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CHAMAN NAHAL'S NOVEL THE ENGLISH QUEEN: A STUDY

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Abstract:-Chaman Nahal is the one of the outstanding novelist of the Seventies (1970's) he worked as a professor of English at Delhi University: he wrote eight novels four of them constitute the Gandhi quartet. Azadi (1975) is one of these four novels and is added the epilogue (1993) which serve as the epilogue to the whole quartet.

Keywords:Chaman Nahal's Novel , English Queen , law of spirituality and philosophy .

INTRODUCTION

ChamanNahal who belongs to second generation of Indian English Novelists shot into fame with the publication of his novels among them Azadi (1975) the novel won the coveted Sahitya Academy award of the year.

India known as the law of spirituality and philosophy was the birth place of some religions, which even exit 500 religious developer in India.

In Indian English fiction satirical novels like those of Swift are few and far between. The most remarkable ones are ChamanNahal's The English Queen (1979) and Ved Mehta's Delinquent Chacha (1963) equally satirical and comical designed to be the reader's favorite. Of the two, I propose to concentrate on the English Queens which deals with the Queen's English of Indian origin as practiced by the anglo-maniacs here. Nahal happens to be the trend-setter as a social satirist because of the pronounced characteristics of satire in this novel. The present novel is intended to pooh-pooh the anglo-mania of the Indian elite, particularly the female of the species. Their fads, shams, snobbery, vanity and presumptuousness are the main target of satire in this novel. In fact, the so-called English queens are neither English nor queens. At best they are mock English and mock queens very much conspicuous by their mannerism and ridiculous in their silly superciliousness.

The English Queen

The English Queens excels in humour and light hearted satire. The elements of fun, comicality, ribaldry and irreverence smoothen the edge of irony making the satire soft and palatable. Here the satire directed against the anglicized Indians, the black British committed to perpetuating cultural imperialism and un-Indian sing themselves. The author has pinpointed six such types of elite Indian women who are bitten by the English bug. They are out to preserve the legacy of the British mannerisms for the sake of superiority and self-aggrandizement. During the British rule it was the

insulating attitude of the British men that alienated them from the natives in India. Curiously enough, in free India the black Memsahibs are alienating themselves from the others, as retainers of colonial conscience. The author has ironically called them the English Queens and exposed jokingly and ironically their thousand and one vanities.

To begin with, the coronation of the queens on the eve of India's independence, i.e., 14 August 1947 by no other man than Lord Mountbatten himself. The author's Lord Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas Mountbatten, ICE, KCG, BCD reads out the Royal character which says that from the 15 August 1947 the British people will cease to use English as their tongue. The British are gifting the language to India, and henceforth the Indians alone will have the sole copyright of it. And more, for the safe transfer of linguistic power, the King-in-Parliament has created a new order in India, to be known as the order of the Queens, to which six Indian females will be appointed. But as the Viceroy has something up his sleeve, he signs the character with a single 't' to make it vulnerable and untenable in a court of law. The character, thus, is an amusing piece of farce.

Equally amusing is the selection of the six principal queens committed to swear in English, sing in English and die with only an English word on their lips. And quite interestingly, such Anglophiles are found in Chit-Chit Industries Emporium where sales girls are always chit-chatting with each other. The ideal ones are sworn-in. The viceroy touches the kneeling ladies at the shoulder with his sword and places a small diadem on their heads and administers them the oath of office with the words, "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog". It becomes the sacred slogan of these queens. As a matter of fact, this particular sentence was used in routine typing lessons in every typing school. It has all the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet. Thus, it is only fit and proper that the newly designated English Queens should swear by the whole length of the language they are inheriting.

The description of the English Queens is a marvelous exercise in irony, mock-heroism and humour. The first queen is from among the teachers of English represented in the novel by Miss Sumitra Pandey, a spinster and snob. This Queen's English is characterized by her pronunciation of 'Lawrence' as 'Lawrence', 'Shelley' as 'sell-eh', and 'Shakespeare' as six pair. The second queen from the army circle is the wife of Brigadier Bhupesh Chopra, Renuka Chopra remarkable for her ingrained imperialistic manners and squeaky English. The third queen-an Anglo-Indian Caroline Oaks is proud of her English ancestry. Her great grandfather, a Yorkshire man had married a Mohammadar lady in India and their offspring had married a second generation Christian convert from an untouchable Hindu. Another queen is Barbara Smiles, a pure English waitress who had come to India with her Indian husband and Anglo-Indian son. Her romance with her husband ended in divorce, still she wrote romances about India for her foreign readers. The fifth principal queen is Shrimati Hemakant Mathur, wife of a retired judge. She is the honorary director of a woman's organization called 'Rape While Awake'. The sixth queen is Sardarni Satwant Kaur, a neorich, most fashionable, flippant and extravagant. She has the remarkable knack of making her English most mellifluous by suffixing 'ji' to any word or sentences she speaks. Thus, yes ji, no ji' you have dinner with us ji, I am OK ji' etc.

The story or the irony of the story is that Rekha, a Lecturer in English and the daughter of the English wqueen Renuka Chopra, affronting her destiny falls headlong in love with a poor Indian musician. Strangely enough, the great Anglophile has given birth to a great Indophile, a True Swadeshi, as it were. All the queens of Bide-a-Wee colony are shocked to hear of Rekha's choice. Brigadier Chopra is out to shoot poor man. But realizing that discretion is the better part of valour, he decides to give Rekha his Gymkhana Sermon which unfortunately falls flat on her. Then he throws in her way several army officers – a wing Commander, a Lieutenant Commander, a cavalry Major all eager to marry her while Rekha equally eager not to marry any of them.

The people of the basti, the supporters of Rekha's prospective bridegroom decide to teach a lesson to the rich colonizers of Bide-a-Wee first, they let loose their buffaloes, then their pigs who ruin their gardens and create a havoc in the colony. Then the maids strike work in their master's houses. To crown it all, they arrange an all-night hymn singing and chanting on the amplifier in full volume. It continues for days together until at last the parents of Rekha as well as the colony queens agree to the marriage. The English Queen's daughter is married to an Indian commoner in the vulgar

Indian fashion.

The barat is a curious assortment of all kinds of entertainer. First comes a tumbler. Then a juggler. He throws an egg high up into air and catches it bang on a plate without breaking the egg. Next comes a conjurer. He tosses an egg up as high as he can and egg goes out of sight. And the wonder of wonders, it is recovered from the bodice of queen Sumitra Pandey. Then there are the monkey show, the bear dance, the snake-charming and glass eating. Finally, a magician takes out a common louse that leaps and bounces at the trainer's hint. The Major General present on the occasion is thrilled to see its marvels. He claps saying 'Bravo, Bravo'. And lo and behold! The louse jumps a big jump and lands on the massive moustache of the Major General. The louse owner starts weeping. He demands his louse back. But the louse is lost in the jungle of the Major General's moustache. However, the louse jumps again and disappears into one of General Kalra's hairy nostrils. An ambulance is summoned to take the GERAL to hospital. Just then the louse takes another jump and taking an interior somersault comes out of the other hairy nostril and falls flat on the napkin of the owner.

Before the marriage is solemnized, Pradeep demands the Royal Character and gets the Xeroxed copy for the original which he hardly detects.

In the last chapter "The Ascent to Heaven" the story moves into the realm of the supernatural and Pradeep turns into an avatar and becomes Lord Chetana. As the latest of the incarnations, his purpose is to awaken the ignorant Indians from their slumber by exposing the Machiavellian strategy of Lord Mountbatten. The gods above can't tolerate Indian's cheap imitation of English mannerisms. Naturally, Lord Chetana reprehends the well-groomed Indian men and women who can't complete a single sentence in Hindi without throwing in a few words of English. They are equally reprehensible for sending their children to American institutions. Says Lord Chetana, "Living in India, eating Indian food, breathing Indian air, an Indian couple is unsure of the education of their child. They want to make, a small American of him, little realizing that his true dignity lies in living and dying as an Indian". (p.158).

Then Lord Chetana presents a series of tableaux first, an Indian woman feigning her Indian background to Judaic Greek which is preposterous. The another Indian Woman talking to an Irish woman and like a foreigner renouncing 'lungi' as lunji'. Then there is an LDC (Lower Division Clerk) from Tamil Nadu who despises Hindi in preference to the noble language English. The next tableau shows a college in Oxford with people of different nationalities who are celebrating a valedictory function at the end of their term. While the Japanese recites Hiko poetry, the Thai lady presents shadow dance, the Spanish couple perform Bolero dance but the Indian gentleman has nothing Indian to offer. And finally as Lord Chetana flies up in the air on way to heaven, the Royal Charter slips off his hand and cruising towards the Bide-a-Wee Colony it falls into the lap of Sumitra Pandey.

The satire in this novel is on social, administrative and campus levels, the main thrust being English mannerisms. The author's description of the sales girls is delightfully ironical. He says, it was called Chit-Chat Industries emporium for the simple reason that its management insisted that the sales girls be ever chit chatting with each other. The ideology behind the place was that of Gandhiji and all items sold there were supposedly made by hand, ye the sales girls themselves came in machine-spun saris and blouses and they knew hardly any Hindi' (p.34). They were the best illustrations of the worst Indians basking in the glamour of self-alienation in their own land. Underlining women's vanity the author says about Renuka who is proud of her daughter's upbringing and ways. A sample, Rekha loves funerals and keeps waiting for someone to die to make yet another trip to her hairdresser, her manicurist, her masseur, and her beautician for the threading session, and clad in a freshly laundered white silk sari and black pumps. And holding a wreath in hand, she is the first to arrive at the cremation that with a perfectly sad, doleful look. (p.108).

Similarly the author mocks at the hypocrisy of the Hindus saying, "A pig was an unclean animal and a high caste Hindu wouldn't touch it except to eat it" (p.95). equally humorous and ironical is the author's description of women's opting for a new birth control device. To quote... 'There was the pill, but could a poor Indian woman remember taking it every day when her mind was preoccupied with remembering the fasts she was supposed to observe? No, a chastity belt alone was

the answer. And the one with a combination lock on it and not a key. The bullies that they were the men could extract the key from the woman' (p.114).

The English Queen virtually begins with SumitraPandey and ends with her. The author, himself a teacher of English with his intimate knowledge of his class, has a nagging dislikes for the snobs and hypocrites of the English language. He laughs at them and we laugh with him. For example, the subject of SumitraPandey's dissertation for her Ph.D was the use of the Hyphen in Lawrence's Major Poetry; and her curious finding was that words which didn't appear on the page. But it was implicit in every line he wrote, words having unspoken prefixes and suffixes attached to them. How marvelous! The irony against the researcher is obvious. SumitraPandey's presumptuousness is hollow and hypocritical.

Again as principal expert at the interview for selection of lecturers for Ashoka College "SumitraPandey' main concern was with the candidate's awareness of his English heritage. Who was Aurobindo? Who wrote Gitanjali? Answer to such questions in the affirmative immediately disqualified the candidate. The ideal candidate replied like:

Who was Tiger?
I don't know'
Has any Indian ever won the Noble prize for literature?
No'
Is there any literature in the vernacular language of India?
None;
What is Hindi?
It is some kind of a fruit'
Have you ever eaten it?
No,
What are mangoes?
Never heard of them.
Where is KanyaKumari located?
In Kashmir.
Have you heard of the river Yamuna?
No
And the Ganges?
I'm afraid not/
Which is the most sacred river in the world?
The Thames. (p.46)

The satire herein looks herein looks Shavian. It tickles and teases; it delights and devastates all at once. ChamanNahal's message is loud and clear unalloyed condemnation of the Indian people's attitude to denigrate Indians and upholding the positive values.

The author has satirized the administrative machinery and its style of functioning. There is a beautiful example of a D.T.C. bus hijacked by students which knocked down a tonga and two of the five passengers were killed on the spot. The Lieutenant Governor of Delhi praised the students for their skill. After all, three persons in the tonga had survived. He gave the student driver of that bus a merit certificate of appreciation at a special investiture.(p.54).

The campus scene is a marvelous mixture of humour, irony and farce. One group of agitating students wants the voting age to be lowered to one day every soul that had graced this troubled planet for twenty four hours or more to exercise franchise. Their president exhorted the students to suspend their studies for one year. In any case, since they only wasted their time inside the classroom, they might as well waste it outside(p.57). then another group of students came and the leader accused the president of the Delhi University students Union of being a counter revolutionary. He was in the pay of CIA. He exhorted the students not to cut their classes. He praised Indira Gandhi saying she had dismembered Pakistan. She had dismembered the irritating name of Ceylon and changed it to Sri Lanka. She had dismembered Nixon, as it was her influence that made the Senate

Watergate Committee recommend impeachment against him. She had dismembered and created a cancer in the stomach of the Chinese premier, Chou-En-Lai. And given time, she would dismember poverty too. And to top it all 'the students leader here said that no political speech in the sub-continent was complete without weeping. Since he had no talent for it, he had engaged a professional weeper. And the weeper did his job weeping bitterly, convulsively and uncontrolled into the mike'(p.59). The satire is biting indeed.

But The English Queen has also broad humor and soft satire. It is evident in Brigadier Chopra's way of giving his top serious commands to his wife, Renuka. To quote, "He shouted for Renuka and ordered her to fall in and then marched her around the living room several times, shouting by the right or by the left or about turn or mark time. Finally, he brought the panting woman to a snap halt, and keeping her at the attention, ordered her to prepare dinner while he too Rekha out for a drive' (p.87). There is another example, a bit less humorous in the description of suitors for Rekha. To possess Rekha, 'a wing commander was ready to crash his MIG on an army target in our next war with Pakistan. A cavalry major was only pining to burn inside his burning tank. All this to provide posthumous medal and a life pension and gratuity for the dependant (i.e., Rekha the wife) so that ... she would shake hands with the president at the republic day parade, while receiving her deceased husband's medal'.(p.88)

ChamanNahal's comic spirits is seen even in small phrases and sentences. His JJ Colony', an abbreviation of Jhuggi-Jhonpri Colony, handle bar mustache, Rape while awake the Quick fox prayer (the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog) can serve as suitable illustrations. To add to the list, Barbara Smiles Changes her name to Barbara Sighs. The barat came only at ten o'clock, punctually three hours behind time. SardarniSatwantKaur's 'let'ssocho about it. No, Ji, let's not our tempera na' etc.

The intention of the satirist is to hammer the point that the true dignity of an Indian lies in living and dying as an Indian.(p.158) He warns the people against the Machiavellian politics of Lord Mountbatten who confides to his men, 'If the hoax works, we will have recovered with the other hand what we have given away with one. India will continue to be tethered to the feet of England for all time to come'(p.33). But all the same, the author wants to debunk the humbug of purely native India; the parochialism of such an India, its crudeness, its bullying tactics to browbeat an adversary. Its linguistic muddle, and its poverty that most people hug as an alibi for laziness and indolence.

In The English Queen ChamanNahal's aim is positive, to correct the excess of anglomania among the Indian elite. Though women are the butt of his satire men are surely not holier than them. Like Jonathan Swift, though he has exposed the fool and lashed the knave.

Yet, Malice never was his aim;
He lashed the vice, but spared the name.
No individual could resent,
Where thousands equally were meant.

The named English queens are only types and not individuals. Fed up with the new breed of surrogate English men and women of Indian origin, ChamanNahal, like Caliban in Shakespeare's The Tempest seems to suggest.

You taught me language, and my profit on it,
Is, I know how to curse; the red plague rid you,
For learning me your language:1

The English Queens is a pioneer satirical novel in Indian English literature which might have been inspired by Ved Mehta's Delinquent Chacha (1963). According to Iyengar, 'It is a satire on Indians who have madly gone foreign. Delinquent Chacha nurses "a nostalgia for the lost empire' and wants to turn himself into an Englishman. He talks of the innate superiority of Britons' (p.64) and says to the extent that the sun set permanently on India the day the British left it. But Whereas Delinquent Chacha is a caricature of people, The English Queens, according to Iyengar, is another

kind of novel altogether, observant, satirical, a brilliantly engineered expose of the urban centered upper middle class Indians who still ape the speech and moves of the something ruling English class in India. What Nirad Choudhari has done in the withering prose of *The Continent of Circe*, Chaman Nahal has done no less devastatingly through the medium of fiction. The writer of *The English Queens* is, no doubt, a real Indian king in his nationalistic fervor and pragmatic rationale. His intended message for the mock English queens as well as their male counterpart is 'stop aping'.

CONCLUSION

The English Queens excels in humour and light hearted satire. The elements of fun, comicality, ribaldry and irreverence smoothen the edge of irony making the satire soft and palatable. Here the satire directed against the anglicized Indians, the black British committed to perpetuating cultural imperialism and un-Indian sing themselves. The author has pinpointed six such types of elite Indian women who are bitten by the English bug. They are out to preserve the legacy of the British mannerisms for the sake of superiority and self-aggrandizement. During the British rule it was the insulating attitude of the British men that alienated them from the natives in India. Curiously enough, in free India the black Memsahibs are alienating themselves from the others, as retainers of colonial conscience. The author has ironically called them the English Queens and exposed jokingly and ironically their thousand and one vanities.

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