

The Danger of De-Culturation in the Novels of Kamala Markandaya`S Possession

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Abstract: This research article is an effort to examine the Danger of De -Culturation in the novels of Kamala Markandaya`s `` Possession ``.The novel Possession deals with the theme of loneliness and alienation which comes out after East-West confrontation. In this story, the protagonist Valmiki, the great oriental artist whose art stifles in an alien culture. He feels himself suffocated in an alien environment. Though he gains recognition, but he loses his spontaneity. A rich English woman lady Caroline Bell discovers the talent of painting in the South

Indian boy, Valmiki. She takes him to England polish him as an image of the great Indian artist. As a matter of fact, Valmiki becomes a popular artist and enjoyed name, fame and glamour of the Western culture. But at the same time, he feels that he destroyed his soul. He feels culturally estranged in an alien land At the end of the novel he has to break with Lady Caroline Bell an come back to India. This article is concerned to make an intensive study of the Danger of De culturation in the life of estranged protagonist Valmiki who positions himself in the search of identity.

Keywords: Aculturation, De-culturation, Alienation, Exile and Isolation.

I. Introduction

The two major fall outs of cultural fissions are Acculturation and De culturation. Acculturation is defined as a positive stance, a comprehensive acceptance of the tenets of one culture into another, while De culturation is defined as, negative process, a dreadful distortion of one culture by another. It is not merely a clash causing of alienation, but it also affects the death of the spirit causing not merely a crisis of identity or existence, but denial of existence. Kamala Markandaya has delineated this facet of cultural interaction in the novels particularly ``Possession.``

``India and England did never understand each other``.

East -West confrontation as represented by India`s contact with Britain figures prominently in Kamala Markandaya`s ``Possession.`` In the en- counter between India and Britain each gained a considerable extent but one of the fall-outs of this tension in togetherness is the danger of de- culturation of one`s spirit and one`s culture.

De-Culturation –Historical Phenomenon

De culturation is a phenomenon as old as the history of civilization. Even the ``BOOK OF GENESIS`` also narrates the story of exile and de- culturation. Adam and Eve were alienated from the Garden of Eden due to the grace of the God and banished from their home, to labour by the sweat of their brows. Ever since exile; exodus and migration have become the fate of man. The motive of modern migration may vary from political or religious persecution to economic problems. Whatever be the reason, the impact of de-culturation or cultural dislocation of the individual psyche may remains complex. It is not only a physical journey from one line to another but it also involves separation of spiritual and symbiotic ties with his mother country. Post-colonial India has also witness the same. During that time India has witnessed the migration of many Indian to the lucrative abundance of the west. It could be define as an escape from the economic and communal chaos prevalent in India.

De-Culturation- Common Theme Of Indian English Literature

In the fabric of contemporary Indian civilization, the two most easily discerned strands are the indigenous Indian tradition and imported European conceptions. The conflict between the old and the new, makes up the personality of a modern man and modern Indian writer. A writer is concerned with the springs of human actions with the motivations behind of human behavior. Infact, this dualism of culture is an essential ingredient of the consciousness of every Indian- English writer.

``A writer is concerned with human action and motivation behind human behavior.``

Indian- English literature deals with the emotional problems of the modern man it reflects the injuries, alienation, de-culturation, frustration, identity crisis that an uprooted individual undergoes. Almost all major

Indian English novelist like Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Manohar Malgonkar, Bhavani Bhattacharya, Nayan Tara Sahgel, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya and Arun Joshi have diluted this dualism of culture in their different distinctive ways. Arun Joshi's 'The Foreigner', Kamala Markandaya's 'The Nowhere Man', Santa Rama Rau's 'Remember The House', Sarat Kumar Ghosh's 'The Prince of Destiny', Raju Rao's 'The Serpent and the Rope', deal with the tension ensuing from de-culturation. Anita Desai also shows her tangible concern with the multi-cultural situation in her novel 'Cry The Peacock'. It is concerned with the disharmony and dissonance that disrupt the marital relationship between Maya and Gautama. 'Bye Bye Black Bird' also reflects the disintegration due to de-culturation. De-culturation can be best understood in the light of the two related yet paradoxical terms 'exile' and 'home'. Home stands for the habitual abode, it is where one belongs to, it becomes the part of one's cultural and spiritual identity. It stands for one's native soil, mother country, his security which becomes the part of his 'Self'. Exile refers for enforced or regretted absence from one's country or home. It is literally an uprooting and often as withering and its effect on the mind and spirit which is deprived the sustenance it has drawn from native soil. At the end, the protagonist feels only de-culturation and alienation.

De Culturation In Possession

'The presence of two cultures in one's mind forms a wider and therefore a saner basis on which to originate the quest for identity and that the dis-cordance between these cultures can be creative as well as merely confusing'.

Markandaya's novel Possession inacts this conflict arises out of the possessive spirit of English cultures on the spiritual, natural self of the Indian society. In Possession the novelist depicts the inter-cultural tension and conflict between the materialistically possessive West and the spiritually non-possessive East between the secular and divine sources of art. "Kamala Markandaya is trying to make the story Caroline and Valmiki, a parable of colonialism a passing of Empire and current insidious movement of neo-colonialism."

Kamala Markandaya depicts the conflict between the East and the West and its impact on the relationship and at the end danger of de-culturation. Through her description of major characters like Caroline, Valmiki, Swami and Anasuiya, she depicts the cry of alienation which comes out of the British occupation of India.

Caroline, symbolic of the western culture comes to the village of Valmiki in search of liquor and comes across Valmiki, the rustic Indian artist, the symbol of raw independent India. She discovers in this uneducated goatherd an extraordinary genius. She feels that he requires freedom to broaden his artistic talent and to give vent to his artistic expression in an environment conducive to growth. Valmiki is up-rooted from his native soil where he had been bred on the spiritual values of the East by the Swami, is transplanted in the materialistic soil of Britain. The way she takes hold of Valmiki, keeping him under her control is reminiscent of the way the British had taken control of India. Under the supervision of Caroline, Val moulds himself his rough edges smoothed out but in the process, Indianness, his spirituality is also being erased out. "His English was good and the accent cultivated- Caroline had dearly made him work at it. Most of the uncouthness was gone, and some of the honesty." since he had been Up-rooted from his spiritual and cultural heritage to face the onslaught on an alien, dominant white race, he obviously suffers and he feels awfully home sick and became the victim of de-culturation. He finds that he is transplanted into the alien milieu where he achieves a claim as a painter.

Val's artistic talent starts withering. The arrogant and insolent behavior of Caroline failed to reanimate him. He realizes that for her, he is not a full-fledged human being to be loved or cared for but merely "the clay" in her hands to be "moulded and caressed to an image she could love". Valmiki asserts to Anasuiya that "She does not care for me..... When I do nothing, I am nothing to her no more than a small insect in a small crack..... This awakening is much worse than being a neglected goatherd."

Val's crises is portrayed again this intellectual background. Caroline's aggressiveness and Val's submissiveness represent the characteristics of their representative races. Caroline fails to understand the religious and the functional values Val's art and, is unable to grasp Val's identification with India symbolized by the wildness to which he returns.

Valmiki spends glorious period materialistically in Europe. It is considered, "tempestuous period of worldly glory-money, power, repute, sex and travel." After living a bohemian life, Valmiki enjoys life to the maximum with recklessness and adopts the mercenary values of the "gilt-edged society", which de cultured and alienated him further from his root.. He often finds himself estranged from his traditional root. He turns promiscuous under the powerful influence of Western culture. He falls in love first to Ellie, than to Caroline and later to Annabel by turns. Val and Ellie are seeking comfort and companionship in each other. But with the other two, he is merely pleasure- seeker. During these years, he feels alienated and de-cultured. He loses the touch with core of himself.

H. M. William asserts: "Valmiki becomes an artist Lady Bell intends but at the expense of nearly destroying his soul. He finds only waste and death in personal relationship and recover his true self has to break with Lady bell and returned to India." this shows completely alienation due to de -culturation of the protagonist. The passionate plea of Valmiki becomes the anguished cry of the nation: Love me, as me not because I am obedient, good, clever, and pretty- Love me for myself. An occasional outburst instead of silent suffering becomes the assertion of the worm- like Valmilki's will power which makes Anasuiya happy that he has matched Caroline's "Inherited arrogance with an arrogance of his own."

Valmiki was totally oppressed due to the amiable memories of the past as well as the painful realization of his own isolation. He cries out in dejection and disappointment. There is nobody to go now; no home, no temple, no climate and no age. Caroline lays her absolute claim on him. She tamed him as he has domesticated Minou, a monkey. He dances like a monkey on Caroline's tune. The exotic climate of London does not suit Minou's life. So it dies of pneumonia. Valmiki's Indian temperament makes him miss- fit in Caroline's, as her sexual partner and both get estranged from each other later on. He can no longer be tamed and made to obey her command. She has refined his manners and made systematic his artistic knowledge and talent, but she fails to overpower and to tame his peculiar Indian sentiments. She only helps him to change his external life and sentiments, his dress and behavior, but not his inner life, his emotional needs. Even Valmiki's mother consents to leave her son for a few rupees and for a better life of her son .But Caroline is not ready to leave Valmiki in the hands of either Ellie or Annabel because she desires to him. Kamala Markandaya focuses on the craving of a woman to dominate over a young man absolutely-culturally, physically, morally, and emotionally, that rises later on the danger of de culturation. The nature of Caroline, by and large, is possessive. Margaret P. Joseph rightly points out:

"While she succeeds in the first-three-making Valmiki a well-known artist, becoming his mistress, teaching him her materialistic values-she fails in the last, for in every crisis he turns to his mentor Swamy."

In Joseph's views the rebellion of Valmiki is against the struggle for dominance, whereas Ellie stands for the long suffering humanity, the Swamy-the typical Indian spirit in contrasted with the materialism of Caroline. Even though Caroline defines Valmiki's crude behavior, makes him a sophisticated man, she fails to subdue his freedom of spirit .He does not accept her domination, her mastery over her mind and heart forever. When he finds her interference in maintaining his freedom intolerable, he escapes from her clutches even if he reduced to penury. He does not yield to her economic dominion throughout his life. At the later stage of his separation from Caroline, in a fit of pique, he refuses even to cash the cheque sent by her. European culture and education awakens his self-dignity and freedom of life .He declines to lead the life of a caged animal like Minou under her eveil spill and control .He is basically an artist and his spirit can never be chained nor restrained. Not all the material comforts of the West can restrain his spirit of freedom. On the other hand, in her bid to possess Valmiki totally, Caroline herself get possessed from which she cannot extricate herself. All her intellectual power, feminine charm and vigor at last makes her a helpless creature; she becomes really powerless and possessed by her emotional-self, by an agonistic self for possession and at the end there is nothing but danger of de-culturation.

II. Conclusion

Possession brings to light the sharpened contrast of culture in the depiction of an individual's crisis when forcefully caught in the clash inter-cultural values while groping towards some kind of self-existence in freedom; it mirrors the growth of realization in the mind Val as he resolve the complex dilemma of personal and artistic freedom and responsibility and returns to the traditional values of spirituality and duty which alone gives him a true sense of freedom and identity.

Through "Possession", Kamala Markandaya highlights the problem of possession. It also throws a fresh light on East-West relationship. Through her description of the major character, she highlights an allegory of the British occupation of India. On every occasion her characters used the same expressions as were used to signify the relationship between Britain and India. However, Valmiki's home coming suggests that cultural encounter may be destructive if one culture tries to disposes another. But it is clear enough in this novel that cultural growth needs liberty and co-existence. India's Westernization and India's acceptance of the European culture is good till it is assimilated in its fabric but when it attacks on its routs then it results in "Danger of de-culturation."

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