
“MIDST SOCIAL TABOOS”- A STUDY ON INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

M. Vanitha,

Assistant Professor of English,
Hindusthan College Arts and Science,
Coimbatore – 641029

Abstract

South-Asian Literature is deep-rooted from the culture mostly in India. The intimacy between tradition and India is tightly knotted. It is highly difficult to separate Indian English literature from archaic customs and beliefs. Even though people almost 21st century their thirst and significance on tradition are grown more. At the same time, there are many people whose intention is to corrupt India and its valuable tradition in the name of westernization. Indian writers frustrated by the change of people. Indian authors showed social taboos such as caste discrimination, male-chauvinism, violence against women, poverty. Writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Kamala Das, Anita Nair, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, Chitra Banerjee Divakurni, Bharati Mukherjee have delineated women's struggles in their writings. R.K Narayan, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Mulk Raj Anand, Rabindranath Tagore portrayed the importance of independence, Indian culture, and tradition, Diaspora in their novels. South- Asian Writers provided reasons as well as steps to overcome from social taboos in India. In this paper, I widened my discussion on social taboos in Indian English Literature.

Keywords: *archaic customs, male-chauvinism, caste discrimination.*

Indian society is blended with more customs and beliefs. It is difficult to separate India from its primitive culture and tradition. Culture is inseparable in the lives of Asian people almost it is running in the blood. Their life is neither intentionally nor unintentionally connected with tradition. According to Indians, their life without tradition is 'a body without a soul'. Culture is not created by other people outside India but it is supervened of generations. Indian culture is aged for some thousands of years. It is merged with differences in styles. Every state in India is celebrated their own festival which is contrasted with other states. The people are diverted not only in the festivals but also in religions, rituals, prayers, food habits, apparels, folk, and music. Even in each state, they are following their own tradition. Apart from these, there is no difference in India, but they are united with the very word 'Indians'.

Indian writers showed social taboos such as caste discrimination, male-chauvinism, violence against women and poverty. Writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sehgal, Kamala Das, Anita Nair, Jhumpa Lahiri, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai, Manju Kapur, Chitra Banerjee Divakurni, Bharati Mukherjee have delineated women's' struggles in their writings. R.K Narayan, Rohinton Mistry, Vikram Seth, Amitav Ghosh, Mulk Raj Anand, Rabindranath Tagore have portrayed not only the importance of independence but including Indian culture diaspora and tradition. South- Asian Writers provided reasons as well as steps to overcome from social taboos in India.

India is an overpopulated country in the world. It is not only ranked in population but also for its customs. The population of India diverges with Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. Their rituals and customs are different from one another. Their prayer, clothing, festivals each and everything is dissimilar with other religion. When religious practice affects other religion it leads to separation, because those customs are emotionally attached to people. India is known for tons and tons of customs and religious practices which are followed by the people. In those beliefs, most of them are really superstitions. Without the awareness of the superstitions people acknowledge them and follow them. They always care about their tradition but they are veiled by the superstitious beliefs. This purged to discretion.

'Taboos' set back its history from English. The word 'taboo' comes from 'Tongan tapu' and 'Fijian tapu' which means 'prohibited'. 'Tongans', people of Tonga used taboo for forbidden food. Even though taboo first used for prohibiting food items, later it is used to neglect certain moral practices. It is a religious belief which was yielded by the human for their own purpose. According to religion, some practices are sacred and if anyone objects will be punished. Taboo is related to society and culture. Some states in India gave harsh punishment to those who break the rules of taboos. People who have broken up those rules will face embarrassment. Some of the taboos are fishing and hunting, miscarriage of a child, marriage, and rituals in death, migration to other places. In certain cultures, a woman who is a barren is not allowed to gather in functions.

India is rich in taboos. Due to the pride of their community, many people are prohibited to do inter-caste marriages in India. They should not tie their knot with other religion. If any person who is not married in the same caste will be restricted to enter into their own house including his own village. To maintain the honor of their community many parents killed their children if they married the person from another caste. Many villages in India had a rule that the couple who are unhappy in their marriage life should not get divorced. Even the woman who was by troubled by her husband should live with her husband only. The villagers are not having a concern about their opinion yet they care about their community's dignity. Love marriages are strictly prohibited in many villages in India. As a part of a tradition, Indian men and women should dress

in their own tradition. Some families are destroyed only because of this habit. They commit crimes intentionally and unintentionally.

Indian literature blends with more and more taboos. Novels of Indian English Literature are based mainly on violence in society. Most of the crimes in Indian society are because of superstitious beliefs. R.K Narayan award winner of Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibushan left his milestone in Indian English Literature. His novel *The Dark Room* explored vigorously in the home for a woman. 'The dark room' represents kitchen. It indicates women whose work is only on the kitchen and not to interfere husband's private affairs. The novel depicted isolated woman Savitri, who forcefully made her work on the kitchen. She wrecked when she comes to know her husband's illegal affair with a concubine. She left her husband and daughters. She attempted suicide and rescued from the villagers. Depression addresses her when she mole stated by a priest. She again entered to her 'dark room' and led the same troublesome life. The craft man R.K Narayan gave new dimensions to his other novel *The Financial Expert* which was completely different in theme. The novel lures an advice 'money cannot give happiness'. The novel demonstrated Margayya, purely money-minded. He attracted towards cheap popularity so he helped many people. Finally, the novel ends with an unhappy life of Margayya. Money cannot give him happiness at any point. This is the condition of many people in Indian society. Instead of saving peace and happiness people ran after money. Thus proved novels of R.K. Narayan depict social problems.

Anita Desai, well-known writer depicts the social problems in her novels. Most of her novels are based upon the difficulties of women because of cultural norms. Desai's women were struggled much to reach their destination in life. Her novel *Cry the Peacock* exploits the tragic life of Maya, the protagonist of the play. Maya is a young woman who is forcefully married to Gowtama, a lawyer. They lived in Delhi with their family members. She could not lead a happy life with her husband because of her joint family. Her aunt and other women tortured her because of her barrenness. Her loveless arranged marriage ended in suicide. Desai's other novel, *Fire on the Mountain* portrayed psychological impulses of women. Her protagonist Nanda Kaul enjoyed secluded life. Nanda Kaul's trauma on Ila Das added one more reason for her private life. Her memory used to think Ila Das, who brutally raped and killed. She avoided everyone even her own daughter. Raka, great-granddaughter of Nanda Kaul visited Kaul's place which added fire to her. Compared with Kaul, Raka is indifferent and independent. So, Desai's characters are enclosed up with social and psychological problems. Not only Anita Desai but other woman writers in 19th century exposed the struggle of a woman in a patriarchal society. Chitra Banerji Divakaruni, Kamala Markandeya and other woman writers explored the condition of a woman by stereotyped family culture.

Caste discrimination is one of the major problems in Indian society. Before and after independence people of India divided by caste. They themselves split-up villages along with caste and religion. They even segregated upper class and lower class. Upper-class people enjoyed every bit of their life whereas lower class people lead their lives in poverty. Marriage and other rituals are different for every caste. Upper-class women or men are not allowed to marry lower-class women or men and vice versa. Arundhati Roy, a great craft maker carved the conflict of the lower class in her novel *God of Small Things*. The novel bind folded with various cultures- Christianity, Hinduism, Marxism, and Islam. Because of untouchability Ammu and Velutha's love affair was ended. Baby Kochamma Ammu's aunt forged a complaint against Velutha as he raped Ammu and kidnapped her twins. Without knowing the truth the inspector and others had beaten Velutha till his death because he was untouchable. Caste is one of 'pathogenic' word in Indian society. If a person gives importance to caste system he may live in isolation as Arundhati Roy says, "Caste is about dividing people up in ways that prelude every form of solidarity....."

Writers like Meera Nair and Akhil Sharma have written against the forbidden values of Indian tradition. Indian wives are meant to satisfy the sexual needs of her husbands and they should give birth to bound their husbands' generation. All these factors have resulted in the emergence of new forms of life. All these taboos still exist in Indian society. Being a drunkard, child and unhappy marriages are still happening in every nook and corner of India. Steps to be taken against all these foolish beliefs. The hidden secrets of India have been brought out by most of the Indian writers. But some have used gentle way of making it out. But a few have brought it out in a vulgar manner.

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