

Structure of Feelings in the Behaviour and Approach of Anglo-Indians of *Bhowani Junction* by John Masters

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ABSTRACT

Bhowani Junction(1984) by John Masters is a story of a young Anglo-Indian girl who is in search of a right suiter and a shelter, but finds it much difficult to feel for herself while entering into relationships with three different men—first, with an Indian; second, with an English; and third, with an Anglo-Indian man like herself. For her, these relationships were cultural and cross-cultural experiences which she encounters with ambivalence, and with patterns of feeling—The Structure of Feelings (term by Raymond Williams). These structural feelings were culture driven and socio-psychological, which moulded her behaviour and approach towards her suiters for their selection, rejections and re-selection.

Keywords: *Cross-culture; Ambivalence; The structure of feelings; Socio-Psychology; Behaviour; Approach*

INTRODUCTION

Bhowani Junction is a novel written in 1954 by John Masters, an English writer. The story of the novel sets in the midst of withdrawal of English from India. The story of this work is woven around the Anglo-Indian community working for railway sector. This novel explores their socio-psychology and behaviour towards both Indian and English peoples. Victoria, here the protagonist, represents Anglo-Indian psyche. Here, they carry two personalities with them—one is of Indian; the other is of English. With Victoria, this split personality

is clearly visible through her behaviour and approach towards her suiters. This novel presents Victoria's journey of searching her own identity through exploring as what fits in on her taste and socio-cultural condition.

Raymond Williams coined the concept "structure of feeling" in the 1970s to impart a historical understanding of "affective elements of consciousness and relationships." After this, the urgency to analyse emotions, atmosphere, and mood as social and historical phenomena has just come out as stronger in an age of modern technology and media and advertisement.

And this theory analyses the emotions and thoughts (approach) of the major characters of *Bhowani Junction*. For example, in the beginning of the novel, the thought provocation of Patrick (an Anglo-Indian boyfriend of Victoria) and his words on brown skin and the responses from Victoria are well programmed responses.

Raymond Williams has coined this term in *Preface to Film* (1954) to converse the relationship between dramatic settlements and written scripts. What troubled Williams was the societal acceptability of specific conventions; for example, the theme of mistaken identity received the public acceptability in the time of Shakespearean era, and that is without much expenses. Therefore, whatever receives acceptance in society or in culture has touched the pattern of feelings in the context of that society. Also, whatever is unaccepted by the society too refers inability of that content to fit in with the pattern or structure of feelings of the time. Thus, it also refers the responses and reflections of the characters in a novel which in turn are designed by the structure of feeling purveying in the present of the society.

In the novel, *Bhowani Junction*, the Anglo-Indian characters are presented with a stereotype response according to their place in the society, and acceptance by the dominant cultures. The novel begins with a narration by Patrick Taylor when he is

outside the home of Victoria, and what goes on inside his mind is his voice of an Anglo-Indian. He feels he is more like English and less like Indian.

Perhaps I ought to say too that 'Wogs' is a word for Indians, and when I say 'we' or 'us' I mean the Anglo-Indians. Sometimes we're called Domiciled Europeans. Most of us have a little Indian blood—not much, of course. (10)

This sense of feeling is not individual but it is also the voice of another character—Victoria Jones. When Victoria meets Patrick Taylor, a childhood sweetheart and also of Anglo-Indian origin, she feels acquainted in the presence of someone of her origin. She shares with him about her cultural point of views. According to her, the Sun cannot make her brown, but it is little blood inside her that do so when Patrick says: It is the hottest time of the day! You will get all brown!... She responds: "It isn't the sunburn that makes us brown, is it?" (14).

The skin colour—white or black is hegemonical (See Antonio Gramsci) notion cultivated and induced by the dominant culture. But according to Raymond Williams, 'Hegemony' can be thought of as either 'common sense' or the dominant way of thinking in a particular time and place, can never be total; he argues that there must always be an inner dynamic by means of which new formations of thought emerge.

Therefore, the dominant culture like English or Indian one for the Anglo-Indian were not the reasons for likes/dislikes, but their own self—made up of two different races, and that is what made them think and feel in a certain way:

I felt her taking a good loo at me. Her own skin was the same colour as mine, perhaps a little browner, less yellow. We didn't look like English people. We looked like what we were – Anglo-Indian, Eurasians, cheeches, half-castes, eight-annas, blacky-whites. (14)

On the other hand, Victoria who encounters with rape incidence, she escapes murdering the culprit and finds a comfortable shelter in an Indian family, where she is treated as bride of their son—Ranjit Kesel. She starts meeting Kesel in the public place. Once when is found with Kesel by Patrick at cinema house, he couldn't resist expressing his jealousy. The reason of that jealousy was out of the socio-cultural conditioning:

He was drunk and nearly crazy with jealousy and hurt pride-because Ranjit was an Indian He said, 'You are just a bitch, Victoria. You can't go out with this fellow. I'll show you... I am not going to hit you, Vicky. It's not your fault. It is that fellow'. (163)

However, after several days, she starts feeling odd in the house of Kesel, and in his company, and she couldn't resist herself to walk away from there. The Indian family, however, was quite benevolent and everything she found in their company was completely okay but was not appropriate to her expectations and her community's standard. To settle down with an Indian is like going down and degrading herself—Anglo-Indian. This made her leave the place and reject the suiter. She expresses her anxiety at one place where they talk about their religion and acceptance on customs. Victoria replies on being asked whether she will marry Kesel:

I don't know Ranjit, I wish it could all be arranged for us. Whatever I think about it I get afraid that I will make you unhappy. I get afraid that I will be unhappy myself, for a time. Then I wonder—for how long a time. (206)

The sense of anxiety in dealing with the relationship with Kesel was out of the cultural and religious expectations from Kesel and his community-oriented approach. He wished her to appear in sari all the time, which is not possible for Victoria. He wishes her to change her name and keep something Indian, which she denies saying since as an Anglo-Indian she likes her name the most-it is her racial identity.

It was a structure in the sense that you could perceive it operating in one work after another which weren't otherwise connected—people weren't learning it from each other; yet it was one of feeling much more than of thought—a pattern of impulses, restrains, tones. (Williams)

After Kesel, her affection turns at Colonel Savage, an English man, who represents his dominant culture. And under the shade of this high culture and custom, she feels sheltered and respected and loved. But this too like the previous relationship turns into dust as she cannot meet up the high standard and expectation of English culture and custom. But in the end of the novel, Savage's duty in India ends and he is beckoned back to England, but his love for Victoria has become irresistible. When she litters to marry him and live in England, he offers to marry but continue in India, and she happily accepts. Savage's superior bids to accelerate his early release from military service as prize for his accomplishments.

Conclusion:

This paper has attempted to study the mood of the Anglo-Indian characters in the light of socio-cultural phenomena amidst cross-culturalism. Their reactions, their choices, rejections, and behaviours are studied under the pre-conditioning. In the words of Raymond Williams, these preconditioning fosters pattern of feelings,

to which he calls, structure of feelings. However, this concept is vague, but it can be understood in the light of structuralist point of view as oppose to romanticist. This theoretic framework could also be implied on both the Indian and English characters to analyse their moods, emotions, and behaviour as result.

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