Contemporary Issues of Indian Society as Portrayed in Indian Literature

U. Santhana Kumar, Assistant Professor of English, Department of English,
MANO College, Sankaran Kovil.

Abstract

Social Sustainability is the aptitude of a society to increase processes and structures which not only meet the requirements of the existing members but also sustain the future generations to preserve a hale and hearty community. In the words of Philip Sutton, sustainability is not about assimilation of ecological, social and economic issues, nor about improving the quality of life. It is mainly about maintaining something worthy in life and society. In literature, social sustainability is related to social and economic aspects of life. After independence, India developed into a democratic--industrialized nation but in spite of the progress achieved, there retains stern problems in the nation related to its social environment. The crises like unemployment, growing inflation, alcoholism, casteism, dowry system, nutritional lack among children, lack of safety for women workers at vocation place, lack of prime facilities at workplace, unhygienic workplace environment, corruption, officialdom, harassment and abuse from upper class. Hence, the paper identifies socially sustainable part connecting with the lives of the people.

Keywords: Contemporary Issues, Indian Society, Portrayal, Indian Literature.

The present reading focuses on representative writers of Indian literary scene. Dismemberment and displacement affected human lives without delay after Independence. As novels of social protest and social criticism, the novel analysed discuss the vibrant issues like poverty, untouchability, hunger, physical and social abuse and the different problems that affect their day to day lives. However, the peoples' status captured the attention of writers, activists, social and economic thinkers. In India, the peoples' society proved to be the victim or substitute for genuine modernisation. The sociological views and Indian writer's themes discussed here portrays the harsh realities of the pre- independent, post-independent and the subaltern state of many under numerous social oppression even in the end of the sixth decade of independence.

The faint rumblings of those people and their under privileged state becomes outrageous and violent in the fictional setting. All of the Indian writers discuss their fateful lore with kindness and with a genuine effort to empower the subjugated ones. The subaltern life shown in their works becomes a symbol of new life and creativity. The notion of protest transcends the primary impulse to refuse and get transformed into an activity of turmoil.

Poverty is an each day sight of the Indian panorama. According to the World Bank approximation, about sixty percent of the populace of India is underneath to the poverty line. Worst epidemics, diseases and habits like Cholera and Typhoid, Cancer, Tb, Aids drug addiction and Alcoholism, engulf the nation. The environment and pollution are two other

major issues that India strives to protract. So, sustainability is related to how individuals, communities and societies live with each other and set out to accomplish the objectives of developmental models, which they have preferred for themselves. To explain in a nutshell, Social sustainability in India is interrelated to equality, the working conditions, wages and even the equal participation in the nation's cultural assortment.

Literature is the mirror of a nation, the history, development and all other related activities of man in association with society. Indian novel delineates the nation's destiny and is a rendezvous with destiny. The Primordial nationalism and the concepts of communal and racial characteristics turn to be the key elements of early Indian fiction. Near the beginning, independent phase of Indian fiction replete with Nationalism, moments of departure in the Bengali novel like Bakim Chandra Chatterji's *Anandmath.*

Fiction is used as an approach of protest in Rabindranath Tagore; especially in the indistinct sentimental version of the social problems and inequalities and the rural landscape of India replete with poverty, casteism and communalism. Inheriting the responsibility of mysticism from Tagore, Raja Rao wrote *Kanthapura* depicting subaltern enigmas and conundrums. Tagore's *Gora* turned to be a classic text that fought against colonialism but most of the relatable issues like class and caste conflict are silenced and erased in the idyllic beauty of the nation. Thakhazhi's *Chemmen* and Mohammed Basheer's *My Grand Dad and Elephant* in Malayalam, Prem Chand's *Godan* and *Karma Bhoomi* in Hindi, Charan Panigrahi's *Matir* Manisa in Oriya, were the great novels that reflected Indian life in its exuberance. A latest perception of the aesthetic became popular along with new politics in India.

Thus, the consequences of Independence in Indian literature produced manifold cultural practices and temporalities. By the decades of 1970's Indian writers produced a body of fiction that captured the multi-layered state of Indian life in novel patterns and powerful images. Meenakshi Mukerjee's *Realism and Reality: The Novel and Society in India (*1985) attempts to read Indian literature across linguistic boundaries to perceive Indian novel in a broader perspective. Mukerjee also identifies three dominant tropes in contemporary Indian novel. First, the variant of the meaning of Karma and Dharma, provisos which we have inherited and need to appraise afresh because they work at more than one level; the individual, community, society and the nation. Second leading trope is that of belonging; in terms of language, region, religion and nation. Third trope is the obsession with violence and hatred. Violence borne out of hostility, hatred and the shortsightedness of the authorities is reflected in Nayantara Sahgal's *Rich Like Us,* Mahasweta Devi's *Drupadi* and Shashi Taroor's *Riot.*

In the Post-independent stage, Indian languages began to develop their own varieties of Post- modernism through movements like Navyothara and Uttar-Adhunik. The resurgent Dalit writing created a fresh dialect that rejected the values of Hinduism of its caste distinction. The essential left produced anti-romantic, avant-garde new semiotics for literature. Feminism has emerged as a lost Atlantis from the pages of literary convention revisioning patriarchal hegemonic interpretations trying to formulate a feminist canon. A

move from cognitive questions to ontological worry can be apparent in all linguistic creations of the nation.

In the year 1936, All India Progressive Writers Association under the leadership of Premchand was formed to debate over decolonisation and the personality of post-colonial literature was discussed. The majority of the contemporary writers were exaggerated by the ideals of the movement. Due to that influence, writers as diverse as; Mulk Raj Anand, Rabindra Nath Tagore, Rashid Jahan, Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, Vaikom Muhamed Basheer, G.Shankara Kurup, Shri. Jayakanthan and Bama were enthused to write on the themes of human state and emancipation. The literary movement became trendy in languages like Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Urdu, Hindi, and Punjabi. Caste and untouchability are chiefly used as themes by these writers. These are the two factors that deprive the development of our nation.

Caste, in its conventional form is a system of hierarchically graded, locally incorporated occupationally and ritually specialised endogenous social strata, which plays a definitive role in the adaptive configuration of Indian society. It can also be explained as a network of closed sanctified interest groups running as adaptive structures in a modernising Indian society distressing the political, economic and social aspects. Caste intertwined with race has a complex history in the socio-political struggle in India as analogous to the systems of oppression in Afro –American countries.

Caste is an entity which is tangible and reckonable. It has definable distinctiveness like endogamy, commensality system, permanent occupation and ordinary ritual practices. The invasive anthropological view of Indian society puts caste at the centre of Hindu strata of social life. It is beached in the hierarchical prototype of the society. Caste is a system of social stratification, which is historically constructed. In the first phase of 20th C, Herbert Risley identified the origin of caste structure to the desire of Aryan conquerors to retain their limpidness from the pollution of conquests. He agrees with endogamy as a result of the hierarchy rather than a main principle.

In Hinduism, Jati refers to a great many things to all sorts of categories of things, sets of colour and sounds, for instance; it includes living creatures generated from seeds, moisture, eggs and wombs. It means a whole array of earthly populations that we describe families, kin groups, genders and occupational categories. Jati classified them as Brahmins, Kshatrias, Vaishyas and Sudras. These distinctions mapped a new-fangled taxonomy which divides the society into forward and backward castes. There is a multifarious diversity of caste practices in India. The changeableness and flexibility of caste also make it ethnic. The social structure of India; even after independence is related to Varna, Jati, inequality, untouchability and the differing notions of caste imported by Aryans at the time of invasion.

Untouchability is deliberate in the society of India far so ever the caste system prevails. Edgar Thurston, an anthropologist who did the caste taxonomy in India comments on untouchability; a Pulayan cannot touch Sudra. If he does so, the Sudra has to immerse himself in the seven ponds. Caste consciousness affects the day to day lives of lower sections, naming of persons, houses and customs related to caste became popular. The hierarchy of

caste coined by purity and pre-eminence of Brahminism provided a connotation of caste as a religious phenomenon. The colonial power elevated the Brahmin's position to the level of hegemonic text under girding all of Hindu society.

Conventionally, caste maintained a command of illusionary purity with a spotless halo over Indian sphere. Even after Independence, casteism has not disappeared and the solidarities innate in it acted as a specific force in India in shift. Caste is becoming an adaptive configuration whose functions include the provisions of security, solidity and privileged treatment to groupings of people who seek to avoid the rational implications of detailed universalised discriminations with reverence to the competition of jobs and other scarce resources of society. Caste as institution and practice continued to confuse social anthropologists and writers.

Caste can be conceptualized as remnant of India's pre-modernity as something that disrupts the nationhood of India. It is acting as an indisputable signifier reflects India's backwardness. Even after Independence, caste operates as a separating trace that unsettles the programmatic certitudes of the Indian national state and it can be personified as the dark rock of Indian tradition. Caste lobbying even plays a vital role in the political scenario of India. As lives of people leave deep scars in the pages of nation's history protest, literature emerged in all regions of India as its intention is to explore; create and seek new meanings in human experience. In the altering political and social state of affairs, protest seems to be the best and legitimate alternative for people and writers to face absurd situations and debased environment. The notion of protest is also inseparable from the social, cultural and political circumstances.

The temperament of protest transcends the primary impulse to refuse and it transfuses into an action of turmoil. It has become the kernel of a new civilization and acts as a symbol of new originality through the discovery of peoples' life in India which reveals the Indian character of Indian literature. Thus, a discovery of India is made possible by writers through the discovery of peoples' lives.

Thus, the study reveals the socio-economic problems like unemployment, growing inflation, alcoholism, casteism, dowry system, nutritional lack among children, lack of safety for women workers at vocation place, lack of prime facilities at workplace, unhygienic work place environment, corruption, officialdom, harassment and abuse from upper class etc still persist in the independent India in different varying ranges. The social order has to find out clear solutions to abolish these ill effects. One of the major problems faced our country men are unexpected bandh. This also affects the social life of people and decreases the productivity and becomes reason for poverty. Social researchers have to chalk out solutions for this problem through creative discussions by the study of literature. By doing so, major social issues can be solved to a large extent by improving the livelihood standard of the poor by creating original and enhanced opportunities to work for their livelihood.

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