

NATIVISTIC ELEMENTS IN THE FICTIONS OF CHINUA ACHEBE MULK RAJ ANAND

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Abstract: The present paper focuses on Achebe and Anand's attempt to depict nativism, regarding the Nigerian and Indian customs, conventions and the issues concerning the confrontation of new and old values and the role of the women in the family. Achebe attempts to show that there is nothing disgraceful in African weather but the intrusion of the British people radically altered the conviction of the natives. Anand illustrates that for Indian women her dignity, morality, chastity virginity and her identity is utmost significant. His novels epitomizes how the Indian woman was molested and assaulted because of poverty and illiteracy by the British Officials, but even in the oddest situation, she tried to preserve her dignity and self-respect which is indigenous asset of Indian life.

Key Words: Nativism, Disgraceful, Ethnic, Dignity, Chastity, Morality, Virginity, Molesting, Assault, Socio-cultural, Identity, Asset, Indigenous.

Introduction: In the Commonwealth literature, African and Indian English Literature have occupied a significant place. The writers of commonwealth Countries used English language as an instrument to project the indigenous values in their literacy works. The British people started education in English language in the colonized countries like Africa and India for their own benefits. It is clearly reflected in the remarks of Lord Macaulay, a government general in India during 1828 to 1835. He states, "Since indigenous languages were inadequate and chaotic and indigenous arts and literature were petty futile things. Only 'Western' education with English as the medium would deliver a good."¹ It shows that native culture, customs, traditions and literature were considered inferior and intentionally they debunked the nativistic elements. They wanted to create interpreters and clerks, who could help them in the admiration, but in the course of time English language played the role of two edged knife, and the new generation of the novelists used it as an instrument to tell the world outside about their own identity and glorious indigenous values, and fiction as a literary genre proved to be the most powerful medium of expression for it. The novelists like Chinua Achebe and Mulk Raj Anand are the pioneers in the Commonwealth Literature.

Chinua Achebe (1930-2013) is the voice and the harbinger of the African ethos. He has emphatically presented the dignity and identity of the Igbo clan, he has imaginatively recreated the socio-cultural

panorama, in which he has depicted the inherent values of Igbo people, He believes that the Africans too have a splendid heritage with its own philosophy, poetry, beauty and indigenous cultural identity, and as a writer his first task is to demonstrate the glorious side of his ancestors and clan to the world, in one of his lectures entitled “The Role of the Writer in a New Nation,” Achebe states:

African people did not hear of culture for the first time from Europeans: that their societies were not mindless but frequently had a philosophy of great depth and value and beauty, that they had poetry and, above all they had dignity...and it is this dignity that they must now regain. The worst thing that can happen to any people is the loss of their dignity and self-respect.²

Mulk Raj Anand (1905-2004) is prolific writer of fiction his contribution to Indian English fiction of social realism is undisputedly remarkable his novels are calediosopic pictures of social, cultural, political and economic life of Indian panorama. He has illustrated the social evils of inequalities of exploitation of the native people, he speaks about the deprived people as their spokesman, and he proves that he is the novelist of classes and masses. He says:

What is writer if he not the fiery voice of the people, who, through his torments, urges exaltations, by realizing the pains, frustrations, aspirations of others, and by cultivating his incipient power of expressions, transmutes in art feeling, all thoughts, all experiences-thus, becoming the sear of new vision in any given situation.³

It shows that Achebe and Anand have presented the spirits of African and Indian life in their literary work; they have used their novels as a platform to depict the great nativistic elements and indigenous values, including national, social and cultural the dignity and identity of the natives, which is the main concern of the research paper. The researcher has selected Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart*, *No Longer at Ease*, and Anand’s *Coolie*, *Two Leaves and a Bud* and *The Sword and the Sickle* to illustrate the nativistic elements, along with the main themes of Colonial confrontation, socio-cultural exploitation, caste discrimination, deprivation and the agonies of the downtrodden, they both have brought froth the nativistic traits which are deeply rooted in soil of Africa and India.

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe has illustrated the folk tales, folk songs, the customs and traditions which are the features the features of Igbo clan, he has focused on the ancestral way of living, the place and position of the Igbo women, though it is the backwardness from the perspective of Europeans, but Achebe points out that it has beauty in it, more than that the natives are happy with it, Achebe believes that the outsiders has no right to interfere in it, Okonkwo, the protagonist of the novel, remains loyal to the ingenious values and the qualities of his clan. He thinks that the Umofians were tightly connected to their soil but cunningly and cleverly the white man separated them from their ages old ingenious values. Oberika, Okonkwo’s friend rightly speaks out, he says:

...he says (white man) that our customs are bad ... the white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart.⁴

Okonkwo decides to oppose the British people to regain the identity and unity of his people; he sacrifices for the values of his society, it implies that it not the individual tragedy or loss it the tragedy of indigenous values caused by the intrusion of British people. *No longer at Ease* exemplifies how the modern life, adopted from the western world entirely changed the outlook of the native youth. Obi Okonkwo, the central character of the novel lingers between the ancestral values and the modern life. Achebe, through his character has displayed that however educated and modern one may be, his ethnic values cannot be wiped out from the mind. Obi is educated in England, he accepts the life style of British people, he wears fashionable clothes, loves an osu girl Clara, in spite of his parents opposition, accepts bribes after joining service from his own people, but at heart, he loves his mother and motherland therefore he victimizes his love to save the life of his mother. In a poem written on his native land reveals his feelings. He writes:

“God bless our noble fatherland
Great land of sunshine bright,
Where brave men chose the way of peace,
To win their freedom fight,
May we preserve our purity,
Our zest for life and jollity.”⁵

In *Coolie* Munoo encounters a number of adversities and challenges, while presenting the pathetic condition of Munoo, and Anand throws light on the importance of family traditional values and cultural heritage of Indian life. In India, woman as a mother is respected and worshipped as a goddess because she is not an individual but an institution of family values, whenever a family member is in difficulties or in confusion she plays the role of an anchor. The words of Munoo’s mother, in her absence, are source of delight and an asset of virtues Anand writes, “He had been told in his childhood to regard ever woman as a mother or sister. He called the apparition of Shella in his mind ‘Sister’.”⁶ the advice is deeply rooted in his mind of Munoo, and also in the soil of India, it is passed from one generation to other. The teaching of his mother has great cultural and social values; these virtues are foundation stones on which the society, the nation is built.

The attachment of family members with each other is also remarkable feature of Indian society, they are closely connected, and ready to die for each other, it is depicted in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Anand talks about this strength in the novel. In Indian family, marriage is considered as a sacred thing, it has religious as well as spiritual significance, and the husband and wife are the two wheels of the chariot of family. Anand emphasizes this indigenous side of Indian life. Gangu, the protagonist, and his wife Sajani are poor; they are oppressed and exploited in the tea plantation of Assam, but in the oddest situation of life Sajani is considers her husband as the companion of life, Anand writes, “she had sung that song which was one of the most popular melodies of the year in hills. ‘Companion of my life and death’,”⁷ the song reveals the inner thinking process of Sajani; she is so devoted to her husband and her family.

The husband is like a god and the family is like a temple for her, she is ready to anything for the family members, when she suffers from an epidemic like Cholera, she first do not think about herself, but about her family, her last words reveals her devotion to her family and her children, to her daughter Laila she says, “Never mind my beautiful, you will be happy. I have told your father to betrothe you and you will soon be married and go to your husband’s home. But mind you look after your old father and little brother, now am no more.”⁸ these words of Sajani can be found only in the soil of India.

Laila, after the death of her mother, accepts all the household duties, she works hard while doing so she is molested and sexually assaulted by the British Officers, though she is poor, she struggles to preserve her virginity. She strongly opposes Reggie Hunt, a British Officer, when he tries to take the advantage of her beauty. She warns him not to pursue her. She says, “Go away: I will call my father. I don’t care who you are, whether you are sahib or...Go away and let me work! My father will be angry, if I don’t get back home before sunset.”⁹ Gangu appears to be strong father and stands behind his daughter like a rock. He sacrifices his life to protect the virginity of his daughter, it shows that the chastity of a girl is the most significant thing in the Indian family and a father can do anything to protect it.

In western countries, women choose men freely, they don’t have social restrictions, they don’t have consideration for morality and dignity, but in *The Sword and the Sickle*, Anand believes that these values are so vital and a woman and a man cannot live together without marriage, it is unimaginative for a woman. Maya, being a widow, wants to live life with self-respect; she clearly tells Lalu that she can live with him only after marriage because she is not a prostitute, her dignity is above all. Anand writes, “She was not content in his eyes as he has been ready to build his life in hers. She wanted to live in the eyes of the world and she wanted dignity...Marriage.”¹⁰ To live life, without marriage with a man, is immoral in India, and Maya as an Indian woman, constantly insists to get marriage because she knows that it will give her prestige and dignity.

Anand’s nativism also peeps through the presentation of the customary life style of Indian villagers, in *Coolie*, Munoo reminds, “The sight of his mother grinding grain between the scarred surface of mill stones which she gyrated round and round ..., by the wooden handle, now with her right hand, now with her left.”¹¹ He has described the authentic rural life of Indian people. Even today most of the Indian women in the villages use cow-dung to paste the house, Anand also mentions. He writes, Sajani saw a yak excreting dung and rushed to the spot to collect the fresh paste to take home to treat the floors with, since there were only a few bullocks on the plantation, and cow-dung was scarce”¹².

Achebe and Anand’s nativism is also visible in the use of names of their characters such as Okonkwo, Obierika, Unoka, Obi, Odogwu, Okolo etc. by Achebe in his novels and Munoo, Lal Singh, Gangu, Lakshmi, Babuji, Bibiji and Chota Babu by Anand in his novels. The ways of salutation and hospitality such as offering Cola to the guest, saying *Yes, sah* instead of yes sir in Nigeria and saying ‘*Ram Ram*’ in India, the use of vernacular terminology for instance, *Obi* for hut, *Chi* for personal god, *Ani* for the earth goddess, *Iba* for fever, *Ndichie* for elders in Nigeria and *Yes Huzzor*, for yes sir, *Angrizi* for English, *Chilm* for smoking pipe, *Ustad* for master, *Bazaar* for market in India. The cuisines dishes eaten by the natives such as *Yam*, *Palm Wine*, *Bitter leaf Soup* in Nigeria and *Gulab jamb*, *Rasgulla’s Pickle* and *Curd* in India, these are the vivid evidences to reveal that Achebe and Anand are very much concerned about the indigenous socio-cultural values, and their novels are the factual manifestation of the nativism.

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