

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is meant to discuss tradition and change in Twentieth Century writers in English. Many of the novelists have written several works but specific books are chosen. Since Indian Literature in English is considered another branch in the tree of Indian Literature and since all the branches - regional literatures - tend to focus on similar material at the same time, especially in the 20th Century, two novels in Bengali Literature have been included. They serve as a useful purpose in depicting village life. Manik Bandyopadhyay's The Puppet's Tale 'an outstanding example of the enormous amalgamative power of India through the ages'¹ and Tarasankar Banerjee's Ganadevta (The Temple Pavilion) 'a vivid and sensitive picture of the unstable background and social milieu which nurses the seeds of great change',² originally written in Bengali, have been translated in English and are adopted in this exercise.

To define tradition in Indian Literature is pretty difficult but an attempt is made here to establish the context in which it is used. Firstly tradition connotes the handed down opinions, beliefs, customs and form from the very early literatures in India to the present time. Indian Literature in English which only became vibrantly alive in the 20th Century is at the end of such a tradition which has inherited traits and trends from its own works and from various foreign

influences.

Secondly Indian Literature in English in itself has a tradition. Works about India in English began when English speaking people came in contact with India either as visitors or rulers. They wrote about India in a language that was foreign and therefore initiated a type, or a class of its own - hence the tradition of Indian Literature in English. The earlier writing in English however is commonly referred to as Anglo Indian Writing³ in order to differentiate it from Indo English Writers⁴ (Indians writing in English) in the 19th and 20th Centuries.

Tradition is used in both contexts in this paper. We are to note also that the writings produced in the 20th Century by Indians in English are yet too new, although post - Independence has seen an upsurge of novels, to have a tradition of its own. It certainly is a writing with a difference. We can only point out certain trends in it which may no doubt form a tradition as the century grows older.

Different chapters recognise tradition in their particular way. There is the sociological viewpoint operating through the traditional joint family and through village family life and depicted in Bhabani Bhattacharya's Music for Mohini, Attia Hosain's Sunlight

on a Broken Column and Rama Mehta's Inside the Haveli.

This tradition is counter - poised by Manohar Malgonkar's A Bend in the Ganges depicting a family that has been westernised. The chapter describes at full length, family life, the treatment of women, and the adherence to custom. Traditional family has always been a popular theme for writers throughout India. Among modern writers there is hardly a novel that does not in some way introduce this type of life either as the ideal, or its disintegration or a sentimentalizing of it. India's society in this present era still boasts of the strength of such an institution although there has been some movement away to smaller units.

From the level of form and substance the three popular writers of the thirties are discussed. They are Mulk Raj Anand and his two novels Untouchable and The Road, Raja Rao and Kanthapura and R.K. Narayan and The English Teacher The Guide and Waiting for the Mahatma. This chapter dealing with such prominent writers in English, focusses in general on both writers and writings, while the other two lay stress on the substance more than the form.

The last chapter includes the writers Manohar Malgonkar, Khwaja Ahmad Abbas and Kamala Markandaya and their works A Bend in the Ganges, Inquilab and Two Virgins. Their novels are very different from the writers mentioned before. Their tone is far different. Malgonkar and Abbas can be classified

together, while Markandaya and Malgonkar share similar sociological elements in their substance. *carefully mixed.*

It is necessary however to include a brief history of Literature in India in order to appreciate and understand this exercise of 'Tradition and Change' more clearly. The history informs of the elements of Indian Literature throughout the ages some of which exist and influence modern writers in India today.

How does change stand in relation to tradition? Change is used in the context of a work having little or no resemblance to former types, or works which deliberately shake off form and style or previous literature, substituting something innovative. Change also refers to adverse reaction to customs, rites and practices of the society. Change is represented by the city as against the village, the educated as against the uneducated, the rich as against the poor, the young as against the old, the nuclear family as against the joint family, the west as against the east.

This study is neither extensive nor total but hopes to focus its attention on some aspects of tradition and change as contained in some literary works in India. I wish to mention however from critical readings there seems to be other books which would have served as far better examples of tradition and change than some of what I have used but because of extreme difficulty in obtaining Indian texts

in English I have had to resort to these. G.V. Desani's novel, in particular, All About Hatter is sorely missed.

A Brief Outline of the Literary Tradition

During periods of great literary creations there has always been an interchange of traditional values between different cultures. Some values are imported, transformed, assimilated and nationalised. We are to remember that India has been subjected to invasions and conquests by different countries. The region became exposed to different customs and culture which in due time influenced the form, style and substance of the literatures of India.

To trace a history of Indian literature we must go back to the Rigveda which portrayed women as a submissive being. She was always Mother, wife, daughter, sister, never acknowledged as an individual. More frequently woman was shown in the personality of Mother. Aditi, the mother of gods was much more sung to than Usha, the only goddess in the Vedas who was not a mother. From the Upanishads we passed into the Upanishadic period portraying woman as an acquiring agent of knowledge from her husband rather than one acquiring land and security. Here the man of the house was given absolute rights over the household, a tradition which still predominates in India today.

However this is not to deny the fact that a woman was not an independent character even in Indian literature.