns itself with Nahal's portrayal of Gandhi and his role in awakening the national as well as moral consciousness. Nahal's The Gandhi Quartet is an exclusive presentation of the mechanics of Gandhian methods and how people responded to them. Gandhi's firm belief in non-violence, his frustration over the division of people on basis of religion and creed are elaborately analysed. An array of novels portraying Gandhi as a character and the relevance of Gandhian ideologies are discussed. Nahal's difficult and challenging task of portraying Gandhi both as an individual and as a symbol has been explored. Gandhi saga sets the pace and the deeper meaning to his novels. The chapter focuses on the relevance of Gandhi and the need to interpret Gandhian values in response to the new life demands.

analyze the spectrum of women character studies the feminist consciousness as perpetuated by Chaman Nahal in his novels. Nahal has the flair for portraying strong women. The role of women in the freedom struggle has been glorified by Nahal. His women are smart and are often the anchors of the storyline. The chapter analyzes the spectrum of women characters- the instrumental woman of a family, the convicted women in the freedom struggle,

the British and the American women living in India, and the emancipated yet cultured woman typical of the Indian tradition.

Renewing the Spirit Within highlights the main threads running through all the chapters, illuminating the relevance of his observations on the exultation of life at all circumstances. The various techniques employed by Nahal are examined to assess and establish Chaman Nahal's position among the major writers of Indian English novels. Nahal's creative writing is an embodiment of a positive attitude to life, its acceptance in its totality, the celebration of its joys and resignation to its sufferings, leading to relentless exploration of values that make life meaningful. He succeeds in awakening the dormant spirit of men pointing out, that though confined within the frame of society or history, the essential pursuit should be to search and celebrate the meaning of life.

Nahal is one of the artists who has a firm idea of the thousand things to say, and what is more remarkable is that the way he yearns to say them with conviction. Chaman Nahal exhorts his readers to gain in all his novels. Progress or destruction depends upon the dominant thoughts of man. Be it war, peace or even trips to the Space, are conceptualized primarily in the minds of men.

Conclusion

The curve of knowledge that began a century ago has brought man to the frontier where he stands today, Stupendous have been its achievements, incredible its knowledge of the laws and processes of Nature and formidable its impact, in the utilization of matter and the resultant technology. But, this magnificent curve of knowledge has made man bereft of an identity. Being denatured in the process, his obsession with matter has worn him off. Man has to acquire wider, vaster, richer and more complex consciousness to effectively master this highly increased field of knowledge and become sensitive to things happening around him.

chaman Nahal strongly believes that man must measure up in power, in to the external reality he lives in and make changes in it. He offers a detailed elaboration of this consciousness issuing forth from his own experiences and knowledge. And in a special measure, Nahal makes extensive explorations into the realms of the past and interestingly treats the past not as a source

of hurt but as an experience that is needed to gain maturity. It is through the dimension of consciousness that the mind exceeds itself and arrives at its own fullness of spirit.

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