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Research Article

SASTHI BRATA AS AN INTELLECTUAL REBEL RICHLY PROJECTING THEME OF EAST-WEST ENCOUNTER IN HIS FICTIONAL WORLD: AN APPRAISAL

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ABSTRACT

This paper throws light on the fictional world of Sasthi Brata, who has portrayed East-West encounter because of the westernized impact, on the other hand the conflict between East and West is considered to be the pet theme among Indian writers, this made Brata bring out the possible synthesis of the two culture and he occupies a unique place in Indian writing through his style, Sasthi's hero's in the fictional world differs from that of others because the conflicts arise within the how himself whereas in others, the conflict arise between the characters and others.

Key Words:

conflict, culture, East-West Encounter,
individuality, traditional feeling,
intellectual rebel

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INTRODUCTION

Indian English literature is now recognized as a distinguished entity. As a body of literary works written by Indians in English, it does significantly express Indian ethos and Indian sensibility. Being defined as “a by-product of the eventful encounter between India and Indian ethos on the one hand and England, the English language and western culture on the other” (Naik 1), Indian English Literature is now two hundred years old and it is nothing but “literature written originally in English by authors Indian by birth, ancestry or nationality” (Naik 2). In the words of Radhakrishnan, Indo-Anglian fiction, which has attained a pride of place in Indian English Literature, is totally Indian in theme and treatment and its message, if any, is essentially Indian while its appeal may extend beyond the India border because of the human element it depicts.

Various writers of Indian English fiction like Bankim Chandra, R.C.Dutt, Tagore, Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan have enriched Indo-Anglian fiction by portraying a wide variety of Indian life both ‘individual’ and ‘social’. Indian English writers are said to have tried their level best and done their utmost to render the rich cultural values of India in English in a bid to make the westerners understand them in its right perspective. C.N.Reddy observes:

“Indo-Anglian literature is not essentially different in kind from Indian literature.

It is a part of it, a modern facet of that glory which, commencing from the Vedas, has continued to spread its mellow light, now with greater and now with lesser brilliance under the inexorable vicissitudes of time and history” (Iyengar 388).

As regards the growth and development of fiction in India, the pioneers in the field were some English men who took Indian materials as their themes and scope of work. For example, such writers as Sir William Jones, John Layden, Sir Edwin Arnold and a few others believed in the past glory of India. Some Indian writers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Tagore, To ru Dutt, Sri Aurobindo, and Sarojini Naidu also presented the same so that the culture of the country could best be interpreted in English. While Tagore and Sarojini Naidu enriched the age with social and cultural perspectives, the writers like Sri Aurobindo laid focus on philosophical, religious and cultural perspectives reflected thereby in their literary creations. *K.S.Venkataramani's Murugan the Tiller, Mulk Raj Anand's Untouchable, and Two Leaves and a Bud, R.K.Narayan's The Dark Room and The Bachelor of Arts, Raja Rao's Kanthapura, Nehru's An Autobiography and The Discovery of India,*

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Gandhi's writings, Ezekiel's poems and A.K.Ramanujan's poetical works are found to be almost a mine of stimulating thought on political, social, economic, personal, cultural and also spiritual issues. All these writers used alienation as a recurrent theme and also presented the problem of East-West encounter. Among them, Arun Joshi, Chaman Nahal, Anita Desai and Sasthi Brata are considered to be prominent writers giving vent to the anguished cries of man. It can be easily understood from the following statement of Radhakrishnan;

"... the anguished cry of a man who finds himself an alien, a stranger in his own world, a stranger in his own life; the cry of one who has lost his identity and roots" (P 132).

The conflict between East and West is the pet theme of any Indian writer writing in English. Some writers have presented the East-West relations as one of the conflicts dwelling upon the basic difference between the two modes of life, while some others have stressed on the similarities and hunted at the possible synthesis of the two cultures. R.K.Narayan in his novel *The Vendor of Sweets* portrays the same conflict. Sasthi Brata is one among those writers who have portrayed and presented rather richly the conflict between East-West encounter and the possible synthesis of the two cultures.

Every human being has his own individuality, which is otherwise branded as personality. Individuality of personality is shaped by education and environment. When once it is formed, it will be very difficult to alter it. When an individual comes in contact with a new environment, he must adjust his individuality to the new situation. When he is not able to do so, he will feel as a stranger in the new environment. This creates a lot of socio-psychological problems to him and to the people who come into contact with him. He feels a sense of losing his identity, which subsequently makes him unhappy, pessimistic, disturbed and finally unfit for any natural mode of life. As a result, the East-West encounter seems to emerge. This gets reflected very beautifully as the main theme in all such notable novels of Sasthi Brata as 1.*The Sensuous Guru* (1967), 2.*My God Died Young* (1969), 3.*Confessions of an Indian Women Eater* (1973), 4.*He and She* (1973) and 5.*A Search for Home* (1975).

Sasthi Brata, the intellectual rebel, occupies a unique place in Indian writing in English. He is considered by many as a pornographic writer. But a Careful study of his novels reveals his transparent honesty, in sight and understanding and proves that he is not a writer of third rate. The East-West encounter found in his novels creates a situation to ascertain his self-identity. His long-standing association with the two cultures (East and West) has lent a sharp edge treatment to his writings. Brata's *My God Died Young* in his second book, the aim of writing this book is recorded in the author's note to the novel thus:

"I wrote this book to try to underst and myself. I imagined that quest would be of interest to others. For it reveals a world at once distinct and foreign. I could not have written it living in India. So, I have addressed it to those who live and think the way I do" (P 6).

My God Died Young catapulted Sasthi Brata to International literary fame. What is stated in the *New York Times* is as follows:

"This is the story of a young Indian, angrily rebelling against the pervading hypocrisy of the Indian social set up and having the guts to go forth and seek a different, more honest life style in another land struck instant rapport, with a new generation of readers making 'My God Died Young' a big seller" (P 6).

This appears to be the autobiography of Sasthi Brata, the intellectual rebel without a country and one who tries to find his roots. With transparent honesty, insight and understanding, he, himself records that 'it is a personal treatment'. Though the description of the mating game seems to be the highlight of this novel, the theme of East-West Encounter runs as the undercurrent in the novel.

Sasthi Brata, the hero of the novel, was born of rich Bengali Brahmin parents in Calcutta. He was the fourteenth child of his parents. The family was a large one. There were several widowed aunts, his mother's step mother, cousins and a few distant relatives in the household. He was the most affectionate son of his mother. She encouraged him a dependence on her which he found it difficult to shake off even afterwards. The picture of the Sasthi's home has given him the traditional feelings of 'East' at the beginning. The author has taken pains to describe Sasthi's home as "a man's house is an extension of himself. Describe it and you have described him" (Wellek 221). At the age of ten, he was sent to an English medium boarding school. It was a non-conformist institution. After his schooling, he joined the Presidency College, Calcutta. During his college days, he fell in love with a girl, 'Apu'. But they met with failure in their love affair. She was forced to marry another man selected by her parents, an aspect of ancient eastern culture. Sasthi went abroad and settled in England. There he met an American girl. He felt that she was the only girl who was very close to him in her adult life. When she left England, he followed her to America to renew his relationship with her, but she denied that they have ever achieved any unity in their relationship. He returned to England with a feeling of total unrest.

When Sasthi Brata returned to India, his parents who were anxious to see him married, selected a girl Sita Bondopadhyya, an M.Sc. Student in Botany. He went with his parents to attend the formal function of seeing the girl. Again, there is an aspect of eastern culture. But when his mother asked him if he wanted to marry that girl, he kept silent. It seems that he did not marry that girl and left the country once again. Sasthi Brata had the perpetual feeling of strained resentment with the world and lack of control over the mechanics of life. In his boyhood days, he was subjected to the twin pressure of a Brahmin home, a symbol of eastern culture and a non-conformist Boarding school, a symbol of western culture. From his childhood days, Sasthi Brata's ambition was to become a westernised character which he seemed to have inherited from his father. Though "his father never visited Europe, he had ample opportunities to be exposed to a western educational system and approach to life. He was all praise for the British" (P 31). So, his father sent him to the western type of boarding school, where he had absorbed the sophistication and culture of the western society.

In *A Search for Name too*, the author is the hero. The sufferer is the hero only and around him are many characters who either accelerate his total failure step by step or the causes for East-

West encounter. In both the novels, the heroes belong to Brahmin family. The families are highly orthodox in nature. In both the novels, the hero is sent to Christian Mission Schools where order and discipline find no meaning to the hero and only accelerate his own destruction. In both the novels, the hero loves a girl but the girl is married to somebody selected by her parents. Again, this love failure makes the hero think about the west. Then the hero marries a girl arranged by his parents but that marital happiness gets shattered soon. The hero goes abroad and there also he finds it difficult to move with others because others treat him as an alien. The hero returns to home land but here the people look at him as a stranger as he returns from quest and thus finds encounter between East and West by losing his self-identity between East and West by losing his self-identity in the country of his birth.

To conclude, both the novels *My God Died Young* and *A Search for Home* give a detailed account of the early life of the heroes and about the forces that led to their destruction. The main difference between Sasthi's hero and the heroes of other novels dealing with the East-West encounter is this. The conflict is within the hero himself always in Sasthi's novels, whereas it is between the hero and other characters in others' words.

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