

## PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

### EMERGENCY IN INDIAN ENGLISH: A STUDY OF CULTURAL MEMORY IN MANOHAR MALGAONKAR'S THE GARLAND KEEPERS

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**Avishek Deb -- Emergency In Indian English: A Study Of Cultural Memory In Manohar Malgaonkar's The Garland Keepers -- Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(6). ISSN 1567-214x**

In the contemporary times, it is being noted that the composite socio-political intelligentsia is experiencing an estrangement in excavating the proper knowledge about ideology and the reason of its being and not being. Ideology dwells in every community. Every society is governed by a powerful and radical group. What is generally found in every society that there are oscillating principles and beliefs which attract one group or the other. The existence of opposing ideologies and histories is the law of a society. Terry Eagleton opines that an ideology is the social understanding of an age. In other words, it represents the sociology of the age. This view however ushers in doubt over the intention of the phenomenon as being wholesome by nature.

Kwame Nkrumah in his essay 'Ideology and Society' opines in this context, "Though the ideology is the key to the inward identity of its group, it is in intent solidarist. For an ideology does not seek merely to unite a section of the people; it seeks to unite the whole of the society in which it finds itself" (*Decolonization: Rewriting Histories*, 65). Yet even in the postmodern age the question of from where ideology sprouted in the past, remains unanswered. As explicated earlier the ideology needs an 'intent' or theory for praxis, the matrix is composed of and operates on the two strands: intentionality and functionality. Etymologically taken, the very word 'ideology' can be broken down to two parts in order to possibly attain the answer; 'idea' and 'logos'. Since it somewhat is a suggestion that the idea has been borne by the logocentric world in order to develop into an ideology, it is upon us to comprehend what should be the ideology of fiction. It is due to this reason why a Salman Rushdie or an Amitav Ghosh is required to experiment over the historical narrative in their fictions. Their fictional treatment with different forms of meta-structures, are aimed to provide possible answers in their micro or mini forms.

The Emergency (26 June 1975–21 March 1977) paralyzed the mind of Indian intelligentsia. It erased and re-raised (recalled, in a sense) memory which ought to have been present without any hiccups. Bipan Chandra states that both the then Prime Minister and JP Narayan justified their acts in the name of democracy. Stating the stance of both Jayaprakash Narayan and Indira Gandhi, Bipan expresses:

The main justification given by JP for his movement was that it aimed at ending corruption in day-to-day life and politics, whose fountainhead was Mrs Gandhi, and to defend democracy which was threatened by her authoritarian personality, policies and style of politics. Her continuation in

office, he said, was “incompatible with the survival of democracy in India.” Mrs Gandhi’s primary defence of the Emergency and her main criticism of the JP movement was that its disruptive character endangered India’s stability, security, integrity and democracy. “In the name of democracy it has been sought to negate the very functioning of democracy,” she said on the morrow of the Emergency. (Introduction, *In The Name of Democracy*, ii)

While factual memory of the historians was going through a state-aided amnesia, cultural memory of Indian-English literature operated as, according to Erll and Rigney, a “medium of cultural memory” and a “medium of remembrance” (“Literature and the Production of Cultural Memory: Introduction”, 112). Cultural memory sprouts out of suppressed images, expressions and objects. In such a fiasco of political amnesia, it was time for the Indian-English novelists since 1970s to observe and formulate their ideology in their works. Paul Ricoeur in his essay “Memory and Forgetting” emphasizes on remembering the peripheral wounds as he said, “We need, therefore, a kind of parallel history of, let us say, victimization, which would counter the history of success and victory. To memorise the victims of history – the sufferers, the humiliated, the forgotten – should be a task for all of us” (*Questioning Ethics* 10-11). As the Shah Commission Report of the Emergency was not available till a decade ago, the mammoth task of sketching the repressed memories in the Indian-English novels fell upon the likes of Salman Rushdie, Amitav Ghosh, Shashi Tharoor, Nayantara Sehgal and others. Viney Kirpal opines, “The role of the 1970s in shaping the new Indian consciousness has been exceptional. The 1980s novel is the direct result of the events that occurred in the 1970s and the early 1980s” (*The New Indian Novel in English: A Study of the 1980s* xx).

As Edward Said’s concept of the “public intellectual”<sup>1</sup> has broadened over the years, the functionality of a literary author (in this case, a novelist) dealing with history rests on his spinning of a fictional cobweb, while carefully making sure of the presence of the historical undertones in the narrative; revelations of the malicious ideologies take place yet, the work remains as a fiction rather than a documentary of realism. Probably to some extent an excerpt from John Fowles’ work, fits into the post-independence fictional requirement of India perfectly: “Fiction is woven into all, as a Greek observed some two and a half thousand years ago. I find this new reality (or unreality) more valid” (John Fowles, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 82). Just as the Marichjhapi incident is a subversive undertone and not a guiding motif in Ghosh’s *The Hungry Tide* (2004), Manohar Malgaonkar’s *The Garland Keepers* (1986) never seems to allow the 1975 Emergency to be the central focus of the novel. The only difference being its artistic way of dealing with political issues and problems, somewhat like as Irving Howe quoted Stendhal’s comment: “politics in a work of literature is like a pistol-shot in the middle of a concert, something loud and vulgar,” (*Politics and the Novel*, 15) yet bound to draw attention. It suggests that the writer should keep himself apart of this crude world of bombs and bullets. He should escape that zone where art may slide into polemics and propaganda. The historical narrative of this novel gives the readers an

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<sup>1</sup> Representations of the Intellectual: The 1993 Reith Lectures. Vintage Books: New York, 1996.

opportunity to study the social, political and economic processes in the formations and transformations during the time in a dystopian atmosphere.

*The Garland Keepers* poses a condition of national epilepsy where the society is noticed to be way too orderly than normal. As the unknown quasi-divine Big Brother in George Orwell's *1984*, the Great Leader who leads such a ruin is left unseen. The ones ensuring the tyranny of the state apparatus are his son, Kalas Kak, Swami Rajguru, Ekanti Ma Pashupat and Kaul. The rebellious side is portrayed by DSP Om Prakash Aggarwal, SP Visram Lal, and Head of Investigations, A.B. Chopra. But such a binary opposition did not, right from the outset, ignite the action of the book. Earlier, Om Prakash happened to be a government sycophant who wrongfully accused Dorabji of a bank fraud case and arrested him. The prosecution started only after Om agreed to re-examine the case on some suspicions about the hidden case file. Due to his untimely promotion and previous experience, Visram Lal declined to support him with the event. The only result of this endeavour was Om 's life in a calculated assassination behind the veil of a tragedy. Later, Vishram and Chopra snatched a hidden microfilm file: the key to all the government's corrupt acts. Afterwards, when they came to know that the chief perpetrator, Swami Rajguru, alias Naik Fida Ali, was once a Pakistani fugitive soldier, Vishram and Chopra caught him and sent him away to the Pakistani army for his eventual retribution. They only give a twist to the action by handing it over to General Jamal Din, the only cause of Swami's escape from the army due to his sexual assault. The book, though, has an open end with the disclosure of the microfilm by Vishram and Chopra. This microfilm revelation could have led to a potential takeover of the government of the Great Leader and the definite end of the Emergency. It is also shown that the plight of Swami Rajguru is not as bad as the general forecast. In fact, he succeeds in conveying to the Chief of Pakistani Sector, Marshall Inayat Usman, his possession of the hidden files of all the Indian VIPs, a copy of which he had kept in Switzerland. M. Rajagopalachari in his book *The Novels of Manohar Malgaonkar* observes that "what Malgaonkar wants to suggest is that Emergency transforms a country into a dystopian nightmare with corrupt politicians" (Rajagopalachari, 96).

As described earlier, it is time to really know how the novel deals with the changes during the Emergency at the socio-economic and political stage. Concentration of caste inequalities, women's concerns, domestic privacy problems are confined at the societal level as individuals grow uncertain towards their own life. As the soul way to live with additional legislative power, sycophant mentality develops on the political stage. It is possible to order press censorship, indiscriminate execution of family planning, arrest, expel or even execute honest workers on cooked-up charges of MISA with free will. On the economic level, while unemployment increases, as we see in the case of Netra, who also happens to be the victim Om Prakash's sister in the novel, under-employment and over-employment increases as is seen in the case of Vishram and A.B. Chopra falling in the former category, and Om Prakash and Surbinder in the latter. This distinctly defines the groups between the dutiful bunch of people and the sycophants. Also fabricated bank fraud cases have been

created to cover up the black money of Swami, Pashupati and Kaul's corruption. However, as the necessary scapegoat of a farcical judiciary, a common man like Dorabji was needed. The most complex character, Swami Rajguru, depicts, on the one hand, strength not coming from the barrel of weapons, but from the knowledge of secrets of rivals in democracies. His role is analogous to a parasite whose operating structure is not influenced by situational alienation. He continues to thrive with rewards around the boundaries of both nations.

Since Nayantara Sehgal has also dealt with the Emergency of 1975 in her novel *Rich Like Us* (1985), there is generally a commonality observed between these two novels. However, her novel has been explicit in naming the political parties, young thugs passing off as youth Congress workers, and more realistic in portraying the clandestine dynastic governance headed by Madam. Adding this epistemological identity of gender, she has meant Mrs. Indira Gandhi almost directly. Here Malgaonkar has been subtle in not doing so.

Before concluding the paper, one basic point that requires to be cleared out is that the issue of Emergency whenever debated in fiction, it is the evils of the rulers that is concentrated upon. What a proletariat or the entire section experienced on different levels has never been dealt with in the past. When a nation undergoes an incident like Emergency, it is a composite experience and not a dissected one. Malgaonkar along with his fictional political backdrop, tries to give the experience of the proletarian section as it has always remained suppressed. These voices today are micronarratives to the whole meta-issue of Emergency. Whether a ray of hope through Adam Sinai in *Midnight's Children* (1981) should be concentrated or not is not the question. Malgaonkar has not ushered in such hopes as it would make him subjective and hence, his open ending. It is important to know how a fiction needs to function. If functionality becomes the focus, then it is upon the readers and critics to understand and decide what kind of narratives they would prefer in the contemporary Indian fiction. Will it be a historicized fiction, or a fictionalized history?

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