



Minority Literature: A Critique of Retrospect



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Research Paper :

Minority literature is known as a literature of protest against cultural and social categories. As a protest literature, it voices out against the existing system and tries to find an alternative. It also aims to bring out a picture of minority lives 'as in' in a fictional representation'. Minority literature is pitted against the mainstream literature which has a long history while minority literature is a recent offshoot.

The voices of minority religions rose since Indian Independence. It is the literature which talks about the minority experience. The minority literature tries to build a bridge between mainstream and minority texts within the context of cultural categories. It is

the literature raises voices against the social inequalities of cultural categories like caste, creed, gender, sex and so on. The minority writers and their literature documents and chronicles their personal community experiences. It's an important and significant mark of the minorities and important concept to comprehend and intercept. Quite contrast to it, the mainstream writers takes a spiritual subject and a vast canvas.

Majority and minority are the terms used to refer systems of beliefs taken place through centuries within the Indian- subcontinents. The communities like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism are the indigenous to the subcontinent while Islam, Christianity, Judaism and Zoroastrianism are known as non-Indian-Systems originated outside the subcontinent; Islam, Judaism and Christianity have common origins and belief pattern. On the other hand, Zoroastrianian have its origin in Iran and roots in India. All these communities have many similarities and variations. The communities believe in reincarnation means all living things will die and again will be reborn. The communities also believe in 'Karma' which focuses on the idea of all actions that lead to rebirth. Religion is often used as 'Dharma' in Indian context while religion in Western.

The diversity in unity and oneness is the soyl feature of Indian–Subcontinents, is divided in many languages, religions, sects and subsects. It is thus, difficult to think of minorities and ethnic identities in this vast multicultural nation. On the other side the ethnic groups (communities) have made their own identity at cultural, traditional and societal level. Each and every entity like community, religion and language are the part and parcel of the nation. The writing of minority writers is very much important in this regard, as it expresses the uniqueness, belonging and diversity of the nations. The literary piece, voices of minority in fiction makes much contribution to the reaffirmation of people's ideas, goals and values. It is also a systematic study of cultural contact and cultural change. The literary genre, fiction written by minority writers is of special importance in this regard. The fiction helps the reader to have a glance and intimate peep into their cultural, psychological & religious level. The minorities and their overall identity, status and cultural practices are very complex, critical and unresolved.

The careful analysis and appraisal is much essential to demystify the concept and its proper care. The feelings and sensibilities of minorities and their position begin to

create a mind set at each and every level. The well known novelist D.S. Maini expresses his views on the different contexts of literature as follow (1970: P.213-214):

In fact, a most expressive evidence of a corporate mind-set is a critical reading of a people, art and literature. For in art, particularly in fiction, such a mind-set gets structured and mirrored through the very processes and energies of art. Its inner dialectic hoists the show.... In sum, it's a slow and long process of emotional orientation which in the end disorients the corporate sensibility and begins to cause problems of a deep psychological nature. Communities or minorities find themselves trapped, engulfed and victimized, both as fact and fantasy?

It is necessary to study the concept of minority community, minority voices and their role which is much important in the modern context. What is the role of minority culture in India? How do they find expression? The minority identity, division and separate status didn't affect the unity in diversity. The writing of minority writers is unique in this sense which expresses the belonging and diversity in unity. The Indian tradition holds all together inspite of their ethnic differences. The minorities though they Parsis, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims and Christians have a common bond of unity. The minorities live in any nation (India, Pakistan, Britain and U.S.) have a same affection and unity towards each other. Each community holds together with other in and across the boundaries respectively. It's the great Indian heritage has hold the entire ethnic group together since the sixty years of independence. It is thus, much important to study and listen the voices of minority community. It's the greatness of India which holds together the diversity into unity. The minorities have identity and status at one side and on the other they face invisibility, religion and its loss of identity.

The present research paper aims to study the voices of minority in general and of Parsis in particular. Bapsi Sidhwa called the emergent voice of Parsi minority. The identity of Bapsi Sidhwa rests as an internationally acclaimed novelist who writes for Parsis, women and exploitation or imbalance nature in the society. Bapsi Sidhwa born in 1938 acquired a prominent place in international literary circle.

Sidhwa is known as Pakistan's best novelist that the nation ever produced. Writing is an attempt which creates an identity and reconstructs ones subjectivity. The novel, '*The Crow Eaters*' is a novel of and about Parsis. The Zoroastrian is the supreme for Parsis

and its celebration in actual life. The Parsis followed the Zoroastrian and its guidelines towards the human values, charity and struggles to the path of Asha. Each and every Parsi community member have much proud & faith in the Zoroastrianism. Sidhwa's literature though it may be novel or short stories, it mostly figures with Parsi community and its traits prominently.

The novels like '*The Crow Eaters*', '*Ice-Candy-Man*' & '*An American Brat*' are the perfect examples of Parsi life & their community. And the short stories like '*City of Sin and Splendor*' and '*Why Do I Write*' are also autobiographical texts. For Sidhwa the novel '*The Crow Eaters*' is a beautiful story of resourceful and accommodating community. It is the community which is tucked away in the forgotten services of history. The novel mostly based on comic ideas with an extra-ordinary sense of humour which attract mostly to the reader. The novel is about the three generations of Parsi life, begins with the rise of Freddy Junglewall's life, his prosperity and settlement.

In short the philosophy of all the religions is mostly based on the moral ground. It helps to develop and update the human intellect and human experience. The writers of particularly minority community try to reinstate the position of their community members. The literature is regarded as the highest form of development. As Ngugi WA Thiong'O writes:

Literature cannot escape from the class power structures that shape our everyday life. Here a writer has no choice, whether or not he is aware of it, his works reflects one or more aspects of the intense economic, political, cultural and ideological struggles in a society. What he can choose is one or the other side in the battle filed.... What he or she cannot do is to remain natural. Every writer is a writer in politics. The only question is what and whose politics.

Bapsi Sidhwa's identity rests as a Punjabi, Parsi, Pakistani, U.S.A. writer. The writing of Sidhwa is a amalgam of a realm of conflicts and convictions, sensibilities and dignity. Sidhwa's writing is also about historical, political, socio-cultural arena of the Indian sub-continent. Sidhwa has written five novels and short stories which reveals the history of Indian subcontinent a piece of literature written by a social being for the members of the society to read and comprehend what is written and conveyed. The work of literature or the philosophy of prophets contributes to the reaffirmation of

people's ideas, goals and values. It is the only weapon which moves and shakes people and finally leads to development.

Bapsi Sidhwa very well highlights the traits in Parsi community which remains loyal to the every ruling authority. It is the ideology and preaching of Zoroastrianism changed the life of Parsis which believes in monotheism. The Zoroastrian philosophy is based on the philosophy of Prophet Zarathustra who raised his voice against plurality of Gods. According to him 'lord Ahura Mazda' is the only one God whom all the Parsis worship. It is the Zoroastrian religion basically highlights / focus on the idea of good thought, good words and good deeds. The most important feature of the tiny Parsi Community is they still abide their promise / word which they gave to the Indian Prince, Yadav Rana. They also conditioned not to converse others into faith and the reason Parsis don't allow conversion to their faith. It is the dominant reason the Parsis population is decreasing day by day. The novelist tried to immortalize the endangered species by capturing its Quint essential ethos in her fictions '*The Crow Eaters*' and '*An American Brat*' respectively. '*The Crow Eaters*' and '*An American Brat*' are also known as the Parsi novels which deal with Parsi customs, ceremonies, beliefs, superstitions, rituals, myths and legends. In the author's note of '*The Crow Eaters*', Sidhwa wrote;

Because of deep-rooted admiration for my diminishing community and an enormous affection for it - this work of fiction has been a labour of love.

The recipient of many national and international award novelists Bapsi Sidhwa is the most deserved post colonial writer. The identity of Sidhwa is a smooth, humorous and adventurous writer, who draws the reader's attention from one culture to the other. The appearance of the writer in the novel is unique who appears through the bildungsroman technique. It is the basis of each and every novel though it may be postcolonial and minority novel.

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