

Social Realism in 'The Collector's Wife' by Mitra Phukan

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ABSTRACT

The portrayal of the violence and terror which reigns in several pockets of the North-East India has been a common theme in many literary texts of the region. However, numerous contemporary authors, unfit to shoulder the weight of such cliché portrayals, have decided to intentionally break free from such pictures and have brilliantly brought out different under-spoke to aspects of the locale. Regardless, the tensions and psychological warfare present in a few pieces of the North-East India are substances which can barely be overlooked. Mitra Phukan's book, 'The Collector's Wife', portrays the agitated political circumstance in a community of Assam named Parbatpuri where kidnappings, coercion, and political precariousness are the request of the day. Set in such a miserable background, Phukan's hero, Rukmini's life experiences gigantic strife. This paper is an endeavor to examine the between connection between the individual and the political in Phukan's book and how the breakdown of one influences the other.

1. Introduction

Ian Watt's seminal *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) attempts to understand both the emergence and the rise to dominance of the novel as a genre as well as of 'realism' as the literary mode of choice in the nineteenth century and, indeed, almost ever since. According to him, the novel is an endeavor to be a steadfast record of the real world, depicting human involvement with unbiasedly. In any case, social commentator Raymond Williams censures the example portrayed by Watt at specific focuses and contends that "At a specific point there are perplexing relations between what can be called predominant, remaining and rising foundations and practices". In any case, Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* is a case of a novel that pursues the antiquated sentiments and blending highlights of past modes with new structure and gives a pen picture of social authenticity [1].

In the publication of New points of view of Indian English Writings, Malti Agarwal says that the Indian English Literature is lavishly plunged in tints of its local social ethos. It offers voice to the common negligence in the contemporary Indian culture. Crafted by scholars like, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R.K. Narayan, Khushwant Singh, Nirad C. Chaudhory, Manohar Malgonkar, Amitav Ghose, Salman Rushdie and so forth are acclaimed as perfect works of art in the portrayal of contemporary social reality. In spite of the fact that there are a bunch of Assamese English essayists who set up themselves in the standard of Indian English Literature additionally endeavor to give a concerned voice against any sort of viciousness and local biasness established in the place that is known for Assam in their works. Among the Assamese English journalists, Mitra Phukan, who is likewise an interpreter, kids' author, trivializes the Assam Movement in her most praised novel *The Collector's Wife*. In his presentation novel *The House with a Thousand Stories*, Aruni Kashyap delineates the darkest time of Assam's ongoing history. By the orthographic portrayal of state psychological oppression, brutality, counter memory and morals they are returning to the past and attempt to give a pen picture of social authenticity of north east India.

In any case, how do artistic writings produce a social reality that can be perceived as "constancy to reality" or "the manner in which things are"? How does reality come to be related with delineations of fierceness, shamefulness, lower-class life? Is authenticity some portion of a more extensive social exertion to fix and control a cognizant portrayal of social reality that appears to be progressively difficult to reach, divided and out of hand? To discover answers to these inquiries we can rethink "authenticity" inside the settings like "social change", "the portrayal of class contrast", and so forth. This paper plans to take a gander at how these two authors reflect the social authenticity in their separate books. The accompanying issues will be examined to watch the subject all the more strongly [2].

2. Historical Review

History is packed with the subtleties of life. Along these lines it is important to return to the past to comprehend the present. As Peter Barry in his *Beginning Theory* says that the postmodernist imagines that the past must be returned to (with incongruity) and ought to be tested. Returning to the past is a pattern of post-provincial writing. Frantz Fanon contends that the initial step for 'colonized' individuals in finding a voice and a character is to recover their own previous (193). Assam is a place that is known for different culture, convention, language, ethnicity, and obviously of a rich history. Alongside the accuracy of social aggregation the land has likewise observed numerous contentions, savagery, bloodsheds just as the killings of blameless individuals. The history sees the truth and this reality frequents the general population of Assam. Then again being a piece of colonized India, Assamese scholars have additionally the inclination to broadcast their past to outfit a sound voice in the standard of postcolonial Indian writing [3].

The memorable Assam development was one of the celebrated developments in post-pilgrim India fundamentally driven by understudies of Assam (All Assam Students Union) began in 1979 and authoritatively wended up on 15 August, 1985. By Assam Movement, Dr. Manirul Hussain implies in his book *The Assam Movement: Class, Ideology and Identity*, the

development which requests to stop the unlawful migration of remote nationals to Assam particularly from Bangladesh and Nepal, their cooperation in the appointive procedure in Assam and to expulsion of all outsiders living illicitly in Assam. This development has been featured in Mitra Phukan's tale *The Collector's Wife*. The tale recounts to the story situated in Parbatpuri, a fanciful rebellion tore slope town of Assam with an amazing vibe of the real world. The hero Rukmini Bezboruah sees:

"... she took a gander at the anxious, splendid youthful countenances of the young men and young ladies, she couldn't resist seeing the facial highlights and forms before her. The almond eyes, the brilliant skins of the Mongoloid, the wavy hair of the Austric, the dim appearances of the Dravids, the fine highlights and reasonable shading of the Aryans, were all present in the horde of youthful faces before her. Furthermore, they needed to free the place where there is outsiders!" (91)

At that point another contention has likewise come into the cutting edge of Assam's political settings. With the expectation to build up a sovereign Assam, Bhimkanta Buragohain and others have made the ULFA (United Liberation Front of Asom) on April 7, 1979. The administration of India restricted the association in 1990 referring to it as a psychological militant association. Obviously the administration wished to oust the presence of ULFA. So they played the traps with the surrendered ULFA individuals and made the intrigue to slaughter the relatives of the ULFA individuals. In Mrinul Talukdar's *Secret Killings of Assam*, it is referenced as "Mystery killings mean the additional legal killings directed by state government utilizing SULFA individuals and the security powers for the sake of the counter rebellion tasks... the most evident defense for the entire exercise was that it was a one good turn deserves another reaction to the ULFA-supported fear mongering, uncommonly the killings of their old friends - the SULFAs." (23) It spreads loathsomeness and vulnerability among the general population of Assam by ending the life of the blameless individuals who should be the relatives of ULFA individuals [4].

These two words 'mystery' and 'slaughtering' symbolize the darkest time of political history of Assam, a period people might not want to day break upon a state once more. These two words threatened and tormented the general population of Assam for a long time somewhere in the range of 1998 and 2001. A sort of awfulness, vulnerability had secured the eyes of the general population. Indeed, even they were uncertain about whether they will see the rising sun of the following day or not. The extraordinary fierceness has fallen upon the life of the guiltless individuals. Indeed, even the words send shiver to the spine of the general population who were the observer of those kidnappings and killings. They have seen just blood before their eyes. Aruni Kashyap has in all respects effectively joined his creative ability and the truth of the mystery killings by taking as a scenery in the novel *The House with a Thousand Stories*.

Reaction against the political turmoil: As we have mentioned in the introduction of this paper that both the novels are written on the backdrop of Assam's recent history, it is

obvious to ponder a reaction against these political turmoils. *The Collector's Wife* by Mitra Phukan retells the most sensitive issues like immigration, Assam movement, agitation, terrorism, extortion in a very devastating way. It likewise unfurls the social milieu, the earth held with dread, anxiety and expectation among the general population of Assam amid the late seventies and the entire eighties, and from that point forward. Mitra Phukan strongly communicates her perspective that in this period of political rebellions, there are two kinds of energy. One who is really joined with their country, care about country, similar to the understudies of DS College and the other who brag of doing devoted exercises like the English teacher Arnob Chakravarty, who use to 'administration to the general population, Desh sewa'.

The author appears to be increasingly cognizant about the social and hostile to social exercises amid those days. As she makes reference to "either of numerous psychological oppressor, or pseudo-fear monger equips that the area overflowed with, unashamedly asserted the 'credit' for these episodes inside a couple of days.... a significant number of these associations converged into one another, their personalities a clone of the best one, MOFEH, or the Movement For an Exclusive Homeland. Obviously there were additionally the fear based oppressor out-of comfort gatherings, and the phony psychological militant, who were minimal more than posses of dacoits, meagerly camouflaged as agitators." (There is likewise a gathering of patriotism, as though the individuals from these gatherings are intended to procure by doing as such called desh sewa (administration to the country), evidently they are doing desh sewa (fill one's very own need or means) through including in the snatching of TE grower, business person, enormous political pioneer, or they are including in the instances of blackmail, for example, "down with fear based oppression, up with patriotism." [5].

The socio political condition of that time influences the life of the youthful, youth age. As the hero Rukmini feels that numerous faintly reprobate young people of different age, or from another state had hopped eagerly onto the insurrection temporary fad, and started to think with a momentous level of achievement, on furnished theft, coercion and hijacking, as their picked vocation. It implies that the social political issues greatly affected the general population of Assam in redirecting the young people's brain lastly corrupted them to careless and barbaric social element. The general public has progressed toward becoming nearly to a prophetically calamitous one, similar to a tragic culture. Again the novel centers the most contacting element of Assam. The epic says, "... there were additionally Surrendered Ex-Ultras, young people who had authoritatively set out their arms before the experts, and had been invited to the "standard" with the gifts of the administration.

In any case, it appeared that they discovered life in this specific standard dull. Sometimes, they would release pressure by enjoying demonstrations of pandemonium with the weapons that they were formally permitted to keep, for their own security against their past partners, just as the unfortunate casualties' kinfolk, that they were from either of the notable fear based oppressor outfits, before whisking them off to remote

backwoods lands, or assuaging them of their resources. It was an advantageous cover, more productive than uniform in the jungle." The average citizens like workers have lost their confidence. The oppression that has been exemplified by the supposed nationalists has moved toward becoming metaphorically an extremist enthusiasm. Individuals even dread to articulate their name in an open spot. Like George Orwell's 1984 it has likewise proliferated an idea wrongdoing, and as though somebody has viewing on them. The ordinary citizens have been effectively mentally programmed into trusting that the cash plundered from them was to promote the reason for what was impractically called their "Brilliant Homeland". The general population trust this deception and purposeful publicity [6].

This sort of contention among ULFA and SULFA has likewise unavoidably clear in Aruni Kashyap's tale *The House with a Thousand Stories*. In the novel Aruni Kashyap has drawn a picture of a contemporary Assam that is suffused with viciousness. As we mindful that the novel is set against a progression of additional legal executing supposedly dedicated by Indian government amid the late 90s in the territory of Assam to check an equipped dispute, the novel subverts the official form of stories and investigates the outer clashes of the human heart. The creator has nothing to state to the administration approaches, however he just concerns the infringement of human rights. They have moved toward becoming manikin in the hands of government specialist. The tale forefronts reality behind the intrigue.

"There is nothing mystery about the mystery executioners. Everybody realizes who is executing who around the state, their identity working for subtly."

The communist authenticity concerns the battle between the financial classes of society, where the mistreatment of specialists by middle class industrialist, the ideals of the working class are exhibited. The creator needs a support. He says that "there isn't much distinction between the pilgrim British and our own administration". (109) As North-East has dependably been disregarded by the focal government, similar to the colonizers have abused the subalterns, human rights have been damaged among the general population of Assam. We need fairness, security and strength. The epic finishes like "our story finishes here... before leaving engravings of a similar story on the dirt... squashing the dry leaves." But as a general rule does the story end here [7]?

3. Representation of women

Assamese society at that time was a little bit conservative regarding the women's business. Women being one important marginalized class won the sympathy of these two writers as they have always been exploited by their male partners in the name of religion or social customs. In *The House with a Thousand Stories*, characters like Oholya-jethai, Moina-pehi are the real representatives of Assamese stereotypical women. The political connivance has fruitless their life. The previous existence of Oholya-jethai, who is an epitome of racial unfortunate casualty, has now turned into the object of tattle. She has been mishandled by her beau's family, as her sweetheart is a specialist from a rich family, proprietor of a

standard vehicle. The universal society additionally ignores her and now she is living as an exacting lady in the Bishoya's family to shroud her mystery and to overlook her past distresses. "Back then, when you began to look all starry eyed at, you consequently guaranteed that you would turn into the subject of a major tattle, particularly on the off chance that you were a woman." When Pablo got some information about her ugliness, he has been clarified as "... an unmarried, jobless lady has no regard, no ground underneath her feet in our general public.

The main way someone can hold her head high is by clinging carefully to what society anticipates from her. By turning into a desirous watchman of the tenets and guidelines, she purchases acknowledgment and regard, cuts a spot for herself. "On the other hand the contemporary political commotion has conveyed sign to Moina-pehi, the most youthful auntie of Pablo. Be that as it may, the passing of Moina-pehi has remained puzzle in her significant other's home as she would not like to wed since she would not like to be assaulted amid hunt strikes. Again Mamoni, a young lady has been assaulted by four military men is one of the situations of the contemporary existence of ladies. Ladies needed to confront the casualties of society. They were accepted as an article. Others characters like Anamika, and the divorced person Onulupa, and the widow Onima-borma are the exemplification of society's carelessness and severity. Regardless ladies have been focused to settle the issue, whether it is from the administration or from the general public [8].

Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* can be seen from the gyno-basic perspective. Elaine Showalter portrays the term gynocriticism, an analysis which concerns the portrayal of ladies characters in progress of ladies. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Guber's *The Madwomen in the Attic* (1977) stresses the psychodynamic of ladies composes and proposes the 'tension of origin'. Like Bertha Rochester in *Jane Eyre* extends a tremendous counter-figure to the admired courageous woman. Being a ladies author Mitra Phukan has likewise attempted to give more significance in the portrayal of ladies characters than in the male characters. In *The Collector's Wife*, the hero Rukmini typifies the ladies' mind. She is a test to the cliché character of Assamese society [9].

Rukmini appears persistence and resistance in essence and now and then uncomplaining and yet, she develops out as resilient individual testing every conventional unthinkable. She wouldn't like to recognize herself just as the authority's significant other. She endeavors to subvert the customary outlook of a lady character, which isn't focused with the universe of home life, conceiving an offspring, supporting. She thinks about a 'male ovum benefactor' when she sees the promotion of a 'female ovum contributor'. Is that promotion picture of ladies as an article, a machine of conceiving an offspring? Is that the standards of a man centric culture? Why just spouse needs a female ovum benefactor, wife can likewise publicize for a male ovum contributor. So the polarity between the people, the most grounded versus shortcoming, manly versus ladylike are skillfully displayed in the novel through Rukmini's character [10].

Be that as it may, sooner or later we have felt that Rukmini's strength against the male centric standards has been lessened. At the unexceptional of everyday life laden with the political disorder and uncertainty, she has lost herself. She neglects to consult with the earth. Through her character, the author attempts to catch the depictions of a privileged lady, yet smothered by the conventional standards of society. Obviously different ladies characters are not completely created character. It's just Rukmini Bezboruah, who recounts to the story from her very own point of view. So there is a lacking of others feelings and others considering. As she has been depicted as a high society lady, the spouse of a DC and who was conceived and raised outside Assam, some kind of nonattendance are significant in her social concern. She has not experienced the life of regular ladies particularly the life of town ladies, has not worried about their inclination and their response against the contemporary political region. Sooner or later she returns to the matter of a run of the mill wedded lady, to have a few children to eradicate the disfavor of a desolate lady. We have seen her absence of certainty and intensity when she goes to counsel with a gynecologist [11].

"Rukmini was an infertile lady... when a childless female took an undue enthusiasm for one's posterity, the time had come to avoid the hostile stare by returning home at the earliest opportunity, simmering mustard seeds on an open flame, mumbling mantras over the leader of the tyke whose name was taken by the fruitless ladies."

Notwithstanding her wedded life however some place she feels depression, hurt of losing her parenthood and her very own personality. She has an outside illicit relationship and once in a while goes out with the man to take a break. Through the novel plainly the writer endeavors to make a spot and to gain a spot for the ladies of the general public. They need their own character, not as somebody's significant other, etc but rather they imagine that before all else they are individual. The characters of Oholya-jethai and Rukmini are genuinely the picturization of social reality. Aside from the societal position, their torment and sufferings have an all inclusive likeness to all ladies.

4. Ecological Consciousness

Cheryll Glotfelty's definition of 'ecocriticism' sees the relationship between literature and the physical environment. The concerns about the social life and the retelling of vital history of Assam itself justify the environmental consciousness of these two novelists. The settings of these two novels are the Brahmaputra valley. The daily life and the longingness of the common people are entangled with the river. The novel *The House with a Thousand Stories* depicts a typical Assamese village, Mayang, Hatimuria. As he says Mayang 'the land of healing chants, magic and witches', is still a 'remote' place,

though it is not too far away from the big city 'Guwahati'. Despite of his mother's opposes Pablo wants to live with nature, faces with the life of wilderness and get to know their relationships with the country people, which he has never found in his hometown. On the other hand Mitra Phukan's *The Collector's Wife* also personifies the Red River as a character of the novel. It has witnessed the innuendoes of everyday life form the time immemorial. Sometimes Rukmini sits near by the window of her room, from where she can observe the river and the graveyard. Even when she could not find any solution of this uncertainty she goes back to the woods and communicates with the nature without any words to reconcile her heart and mind as Laurence Coupe says that "Nature is the name under which we use the nonhuman to validate the human, to interpose mediation able to make humanity more easy with itself."

The Collector's Wife deals with a life, which is more close to an urban life. But we can claim that both the novelists are successful in describing the social reality within their own time and temperaments. By doing so, they are able to introduce something closer to real morality in describing the range of human relationships that we all are likely to encounter in ordinary life. The subjects that we have encountered in their novels are the behaviour of parents to their children, the dangers and pleasures of falling in love, of making friends, of getting on with neighbours, and above all of discriminating between those who mean us well and those who may not and of course the character of women mention in the previous discussion. At the very end we can say that the description of ordinary life seems very close to their heart, which helps them to see the reality from very near [12].

5. Conclusion

Anand's social criticism was sustained by his faith that an artist can contribute immensely towards social change. By evaluating these two novels of Aruni Kashyap and Mitra Phukan, we have discovered an inclination to extend the general public of their contemporary world all things considered, not as an admired way. Going past crafted by these two authors, we found the microcosm of the endured individuals, the casualties of horrible governmental issues. Their books can be said to have stuck profound roots in the dirt of the general public managing the contemporary topics, have looked to investigate and translate the Assamese society separately – class and position, man-lady connections, clashes and challenges, goals and bargain, enduring and misuse, sympathy and fraternity with the representation of social authenticity. In their compositions we have seen the exact portrayal of life as it truly seems to be, 'loyalty to reality', not as a 'fantasy'. At the end we can say that Mitra Phukan and Aruni Kashyap are genuine social pragmatists.

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