

**POST COLONIAL POLITICS: A STUDY OF ARUN JOSHI'S 'CITY AND THE  
RIVER'**

**Miss Kale Manisha Bhagvanrao**

Lecturer in English,  
Pratishthan Mahavidyalaya,  
Paithan, Aurangabad.

Post Colonial discourse attempts to redefine, reformulate & reconstruct the colonized self. Post colonial is the most appropriate term to describe the new literatures in English. Resistance, subversion & reconstruction are the significant features of post-colonial literature. There are four distinct heads of post colonial discourse in Indian English Literature as Diasporic discourse, Feminist discourse, Minority discourse & Political discourse. The 1980s of 1990s witnessed the political & ideological novels. A large number of Indian English novels written in the post- colonial period have in them treatment of various political issues. It has incontrovertibly had umbilical links with politics. M.K. Naik has convincingly argued.

*'It was the intense phase of national movement for independence, launched by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1930s that gave a virtual lease of life to Indian English fiction which had*

*a sporadic & precarious existence until then.'*

Some of the political issues are the communal riots, the Chinese aggression, disputes between India and Pakistan, differences between political parties of the country and the rise of parochial tendencies. Hindu-Muslim riots of 1947 have been treated in Manohar Malgonkar's 'A Bend in the Ganges', Chaman Nahal's 'Azadi' & Khushwant Singh's 'Train to Pakistan'. The Hindu-Sikh riots have been treated in Khushwant Singh's 'Delhi'. The Chinese aggression has been treated by Bhabani Bhattacharya in his novel 'Shadow from Ladakh'. The disputes between India and Pakistan have been created by Salman Rushdie in 'Midnight's Children'. The fight between the political parties of the country leading to the declaration of Emergency has been treated in Shashi Tharoor's 'The Great Indian Novel'. The rise of parochial tendencies

has been treated in Nayantera Sahagal's 'Storm in Chandigarh'.

My object in this paper is to show how the peoples are still oppressed through politics. It is best represented in Arun Joshi's 'City and the River'. In colonization peoples were ruled by British empires and after independence they are ruled by politicians.

The 'City and the River' (1990) is the political novel in which Arun Joshi presents the malpractices in which people wielding Political Power indulge and the ways in which people respond to them.

One of the malpractices is the Practice of manipulating people and incidents in order to left oneself to the apex by giving the impression that one is very popular of that it is the people who want one to have power. The Grand Master, the ruler in the novel is the person who employs such tactics.

Another Malpractice is the ruler's making people regard himself as the nation. In the novel the Astrologer identifies the Grand Master with the river, that are the symbol of the ruler of the nation respectively.

The next malpractice is one of keeping oneself in the seat of power with the help of guns & thus using the army and police. Which are expected to protect the state from external & internal aggressions,

in order to protect oneself from even the dissenters. The novelist also shows the ruler indulging in the malpractice of giving ministerial post to persons for political reasons rather than for their talents and capabilities for instance, the post of the Education Advisor has been given in the novel to a person who has won the support of students & teachers. Grand Master wants to win the support of these people and talent or capability is not taken into consideration at all. It means giving posts for political reasons is likely to encourage politics rather than bring efficiency in administration.

The efforts are made by rulers to cajole people to continue tolerating poverty in the name of leading a life of spiritualism has been shown in the novel. The people who have been deprived of their homes and hearths are exhorted to accept poverty on the ground that they belong to a country, the civilization of which is spiritual rather than material. But this spiritual civilization fails to provide people even homes and hearths.

The malpractices employed by a ruler in order to eliminate dissent is variously presented in the novel. One of them is using coercion in order frighten people into loyalty. In this novel a large number of boatman are sent to prison only because they refuse to declare that they are

loyal to the Grand Master. A clown is also in prison to make people laugh and so there is no pain in asserting a clown for laughing. Moreover, laughing is an innocent exercise and one indulging in it does not deserve any punishment. Another such malpractice presented here is one of restricting the freedom of the press and not letting an independent newspaper flourish.

One more practice adopted to discourage dissent is that of harassing the dissenters of causing them inconveniences in one form or another. It is highlighted in the novel when the Grand Master gets the boatman's musical instruments destroyed only because he himself has an 'antipathy' to music.

Another malpractice to discourage dissent is that of lying the blame for every unhappy incident at the dissenters door irrespective of facts. The wrong doer blames the victims even for his own repressive measures and tries to direct the edge of people's anger towards the dissenters. The fact comes to light when one finds the Grand Master blaming every boatman for his having been using the police and the army against the latter.

The responses of the ruled, as presented in the novel range from total surrender to an armed struggle. The path of surrender falls in the non resistance

category and that of struggle in resistance category. The resistance of the victims is of two kinds passive and active. Those who accept the tyranny of Grand Master are passive resisters & those who doesn't accept are active resisters. The active resistance is again of two kinds : physical and intellectual. The resistance of those who take up arms against the oppressor is physical and those who simply educate people and explain to them what is wrong with the Grand Master's policies are intellectual active resistance. The intellectual active resistance is again of two kinds non-literary of literary. The resistance in which the speaker puts his arguments in a straightforward manner is non-literary and the one in which the speaker puts his arguments through objective co-relative is literary.

The novelist conclude that one who misuses political power cannot escape undergoing punishment for it. In the novel, punishment comes to the offender from nature. The novelist is exposing how a democratic set up can be misused and replaced by dictatorship. He likes to have a political system in which the ruler does not oppress people, as when the professor is lying on his death bed he has a hope,

*"There will be no Grand Masters. There will be a new*

*world, a new race of men will be born."*

Arun Joshi does not suggest any alternative political system but wishes to have one in which there is no oppression.

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