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Fragmented Individual Psyche in the Contemporary, Glocalized World: A Multicultural Reading

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Abstract:

The world around is now frayed between the twin notions of society and the individual. The all-encompassing technological and political developments of the twentieth and the twenty-first century have a significant impact on the unbending social categorisation of the period. Lopsided allocation of the wealth, lack of adequate living standards, class discrimination and the disparities which arose within tightly knit family bonds created a variety of psychosocial disorders. The outcome made the individual more disintegrated and disrupted all alone in his life. In the contemporary world of complicated lives

and living, the need to interpret literature seems to be a more staggering and decisive endeavour. This paper tries to emulate some reflections on the idea of an emerging world attune to the nuances of changing cultural patterns in the wake of multicultural life situations.

Keywords:

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Individual
Contemporary world
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Literature transcends the boundaries of human knowledge, and a re-reading aptly guides the readers to fresh pastures of innumerable doubts and guided solutions. The importance of deciphering a fresh narrative regardless of the oft-quoted, frequently traversed or traditional literary implications, cannot be termed just incidental, but it should be treated as the need of the hour. The understanding of a text concerning the theoretical as well as aesthetic analysis directs the reader to new paths of glory rather than mere submission to words. Man, in the contemporary world, has lost his sense of harmony with his surroundings. Nevertheless, all are constantly gathering ideas about who we are, what we are capable of, and what the meaning of our life is.

The term “postcolonialism can generally be understood as the multiple political, economic, cultural and philosophical responses to colonialism from its inauguration to the present day and is somewhat broad and sprawling in scope. While “anti-colonialism” names specific movements of resistance to colonialism, postcolonialism refers to the wider, multifaceted effects and implications of colonial rule. Postcolonialism frequently offers a challenge to colonialism but does not constitute a single programme of resistance; indeed, it is considered consequently by some to be rather vague and panoptic in its ever more ambitious field of enquiry. (Hiddleston 1)

Post-colonial literature directs the readers to new arrays of interpretations – whether it is ideological, political, societal, or familial – the individual voice now has more strength rather than mere echoes. The angst and perils of the contemporary human being are illuminated through the gloomy rays of the artist’s weapon for justice. The writers in the second half of the twentieth century expound severe issues in their works for a more just and democratic existence with the portrayal of usually underprivileged others. These characters’ searches usually traverse, along with social and civil movements. In such a situation, many argue that the real intention behind the contemporary literary thought is to re-establish the ‘individual self and its relations’ in a more pragmatic way than a mere depiction of commonalities. Contemporary fiction is characterised in the way it is being dealt with the refinement by the writers and the readers alike. In *Contemporary Fiction: A Very Short Introduction*, Robert Eaglestone opines:

Literature is where ideas are investigated, lived out, explored in all their messy complexity. Sometimes these ideas look quite simply: What if you fell in love with someone who seems quite unsuitable for you? What happens if there is a traitor in your spy network? Sometimes they might appear more complicated: how can I

reconstruct my memory of an event I can't recall? Perhaps, too, 'think' is not the right word: 'think' is a too limiting description of the range of what a novel can do with ideas. In any event, the way literature thinks are bound up with what it's like to be us, to be human. Literature is how we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves. And contemporary fiction matters because it is how we work out who we are now, today. (Eagleton 1)

Celebration of estrangement, dilapidation, ethical binaries, realistic narratives, diversified mythical patterns of storytelling, all have their predominance in the genre of fiction. One man's voice in the mouths of many and vice versa could be experienced more fruitfully in the literature of the period. How the present-day writers' approach the literary texts in a reflective panorama of more systematic, theoretical elucidation and vehemently put forth the significance of it in humanity's struggle for existence. The silence in the violent world of gestures and its pros and cons, all gain importance in the gateways of contemporary knowledge. The individual is one who is also the representative voice of his period, whether it can be generalised or not. Whatever happens to the individual is also a matter of due relevance because he is one among the many, who still plays his role in society, affecting others and is responsible for his actions. It is meaningful to people who made it, live and understand it, precisely because they are at home in it:

Indeed, the global novel is now the most important means by which literature attempts to reckon with humanity as such. The ambition to speak for and about human nature, which has been the object of critical suspicion for several generations, still flourishes among writers. The difference is that where a novelist of the eighteenth century might assert the unity of human nature — as in Jane Austen's blithe "it is a truth universally acknowledged"—the twenty-first-century novelist must dramatize that unity, by plotting local experience against a background that is international and even cosmic. But both types of writer advance claims about the nature and destiny of our species. (Kirsch 13)

The present-day upheavals based on race and religion throws light on the importance of the same situation that humanity has experienced over the centuries. The power to bring about the necessary change in the individual and to some extent, these changing notions which emulate among the mindsets of the onlookers, become vital in the contemporary world of indistinguishable ethics. The life of the struggling, lonely survivor and the ones living around him elevates the journey's path where knowledge translates into ethics. This global

and local mix up with the standards of life and the resistance cult in our multicultural world of atrocities. Leading a life on ethical prospects is not always a fruitful endeavour. However, how one leads his life to the path of achievement becomes something admirable in the globalized world amidst innumerable resistive forces.

Multicultural Condition

Cultures are intrinsic, and traditionalists argue that it could be received from the ancestors and transferred to the succeeding generations. One thing is certain that they are accountable for shaping human lives. It should be noted that human beings around the world have different visions of a good life. They could only be made possible when we have access to other distinct cultures. Cultures are internally no doubt, pluralistic and have assimilations of each among them. The notions of culture and its intricacies grow out of conscious and unconscious mutual but gradual interactions of humanity. We need to critically examine and understand the cultural values of other communities to analyse our intellectual and moral horizons better. This can be considered as the only method through which we can leave narcissism behind and enrich ourselves with more cultural values of worth:

As a larger corporation, to which its citizens necessarily belong without choice, the nation becomes an empty space in which all forms of potential identification can be filled: race, religion, language, culture, history, the land: what makes you a part of your nation?

It always used to assume that to become a nation, the people of a nation should resemble each other as closely as possible. If they looked different, spoke a different language, followed a different religion, then this was considered a threat to what the political theorist Benedict Anderson has characterised as the 'imagined community' of the nation. Many people, languages, and cultures have been repressed for this reason. (Young 60)

Multiculturalism is a state of cultural and ethnic diversity within the demographics of social space. When distinct cultures grow in the same space in harmony, then that society is called multicultural. Multiculturalism is neither a political doctrine nor any philosophical view, but it is a perspective of viewing human life. Human beings are culturally embedded that they grow up in a culturally structured world where they organise their lives and keep social relations in terms of a culturally derived system of meaning and significance. To live in a multicultural society, one needs an efficacy that should be formulated from the vivified

pattern of experience. In the multicultural perspective, no political doctrine or ideology can stand for the full truth of human life. What all the ideologies are —whether it is liberalism, conservatism, socialism or nationalism which is embedded in a particular culture, altogether represents a definite vision of the good life, and is necessarily slender and incomplete.

Multiculturalism could be termed as anti-individualistic because it expects each person to agree with the perceptions, thoughts, and judgments of his group for his own notions of the same to be legitimatised. The white male worldview, according to the multicultural perspective, becomes the dominant which has been foisted upon the native individual. The thoughts and notions of the native, whether it is racial, ethnic, or sexual, are collectively constructed. A ruling premise of multiculturalism is that ethnic origin carries with it irreversible attributes, for example, if a person has specific identifying characteristics such as name or physical features, then he must and at times should have an accurate perception on life and the world around him:

In an immigrant and multiracial countries such as the United States or Australia, multiculturalism is an obvious consensual choice, each group, minority or majority, demanding its own autonomous and independent, that is, incommensurable space. Without doubt, multiculturalism is preferable to the monoculturalism oppression of minorities by the dominant group. The logic of difference, however, paradoxically poses three internal difficulties that are likely to perpetuate a condition of exclusion and neglect for minorities. (Connel and Marsh 137)

Multiculturalism ensures respect and justice to the distinct and diverse cultures. All the cultural concepts of any community, deserves this equal space and regards. Therefore, in one sense, it is also right to comment that multiculturalism at times, destroys an individual's confidence in his mind. The main reason for the anomaly is that the cultural group instructs the individual what is right and what to believe. The long-running Western colonialist perspective of the nation considers that only by drawing lines on a piece of paper and forming a government within those lines, a cohesive political entity can be created.

It is not easy to depict what makes an identity, proper and functional. Therefore, one may believe and elucidate that communities and culture validate the individual's identity. India becomes the perfect example of such kind of situation through the lens of colonial rule. The Indic Civilisation is one of the most diverse and heterogeneous populations existed in relative harmony thousands of years ago before the British even thought of colonisation in

their land. It is a hardship worth mentioning during the colonial periods of the Indian context. Modelling the typical Western idea of Nation-state, the British created a bureaucracy, centralised the government and extended its boundaries in Colonial India. The second example could be a participant in the Negritude movement in Africa, who could celebrate being black only by contrasting black with white. However, another example lies with any country, any nation, which is at war with another. Nationalist sentiment reaches an upsurge during the war by differentiating one's own country from that of the enemy:

“Colonialism” is close in meaning to “imperialism”, although at the same time slightly different. If colonialism involves a concrete act of conquest, imperialism names a broader form of authority or dominance. Colonialism is in this way one active manifestation of imperialist ideology, but imperialism can be understood as a larger structure of economic or political hegemony that does not have to include the direct rule and conquest of another country. Imperialism could, then, continue after the end of colonial rule, and indeed, many critics have described the United States' current dominance of global markets as a new form of imperialist rule. (Hiddleston 2)

Post-colonial authors use their literature, through criticism and celebration, an emerging identity which they have taken as the responsibility of representing men and manners in an elaborative form. Admittedly, the re-evaluation of this national or a universal identity is an eventual and essential result like that of a country gaining independence from a colonial power. It could be made like the individual's identity in a country emerging from a fledgeling settler colony. However, for the author to be a representative of that entire identity is a huge undertaking because he is the one who, through his writings, struggle to convey a relevant post-colonial message. Each nation, province, island, state, neighbourhood, and individual are its unique amalgamation of history, culture, language, and tradition. The impacts and the lasting trauma of the colonial process can be appropriately communicated to only those who could comprehend and embrace the idea of cultural hybridity. It is same as the case of a collective or an individual process. The problem of raising the question of national identity is worth mentioning here for we have to be realised as part of a whole rather than a mere piece of flesh. Thus, Post-colonial writing comprises a strong reaction against negative stereotypes constructed during the colonial period:

The idea of nation has had a crucial role in the origins and development of racial thinking. A contrast between *race* and *nation* was famously made by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), in a riposte to Kant's essay on the races of humanity. Herder

argued that nations were made up of many races. What was important was that over long periods each nation had developed a unique culture and civilisation, a *Volksgeist*, expressed especially in its language, myths, and songs, a whole way of living that was incommensurate with the cultures of other nations, all of them unique.(Rattansi 36)

Multiculturalism enunciates the idea of living in a world of mixed cultures and life patterns. In the contemporary scenario, this notion of a diverse cultural situation is very much vital for man shifts from one place to another because of various personal as well as political problems. Thus, multiculturalism becomes an integral part of the current discourse because it focuses more on the study of Diasporas and their pitiable prospects, refugees, and their conditions in new national boundaries. The struggle with the other, self and the nation-state becomes not just the trouble of the newcomers but also to the former dwellers of the locale.

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