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Mubarak Ali Lashari

Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Sindh, Jamshoro

Hamza Hassan

PhD Film Studies, Univesiti Malaysia Sarawak, Malaysia

Postcolonial Perspective: The Element of Colonialism in Khadija Mastoor's Novel "AANGAN"

Abstract

Post colonialism is the phenomena of the process of occupation and colonization. It dates back from the conscious living of human being. It continued throughout the history of mankind. But the modern colonialism including the occupying different parts of the world by European powers is unique, complex and more strategic. This resulted in change of culture, thoughts, language and literature. This paper attempts to survey the novel Aangan by Khadija Mastoor in the perspective of colonial and postcolonial repercussions. First different themes were analyzed in order to judge the general theme and issues of the novel. Later on, through minute and micro study different concepts emerged due to the result of colonial process and its aftermath effect. On the basis of the findings the conclusion was drawn.

Key Words: Post colonialism, Pakistani Literature, Pakistani Urdu Novel, Partition of Indian Subcontinent, Orientalism

Post colonialism

The term "Post colonialism" refers broadly to the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, and human identity itself are represented in the modern era, by the colonized countries after getting their independence. However, some critics use the term to refer to all cultures and cultural products influenced by imperialism from the moment of colonization started until today. Postcolonial literature seeks to describe the interactions mostly between European nations and the peoples they colonized. By the middle of twentieth century, the vast majority of world was under control of European countries. At one time, Great Britain, for example, ruled almost 50 percent of the world (Said, 1978). During the twentieth century, countries such as India, Jamaica, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Canada and Australia won independence from their European colonizers. The literature and art produced in these after independence has become the object of "Postcolonial Studies", a term coined in and for academia, initially in British universities. This field got prominence in the 1970's and has been developing ever since (Quayson, 2000). it is studied and used as an analysis of text(s) in the perspective of various interrelated things. Postcolonialism as separate discipline is considered to be the part of cultural studies because the current world phenamena is consequence of the colonial process either one or the other way (McLeod, 2000). In the light of above thinkers and writers, it is clear that literature being a part of culture is also interwoven with the colonialism and its aftermath consequences.

Introduction of Novelist

Khatija Mastoor was a great literary woman in the history of Urdu literature. She was born in Lukhnow (India) in 1930. Her work includes drama, short story and novel writing. Major collections of her short stories include "Khel" "Bochar" and "Chand Roz". She died in 1982. (Wikipedia, 2012)

Aangan was the most popular novel by “Khatija Mastoor”. It is a story of a family in sub-continent which depicts the social and psychological phenomenon in Indian society. Aangan is the best portrayer of society. Khadija Mastoor has well-judged the political, sociological and economic movements of his age. She was regarded among serious and deep-thought-provoking novelist. She was awarded with Adam Gee Award on his authentic approach and well-knit plot of this novel (Wikipedia, 2012).

Brief Introduction of the Novel

The novel is portraying the time period of 1940. The most important aspect of this novel is sociological. It is the story of a family which consists of many major and minor characters. The important characters of novel are, Barri Chachi, Aliya, Amma, Kareeman Boua and Barray Chacha. The family disputes and daily quarrelsome is well judged by the novelist with depth and authenticity. These little disputes created differences among all characters and spaces between them kept on increasing day by day. How a weak family member has been discussed with satire and those are totally neglected and just are an extra burden for others. The concept of ‘courtyard’ is also symbolizing the shelter of woman. The behavior of grandmother made mother of Aliya to suffer a lot. So she had only desire to be the master of the ‘courtyard’. But she is never given importance by her husband so due to no support she loses her importance in ‘courtyard’. ‘Courtyard’ is always of that person who is in power. The novel Aangan is symbolizing ‘courtyard’, a ‘courtyard’ of home or society. Everyone is busy in his matters and no one is taking care of ‘courtyard’ and courtyard is becoming desolate and disputed as the days are passing. Due to carelessness the courtyard has lost its beauty and residents of this courtyard are divided because of their different social norms and political choices. The politics of the country has divided the inhabitants of ‘courtyard’ in to different political thoughts which dispersed them into different dimensions and aspects. No inhabitant is sincere with the yard and everyone is playing a hypocrite role. Everyone just wanted the benefit from the courtyard but no one is ready to safeguard the yard which is becoming worse as the days are passing. Both indo-Pak were the ‘courtyards’. Everything is dependent upon the concept of roof and yard. Because of migration thousands of people left their homes and became deprived of roof and shelter. The emotions of anger and fury are developed in the person at that time when he loses his values and other tries to be dominant over him. Same is the case of this novel; the reaction of Indian against British rule is because of this anger and grief and the people started to hate English. As before, they were leading lives freely according to their traditions and values. This novel is regarded as a political novel in Urdu literature. In this novel, the characters of a family are representing the effects of sub-continent politics among Muslim family of U.P which all is happening in a ‘courtyard’ and every characters has his different political views. The novelist has shown the political flashes of that time.

Themes of Novel

There are following important themes of this novel;

1. Political
2. Social
3. Sociological
4. Humanitarian (Hassan, 2010).

1. Political Concerns

The political themes are represented by the political conditions of India. The contrast of ideas between Muslim League and Congress has divided characters into two parties in the same house. For example Barray Chacha is the follower of Congress while Cheemi and Jamil are the true lovers of Muslim League. As well the worldly politics and the effects of Second World War are also well discussed by the novelist.

The traces of Second World War can also found in few parts of the novel. Though the war was being fought in Europe but the people of every 'courtyard' was affected by it. The shadows of danger were rustling over the head of every one. In each home, it was discussed and every man wanted to convey his point of view. After the fall of second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, the second city of Japan, Everyone was much admired by the power of Europeans and British. As Aliya's mother says to Jamil Bhaiya so that he may keep away from the political activities. "Behold Jamil! Don't say such like. Now you have seen that the largest countries had to suffer after fighting with Britain. Therefore leave these dreams of freedom." The mother said to Jamil (Mastoor, 2000).

2. Social Issues

The social themes are very well organized by the writer, as she is regarded as social writer so her quality can be traced in this novel too. Most of the novels of Khadija Mastoor are based on the social themes and she is thought an expert in portraying the society with in words. The traces of his social experiences and his keen eye on society can be found in a large quantity. Few of the examples are as follows;

"Who can save himself from these flies? These are our seasonal butterflies... (Mastoor, 2000)."

The contrast of social norms is also well discussed by the writer in the novel. Especially the character of Najma Aunty is representing the contrast of social norms because she always denies the social norms and she obeys the paths of modernism. She searches the life partner for her and then just tells her family'

"Hi brother...! The matter is this that I have searched my life partner. Just, I had to tell you." She said with pride (Mastoor, 2000).

Aliya was much angry on her behavior that a master in English doesn't mean to reject the traditions or the social norms.

"You should get married. If you say we may do arrangements for your marriage." Elder aunt grinned (Mastoor, 2000).

"What kind of arrangements will you do? Am I Cheemi? On whose marriage the drummers will be called, the drums will be beaten and my dowry will be made. I myself am a dowry." Najma aunty seemed bit proud (Mastoor, 2000).

"Whenever you will say, I will attend your marriage." Saying this Barray Chacha went out (Mastoor, 2000).

The old maid of the home is still very traditional and she is unable to forget the social norms of her era. She is much unhappy on this silent marriage.

"Neither the drums were beaten nor did she become bride. Is it a marriage? The ages changed. In our times the bride was hidden from the shadow of fathers and brothers months before the marriage." Kareeman Bawa was chattering along with washing the pots (Mastoor, 2000).

3. Sociological Perspectives

The sociological themes of society are well discussed by novelist. The atmosphere of the home is presenting the thinking dimensions of every mind. The little joys, big grieves, joking and taunting, jealousy, differences of opinions and sharing of pains between the characters is well discussed by the writer. Therefore this novel is regarded as full of life and each character is performing to show different dimension of life from his physical appearance as well as from his dialogues.

We can trace many examples of small joys and pains.

1. The behavior of Aliya is very sympathetic with everyone. Especially she regards Cheemi as her close friend whether she is regarded as ignorant and ill-mannered by other family members. Same as after the death of her sister, she tries her best to take care of her parents. She has full sympathy with elder uncle and considers him as her father.
“And am I not your father then what I am? Stupid!” Barray Chacha embraced her. “And when we will get freedom then I will make my daughter bride and will search well educated groom for my daughter. O.k..? (Mastoor, 2000).”
2. Even she has the soft corner for Jamil who already has lot of love affairs before. She has been portrayed as the statue of sympathy that regards the feelings of every one and shares the joys and pains of every individual.
3. The mother of Aliya has very taunting behavior with everyone at home and she doesn't leave a single chance to satire any one. With each family member she has such kind of behavior.
4. Najma aunty (The sister of elder uncle and younger uncle) is full of arrogance. She doesn't allow anyone near her and taunt every one because of their low education. Especially her behavior with Aliya is that of teacher and student.

Najma Aunty is Master in English and she is much proud of her qualification. Her behavior is bit rude with family members and she doesn't consider anyone up to her standard. She is much impressed by colonizers language and always criticizes other girls of her family because of their less education. Aliya is never impressed from her and Najma Aunty always considers her ignorant. Jamil is B.A and Aliya is F.A but both were treated as uneducated and ignorant by Najma aunty.

“Hnnn..! What does a simple B.A mean? The man remains ignorant, the less education is dangerous. If you have to do anything then do M.A or B.T. Now look at me, I am hired by every college without any difficulty. But if you have to do Masters, then do in English. Every ignorant person can do Masters in Urdu (Mastoor, 2000).”

She is proud of her masters in English and after every discussion she feels pride to give reference of her education;

“Wah..! Anyone gets job without any quality. The crowns are not gained in such a way. Neither any training nor Masters in English (Mastoor, 2000).”

Najma Aunty was also the teacher of Cheemi, the same taunting also used to be a part of study;
“Not yet. As I might teach you, you learn the same. It is not Urdu that every ignorant learns it. This is English (Mastoor, 2000).”

Like others, Aliya too was taunted by Najma Aunty because of her less education. A day she was pinched by aunty and satire of English made her upset;

“If she has completed B.A with Urdu then it’s enough for her. What can this poor do more? (Mastoor, 2000).”

5. The character of Kareeman Bawa is presenting old maid who passes her whole life in the services of that home and she considers it its blessings. Though she was misbehaved by grandmother but still she serves her at her full efforts when she was ill. So she is full of loyalty and never wants to listen anything against her masters. She is traditional lady and don’t like these modern customs which were killing the old traditions. She is nice with Everyone and she too are liked by everyone. She shares joys with everyone and sharer of grief too. She never wants to leave the home so hearing about partition she says; “Ya Jamil Mian..! This discussion of migration is very bad. I can never leave this home. (Mastoor, 2000).”

4. Humanitarian Themes

When the atomic bomb is fallen on the Japanese cities then it is also mourned by the characters of this novel. Especially Aliya has regretful feelings for citizens of that city. Same as after partition when killing of people started from both sides of the borders then Aliya, Jamil and elder uncle as well the other family members are too much grieved on this situation.

Post-Colonial Elements in AAGAN

The novel AAGAN is brimful of the postcolonial aspects. The “courtyard” which is the basic theme of the novel is consistent upon different characters which are having different political views and different social values among themselves. The most important example is of Elder Uncle (Barray Chacha) and his son Jamil. The elder uncle believes in Congress party and his son Jamil follows orders of Muslim League. Same as Younger uncle (the father of Aliya) and Cheemi have also sympathy for the Muslims as well Najma Aunty (The sister of uncles) is Masters in English so she is the blind follower of English traditions.

The novel is full of Post-colonial elements of ambivalence from start till the end. All the characters of the novel are divided in different dimensions of thoughts and everyone is affected by post-colonial society. Few characters express their feelings with repulsive words while few are admired by English modernism and advancement of society. The example of this may be discussed as follows;

“Ya..! The people of this country are very dirty. The wife of my brother is an English lady.” The mother said with pride (Mastoor, 2000).”

Once the mother of Aliya invites Mrs. Howard at their home but the father of Aliya denies attending the tea party, because he hates English people from his deep core.

“Listen! You haven’t come on tea. Thanks to Lord that I thought a good plan Otherwise what does Mrs. Howard think? Keep remember, your abhorrence will bring fruits. Someone asks him, At least who can be a better ruler than English. Our natives are such like which throttle each other (Mastoor, 2000).”

“Now you have come... Would she not be able to understand that you felt bad on her visit to our home. She is English and still she visited our home and this man even doesn’t take care. If she reported about your misbehavior then you would come in your senses (Mastoor, 2000).”

The revulsion against the English rulers was very successfully portrayed by Khadija in her novel. Especially the character of Chootey Chacha (the father of Aliya) is much against English rulers as he expresses his hatred when his wife always presents the example of the wife of his brother.

“The son of my sister is lower class and the wife of your brother, who has no identity. No one knows whether she is the daughter of any sweeper. Your brother has degraded your whole nation after marrying her. Grace of God! Now, English sweepers are our rulers (Mastoor, 2000).”

The atmosphere of ‘courtyard’ (AAGAN) always remains in tension because of the difference of opinions among different characters. Especially in the start of the novel, the quarrel also remains in progress among Aliya’s father and her mother because the father is much hateful of English while mother is proud of English wife of her brother. The dispute always raises its head on the little problems and then the remarks are expressed from both sides in favour or against British government.

Aliya told her father as he returned from the office about the arrival of Kasam Deedi who has come back after her elopement which was against eastern traditions. Aliya becomes sad to see her conditions and says her father to talk to father of Kasam Deedi to provide her shelter in his house.

“What need does she have to take part in such shameless topics?” The mother was bit angry.

“Why she doesn’t take part? You send her to a Mission School and then don’t give her right to speak.”

“Why you don’t say clearly that English people are shameless?” The mother became ready for fighting but father quickly slipped towards guest room (Mastoor, 2000).

Though the father of Aliya has allowed her to get modern education in the Mission school but along with it, he is much allergic from English government and religion. As he asks from her daughter one day;

“Are you impressed from the religion of British?”

“No, never... God forgive.” Aliya replied (Mastoor, 2000).

The father has lot of hopes from her daughter and he couldn’t see her daughter that she may get impressed from the British people therefore he always advises her daughter to keep away from these people who are snatching freedom of others. He often confirms from Aliya to get her views about English;

“Well done! You are very intelligent. My all hopes are related with you. You know that I hate these dishonest traders. They have made us slave.”

“I hate them too, Father..!” She replied to make her father happy (Mastoor, 2000).

The mother is always much worried about the health of her English wife of brother. So she used to complain about changing weathers of India which is totally unsuitable for the fragile health of her sister-in-law.

“The changing seasons of my country doesn’t suit with the health of my sister-in-law. In no moments, she catches flue as well the stomach problem begins too. Anywhere, in any party, she has to eat chilly. Nonsense! Are chilly the eating material? (Mastoor, 2000).”

The nature of Aliya’s mother is very arrogant and she never leaves any chance of passing taunting comments. A day British officers have to visit the office of Aliya’s father, he was busy in the arrangements of the meeting all the day. Though he is too much hateful of British people but because of safety of his service as he is an ordinary officer in the government office. When mother of Aliya comes to know about the meeting then she doesn’t cease from passing her critical comments.

“Well! You always abuse English and when he is coming then you are out of your senses. How much the people are only sharp in speaking? (Mastoor, 2000).”

The fury of the home affairs is expelled out in the office. When English officers come to visit office then on one of the issues, the dispute rose between officer and Aliya’s father. The officer

abuses her father and he hits the paper roll on the head of him. He becomes injured and Aliya's father is sent behind the cell. When the peon comes to inform them then he expresses his hatred for English which he can never express in front of them;

"Deem Phool used to say master 'bastard'. The peon saw Aliya with his red eyes. "If I may catch him then I devote thousands of Englishmen on my master. My eyes were blooded...blood..!" (Mastoor, 2000)."

The elder uncle (Barray Chacha) who is the member of congress Party is much hopeful that when English will leave away this country then all would be fine. Then he will get rid of all these possessions and he will have a lot of free time. He will utilize this time in his trade and his shop will again be the reason of their prosperity.

"When the country will get freedom then all the problems will fade away. You all think deeply (Mastoor, 2000)."

Aliya's father is sent behind cell for seven years. The whole family is much hateful from this decision and the hatred against English rulers keeps on increasing in their hearts. They are all unhappy with the decision and never accepts Aliya's father as the culprit.

"Oho! Why is he culprit? Who says to beat an English ruler is unlawful? (Mastoor, 2000)."

The elder uncle is regular member of congress so he was arrested by government occasionally. Whenever he was arrested by government, the whole family used to trap in bewilderments. Everyone used to condemn the government. A day when government officials arrived at their home to arrest elder uncle then elder aunt (Barri Chachi) said;

"God's sake... what hell we did with these bastards who daily comes to arrest. What hell will they do after arresting...? Can anyone lock tongues of others? (Mastoor, 2000)."

Whether the matter is of national level or international level, even it's a home affair but only British government is blamed for all defaults which are the post-colonial aspect of novel. As Najma aunt goes for shopping and after her return she blames the government because of high rates;

"O God, the rates have been raised on each cloth. Now anyone tell that this silky cloth is used for the coffin of English people (Mastoor, 2000)."

The hopes are glimmering in mind of every character that after getting freedom from British rule. They would be fully free to do any job and perform any kind of duty. No one would interfere in their matters and all British would leave away this land forever and no one would see their shadows again here on this part of the land. In middle of the novel when the movement of freedom is at its peak then Jamil Bhaiya and Cheemi express their views in such a way;

"And when the country will be free then all English will flee away from here. There will not remain single English in our Pakistan." Cheemi also came out of her room (Mastoor, 2000).

Due to contrast of ideas and differences of opinions among son and father, both Jamil and Elder Uncle (Barray Uncle) kept on passing remarks on the feelings and sympathies of each other.

"The number of Muslim League members has the services in the offices of British Government." Barray Chacha said without turning side (Mastoor, 2000).

"Your ideology is totally wrong. The fact is this that when members of congress use their influence then the job is availed." Jamil was also unable to remain silent (Mastoor, 2000).

Everyone is desirous of freedom but no one is confident about their nation and people to lead a free country. As the mother presented her doubt about her nation;

"First you may get freedom, then all would continue on and then these Indian first learn how to govern." At last mother spoke (Mastoor, 2000).

Jamil wanted to end up his unemployment and wanted to get any job to be the support of his family. He has joined British army to fight for safety of British crown and in these rendered services they would be able to get rid of British rule. As British government have selected the young men from his different colonies to win Second World War and use these people against Germany and Japan. So these lines of the novel indicate post-colonial thought;

“Mother you don’t worry so much, thousands of people join army. So it means they all die and if we didn’t fight with Hitler. We would be treated worse than English people. To tolerate their salvation would not be so much easy.” Jamil Bhaiya tried to understand elder aunt but she was sitting confused and perplexed (Mastoor, 2000).

When his father came to know about his joining of army then his reaction was harsh as well; “What more he dull could do, he will make Pakistan with the support of English. These all are friends of British.” Uncle groaned with anger (Mastoor, 2000).

Najma Auntie though was too much educated and was much proud of her uniqueness in the whole family because of her Masters in English. But still she was not given much importance at home because of her modernism and arrogance. At the decision of her marriage, everyone was unhappy with her because of rejection of all eastern traditions and marrying to an unknown person without will of anyone. All the younger and elders at home were unhappy with her as well as discussing her arrogant nature in her absence. The elder uncle is the saddest on her decision of marriage and expresses his grief to other family members;

“After so much education, that girl is like the sound of dome. The aim of British education was this one.” The elder uncle took a long breath (Mastoor, 2000).

The death of Aliya’s father brought a shock to the whole family. Aliya was unable to face the dead body of her father. The elder uncle was out of his senses to see the corpse of his younger brother. Everyone was grieved and the hatred was increasing in their hearts against British government. The elder uncle expresses his fury as;

“They have killed my brother. He hadn’t got any reward after hitting English ruler and they had punished him so badly. I will tell everyone. I will take his funeral in the shape of possession (Mastoor, 2000).”

The hopes of freedom are glimmering in the hearts of every one. Everyone is thinking that all the conditions of country will be fully in control of Indian and then they would be able to interfere in their interior affairs and they would freely perform their all duties. This situation is very well portrayed by novelist through the characters of this “courtyard”.

“English say that now India will be freed.” Barri Chachi came laughingly (Mastoor, 2000).

“Ya, they will have to free India. They will create disorder just few days more. Dishonest nation...!” Barri Chacha said passionately (Mastoor, 2000).

“Then when you will get freedom, you will open your shops.” Barri Chachi asked. The desires were glimmering in her eyes (Mastoor, 2000).

“Why won’t I. you will see that how our shops will trade. We will also get aid from our government to run our shops (Mastoor, 2000).”

“Really our government will avail us aid for running our shops. Wow how good it would be?” The eyes of Barri Chachi were glittering (Mastoor, 2000).

After the decision of partition of India, Some people were happy while few were unhappy with this decision. As the conditions of the country disordered same as the perplexity increased in people. Everyone was thinking different ways of safety or new paths of migration. Same as Aliya and her mother wanted to migrate towards Pakistan while elder Uncle who is member of congress, he is unhappy with the decision of partition and don’t want to migrate towards

Pakistan. As well, he stresses Aliya and her mother not to migrate and stay with them. The mother of Aliya never wants to stay there anymore. She wants to migrate because her brother and his English wife were also leaving towards Pakistan. Though Aliya don't want to leave elder uncle but she also doesn't wish to leave her mother lonely. Though the country has got freedom but still the hatred in the hearts of people against British didn't lessen. As a day before their departure, elder uncle says to Aliya;

“English has played his tricks before leaving country. He made people homeless. Still my daughter you don't go. Convince your mother. Now it's the age of your prosperity (Mastoor, 2000).”

Conclusion

It can well be concluded that the literature and literary genres are not exempted from the consequences of colonial impressions. The colonial tool of stereotype is well established when blind followers of English tradition and the speakers of English language call local people as 'dirty' uncultured etc. On the same ground, we can observe that 'ambivalence' is well established among the followers even to brothers and sisters who do not seem eye to eye in their world view or local perceptions. Thus, the literature, which developed after the era of modern colonization, is full of the concepts and traditions of the colonizers or master cultures and belief.

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