



Post modern experiments: Nation from the margin-the novels of Allan Sealy

Nasir Ahmed

Assistant Teacher, Department of English, Adhikari Krishnakanta High School, Darjeeling, West Bengal, India

Abstract

The article focuses postmodern experiments of the novels of Allan Sealy. The concept of nation from the margin is portrayed here. The novelist discusses the problems of Anglo Indians. In India they are always searching their identities as they are suffering from identity crisis. The concept of liquidity and viscosity are describes here.

Keywords: Postmodern experiments, portrayal of Indianans

Introduction

The novelists of the Nationalist era like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao reinforced the Gandhian vision of nation-building voluntarily. The euphoria of nation-building lasted through the first decade after the independence. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1981) critiques the notion of a unitary nation. IN this age Macdonaldisation of culture and globalized valorization, we encounter hybrid cultures. The novel enacts a discursive reconfiguration of the relationship between the self and Nation. In *Midnight's Children*, the theme of nation is mythicized and Rushdie foregrounds a plural nation. The research paper is an attempt to visualize 'a nation from the margins' especially from the Anglo-Indian perspectives. Sealy portrays the proletematized condition faced by the Anglo-Indians. The Anglo_Indian 'quest for identity' or 'identity crisis is an endeavour to find out a solid foundation or root. The diasporic identity complexifies the dichotomy between home and the world. I propose to examine the Anglo-Indian negotiation of the Indian 'nation, which can be described a nation in motion.

Salman Rushdie's *Midnight children* focuses the pre-colonial, colonial and post-Independence life a India trough the protagonist Saleem whose birth at the moment of India's independence from Britain 'handcuffs' him, his life, identity and destiny to his nation. Rushdie's novel is a meditation on the textuality of history that constitutes nation. And the novel sounds like a continent finding its voice. Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* critiques the notion of a unitary nation or nation as a 'bounded identity'. The 1930's and 1940's works reflect nation as a 'bounded identity as we find in the writing of Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*.

In this age of Macdonaldisation and the post globalised valorization, we encounter hybrid cultures that is the emergence of Trans-multiculturalism. This novel enacts a discursive reconfiguration of the relationship between the 'self and Nation 'Rushdie celebrates the creative tensions between 'personal and national' identity, playing up and playing with both their polarity and their unity. The novel declares that there are as many equally valid versions of Indian identity as there are Indians. This concept proves to be very liberating for

many Indian English writers, allowing tham to break the polarized stalemate between self and Nation. So the concept of Nation is mythicized in the novel and Rushdie foregrounds a plural nation. So the novel is a celebration of India, the modern nation.

Allan Sealy (1951), as an a Anglo-Indian from Allahabad, now settled in New Zealand after an education in Michigan and British Columbia, he is about as extreme as example of the new diasporas of commonwealth fiction. The lack of hype and other public relations paraphernalia, recognition has come to the author in the form of a prestigious awards like 'Commonwealth Fiction Prize', 'the Sahitya Akademi Awards' 'the Crossword Book Award'.

The Trotter-Name: A chronicle is Sealy's first successful book. Dedicated to the other Anglo-Indians, his professed intention is to write a comic epic in prose of the minority community in India to which he belongs. For the background to this novel he draws upon his knowledge of Lucknow.

The book is often seen as inspired by Salman Rushdie. But Sealy's *The Trotter-Name* is already knocking at the doors of publishers when Rushdie's *Midnights Children* comes out. When the similarities between the two books are pointed out, Sealy denies any 'influence, "saying that he and Rushadie are simply "two writer responding to the same historical moment'. The Trotter-Nama (Nama-as-saga) is the history of the Anglo-Indian Trotter-family, Justin Aloysious Trotter, a French mercenary and artillery expert. Narrator is the seventh trotter, Eugene, a man of our times and a forger of miniatures. The history takes in the various intervening generations of trotters including Thomas Henry Trotter, sitting in the British Museum between Marx and Darwin, set against events such as the 1857 mutiny and the rise of the Congress Party, such a factual summary would bring a wry to the face of anyone.

But Sealy's most striking achievements remains his epic chronicle of a family of Anglo-Indian, a community whose presence trouble the imagining of the nation in terms of the expression of some homogenous cultural authenticity, an idea which the novel suggests is derived from a colonial mentality. As with Saleem in Rushdie's *Midnight Children*, the reader is always aware of the strigge pf Eugene, the narrator, to

include everything in his family chronicle. Indeed Eugene explicitly contrasts his inclusive narrative method, the method of the 'name or chronicle, with that of European historiography.

The name is an old Indianised form and part of Sealy's attempt to unseat historiography is the attempt to displace the genres of the colonizer with those of colonized. For Sealy this displacement does not take place in the interests of a return to some pre-colonial, essentially Indian identity.

Sealy portrays the problematised wretchedness faced by the marginalized Anglo-Indians. In *The Trotter-Name*, his epic favulised history of Anglo-Indians, Sealy comments on the rush to emigrate by this community as Independence looms on the sub-continent quote from the text.

".....the whilom Belle of Bangalore gathered up her daughters and left for England....?"

These minorities are wandering here and there. And they are extremely suffering from 'quest for identity' or identity crises. The diasporic identity further complexifies the intergenerational conflicts and the dichotomy between 'home and the world' so the Anglo-Indian 'Quest for recognition is an endeavour to find out a solid foundation or root.

In the novel 'Everest Hotel', Everest Hotel is the central point of the novel. The plot revolves round life at the Everest Hotel. A young man entrusted with the task of nursing the Everest's ninety-year-old owner and flower hunter Jed. Ritu strikes up a secret, guilty friendship with Brij, body-builder. The newcomer, Inge, a young neo-Nazi upsets the precarious equilibrium of life at the Everest. In the Everest hotel, Sealy portrays life at Everest and how the inhabitants strike equilibrium both within the place and without. The novel visualizes their changing lives. Sealy uses the colors of nature and the changing seasons to depict the changes in the lives of the characters.

The novel *Hero: (A Fable)* is mock-heroic in tone. The hero of the book is a filmstar turned-politician, a character familiar enough on the Indian political scene. The villain, Nero is the hero's side-kick. The south Indian movie star is the protagonist who relocates himself from Bombay to Delhi and becomes a politician.

'Hero' is a fable and there is no doubt that it has fabled elements as the story leaps from the real world into the fantastic. The novel is a genial satire and it critiques the socio-cultural milieu of Indian. The novel follows the picaresque tradition, with the protagonist moving from one comic situation to another.

Sealy has authored a travelogue called *'From Yokon to Yucatan'*. A western journey: which he describes as 'a journey down the spine of North America from top to bottom.

Indianness should not be mistaken for a static cultural identity appropriated in the like manner by individuals of Indian origin. Indianness like other shared cultural identity 'is unstable and changeable, with its cohesion complicated by intergenerational, varying degrees of identification with and relation to a 'homeland, by different events of assimilation to and distinction from a majority culture.

Anglo-Indians are the product of hybrid cultures. Before independence the superiority complex is operative in the mind of the Anglo-Indians as being white. But after independence a sense of alienation emerges among the Anglo-Indians. They

can't get adapted with the congeniality of Indian nation or even outside of India.

The Trotter-Name is a strident criticism of essentialization and the fixing of identities into binary polarities of 'self' and 'other'. No single identity can sufficiently articulate the concept of 'self', for each individual occupies multiple subject positions or identities simultaneously. Allan Sealy thus floats free of any attempts to confine them under single identity. Cross-cultural encounters and negotiations have made their identities fluid, prone to slippage and resistant of closure. The viscosity or the unstability of the Anglo-Indians really foregrounds the doubleness of the Anglo-India identity or the concept of 'in-betweenness'. But the decentering of the Anglo-Indians involving the refusal to be assimilated by the center as well as resisting being categorized as an essentialized 'other' gives rise to Bhabha's (in Rutherford, 1990) hybrid, 'third space' enabling the emergence of other positions and new alliances. It is a hyphenated hybrid space.

In *Midnight's children*, we find 'chutnification of history' or the use of 'chatni' or 'pickle factory'. In the general sense what we find Mango turns into chatni or pickle. The actual identity of mango is lost. So the new generation of India is in the great turmoiled condition as they are being victimized or oppressed by the rough and rugged political upheaval or current political scenario. Their anxiety is working havoc in the matter of dreaming of a nation. The reference of pickle is also found in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*.

The above concept can be used in case of Anglo-Indians. As they are oppressed owing to the political machinery or the administration. So dreaming of a solid nation is not possible for them. So nation as a bounded identity is totally challenged by the expectation of the people.

Derozio came to India with a vision. He adopted Indian culture and custom. The Indianess is very much active. But rest of the Anglo-Indians are not in the line of Derozio. Viscosity, fluidity, unstability of their mentality become the qualitative features.

So from marginalized perspective especially from the Anglo-Indian perspective, India is nation not like that of Nehruvian vision of nation (economical super power) or the 'composite nation (M. Mukherjee). To them Indian is a liquid nation or it can be regarded as 'nation in motion'.

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