



COGITATION OF TIMES IN THE NOVELS OF UPAMNYU CHATTERJEE AND AMIT CHAUDAHRI

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ABSTRACT

Time is one of the most prominent issues of all philosophies and literatures in the world throughout the human history. Deliberations regarding time entity are numerous and continuous, still what time in reality is or literature is still a black hole or whole. The question remains unanswered. The unique and constant place of time in literature has been an invariable centre of attention of all the acclaimed literary figures in the world. On the contrary time entity is always neglected by the research fraternity and especially in an Indian context it is less acknowledged, Indian English literature is no exception to it. Therefore the researcher aims in this paper to investigate the cogitation of time in the selected novels of Upmanyu Chatterji and Amit Chaudhari.

KEYWORDS:

Cogitation – Reflection, Deliberation

Time – philosophical, social, psychological, scientific construct

Temporality – Time represented in the novel

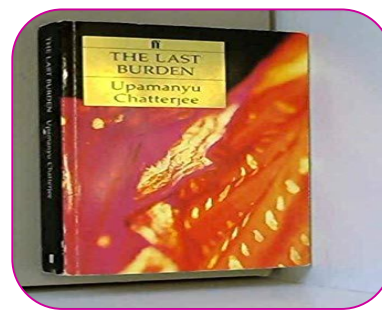
Globalised time – Decade of nineties

Narrative time – Story time, author's time, reader's time

INTRODUCTION:

Time is one of the most prominent issues of all philosophies and literatures in the world throughout the human history. Time is not only a dilemma but it has come as a mystery from the time immemorial. The pace of seconds, minutes and hours and impossibility to return to time passed has made time more mysterious and fascinating for philosophers as well as writers all over the world. What is time then in reality or literature is still a black hole or whole, the question remains unanswered. In the words of Thomas Mann, a modernist writer and German Nobel Laureate in literature, "What is time? It is a secret - lacking in substance and yet almighty." (The Magic Mountains, 1924) His opinion about time is exactly similar to Roman church father, St. Augustine's definition of time in his famous autobiography *Confessions* written almost before two thousand years before. His definition of time enumerates well the complex nature of time, "What, then, is time? I know well enough what it is, provided that nobody asks me; but if I am asked what it is and try to explain, I am baffled." The complexity inherent in the nature of time has remained unresolved from ages. Many authors, critics, poets have strived hard to resolve this mystery and dichotomy of time in their works.

Most of the critics won't deny the fact that literature is reflection of the society from which it originates; this statement is more precise about the post-modernistic literature and the genre novel



itself is associated with the time and change in life after industrialization during eighteenth century. The elements of the novel such as theme, story, characters, setting (time and place), and narrative techniques have drawn immense attention of the research scholars and research students. Extensive research has been undertaken regarding the roles and impact of these elements on the meaning of the novel. There is no argument about the significance of all these elements in the novel but the time entity which is binding factor of all these elements is not focused and studied in detail as it is expected, time has always been studied along with space as a factor of setting. The unique and constant place of time in literature has been an invariable centre of attention of all the acclaimed literary figures in the world. On the contrary time entity is always neglected by the research fraternity and especially in an Indian context it is less acknowledged, Indian English literature is no exception to it. Therefore the researcher aims in this paper to investigate the cogitation of time in the selected novels of Upmanyu Chatterji and Amit Chaudhari. Researcher has selected three most celebrated novels of both the authors. Hypothesis for this paper is “Temporality and Narrative are closely related”. As Paul Ricoeur mentions, “time becomes human to the extent that it is articulated through a narrative mode, and narrative attain its full meaning when it becomes a condition of temporal existence.” (p.52 Time and Narrative, Vol.1) . The research paper aims at elucidation of representation of time in the novels in relation to the conceptual complexity of time, philosophically constructed. Time in the novel indicates to the period in which a story takes place that is narrative time which in turn refers to the cultural, historical and chronological factors adjoining the centre of narrative. Analysis of the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee and Amit Chaudhari keeping in view the element of time will provide the varied perspectives of time in the selected novels and project the inevitable presence of element of time in all the elements of fiction including narrative strategy. Chatterjee and Chaudhari have depicted in minute details the tales of the globalized times in India in their novels. In this research paper researcher will attempt to analyse the reflections of times in the selected novels of Chatterjee and Chaudhari, which will enhance the understanding of time as an element of novel in general and role of time in particular in the selected novels.

CHATTERJI AND CHAUDHARI IN THE ARENA OF INDIAN ENGLISH LITERATURE

Upmanyu Chatterji’s career as a writer as well as an administrative officer commenced on the threshold of the globalized time in India (1983) “Since then, Chatterjee turned “bureaucrat by day and author after office for three decades.” (<https://www.careerguide.com/blog/career-story-upamanyu-chatterjee-author-ias-officer>, 20/03/2018, 7.30am). The master of political satire and dark humour though received recognition late. Chatterjee was awarded the *Sahitya Akademi Award* in 2004. Amit Chaudhari’s rise as a new star in the galaxy of Indian English literature also coincided with the ingress of globalization in India. His notable achievements are Betty Trask Award which was his first prize in 1991, Commonwealth writers prize for Best first Book (Eurasia) in 1992 and a runner up award for the 1991 Guardian Fiction Prize for his first novel ‘A Strange and Sublime Address’, the Southern Arts Literature prize 1993 for his second novel ‘Aftnoon Raag’ are in concord with the early phase of globalized time in India.

While all other Indian English authors of nineties were indulged in the themes of colonialism and post-colonial socio-political situation, migration and resulting identity crisis, multiculturalism, economic inequality, family saga , the novels of both selected authors, Upmanyu Chatterji and Amit Chaudhari reflect the criss-cross undercurrents of the contemporary India or India during the globalization period. “One feature that links these two writers is that both of them wrote novels that would fit the description of “tales about time” as opposed to “tales of time” (Ricoeur 1:101).

Amit Chaudhari’s novels lend themselves to theorising and he himself often does it. However, by themselves , they are a delightful read even when they are not overlaid with any theory. One of the things for which they can be profoundly enjoyed is the rendering of the physicality of space in his novels. (S.Shukla & A.Shukla 9)

The projection of Calcutta in Chaudhari’s novels and Madna and Welfare State in Chatterji’s novels not only uses the spatial dimension but also emphasizes temporality as the basic structure of fiction.

Temporality not only emerge as the part of setting along with space but also it dominates all other elements of the fiction, theme, story, narration, narrative strategy, characters and even space. All these elements are handled discreetly by the intangible time. Criss-cross, crosscutting issues of globalized time in India are handled perspicaciously by both the authors.

COGITATIONS OF TIMES IN THE NOVELS

Cambridge dictionary defines the verb cogitate as the act of thinking deeply and carefully about a subject. After pondering over the novels of Upamanyu Chatterjee and Amit Chaudhari, various aspects of time have been found ruminated in the works. The apt amalgamation of social time, historical time, political time, psychological time of the characters which forms the part of narrated time as viewed through author's time and interpreted through reader's time makes these novels tales of globalized time in India. Authors seem to deliberate over the real meaning of globalized time in their works. Globalised time is prominently reflected in all the six novels of both authors but the globalized time in Upamanyu Chatterjee's two novels *English August* and its sequel *Mammaries of the Welfare State* is globalized time in Indian bureaucracy, economics, politics, administration and society, it is time in the external world during the decade of nineties, maybe as viewed through his own eyes as an IAS officer and articulated through his Protagonist's voice, Agastya Sen. Although Upamnyu Chatterjee focuses upon psychological time and consciousness of time of Agastya Sen in *English August*, he had laid more emphasis on relation between globalized time in Indian society and bureaucracy which was trapped in empirical time. In his second novel *the last burden*, Upamnyu Chatterjee has moved from impact of globalized time on society to impact of globalized time on Indian family system, affection and hierarchies in relationships and especially the duties of children towards their aging parents. Upamnyu Chatterjee's third novel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State* which is sequel of his first novel *English August* portrays the deteriorating condition of Welfare State in globalized time. A newly recruited IAS officer, Agastya Sen in *English August* has settled in civil services, after eight years of service in Madna, his first posting and later in other parts of the state in the novel *The Mammaries of the Welfare State*. A young recruit, Agastya Sen in *English August* is converted into an established experienced officer in *Mammaries of the Welfare State*. Instead of changing his views about the time for better, his views about the time are following the law of thermodynamics of entropy, set system as well his views and behaviour are worsening with time.

Chatterjee's two novels *English August* and its sequel *Mammaries of the Welfare State* comment upon the failure of the policy of globalization in Welfare State that is India at political, economic, education, infrastructure, bureaucratic level leading to the increased disparity between urban and rural people, educated and uneducated mob, skilled vs. unskilled workers, computer literate vs. Computer illiterate employees, rich and poor sections of the society, cosmopolitan youths vs. Rural youngsters, agrarian economy vs. IT economy, foreign returned youths vs. native youths resulting in the division of country into innumerable, incompatible fragments suspicious and jealous of each other. These innumerable sections of the society wished to supersede one another in this rat race of the twenty first century. The time of turmoil, dissatisfaction, suspicion, hatred among the sections of the society leading to enmity aroused out of globalised time is reflected in his two masterpieces of satire.

Amit Chaudhari's all selected novels in comparison with Upamanyu Chatterjee's novels are on the contrary family sagas during globalized time in India screening an assortment of times through the eyes of his various protagonists Jayojit in *a new world*, Sandeep in *a strange and sublime address* and anonymous Protagonist in *Afternoon Raag*. They converse about effects of globalized time on broader spectrum of family life. Globalised time brought with itself culture and thought process of the West which affected and changed relationship structures in families, cultural values, food habits, thinking, marriage system, ambitions of the youth, displacement of the families etc.

The protagonist of the novel *a new world* Jayojit Chatterji returns to Calcutta with his son Bonny a year after his divorce, to spend time with his parents. Jayojit is baffled as he is not accustomed to daily rhythm of his parents as well his son Bonny who lives with his mother in California. He is rather facing

troubled times on the backdrop of his divorce with Amala, his disintegratedness from his son, his unfamiliarity with his own parents and house, makes him feel that he has rather entered a new world of new times. Nothing has changed externally, not even the behaviour of his son or parents towards him still the passing of time has transformed his internal world and infused it with new time. The two months span of vacation is narrated in detail by third person omniscient narrator, nothing noteworthy happens in almost two hundred pages if we think in terms of actions and cause and effect. But it is a summer feast for the readers, the readers experience the summer holidays in Calcutta, Bengali house, savour upon the Bengali delicacies prepared by Indian mother. They also experience the shower of grandparents' affection towards their grandchild and concern about their own divorcee son. The dialogues of Jayojit a professor of Economics in USA and his father, an ex-army man discloses the varied aspects of Indian economy, pros and cons of globalization and liberalization policy. Jayojit's vision of globalized time in India has a base of theoretical construct instead of practical approach as his father had. Jayojit during his college days (past time) was attracted towards and proclaimed, socialism as a theoretical construct for social justice and equality but now in the present scenario as an economist, he is tilted towards capitalism and liberalisation. He has gained practical knowledge and is convinced that social justice is not possible in a poor country like India without economic development of masses. Still he is doubtful about the future of liberalization policy in India. Being a poor country, will it be feasible to liberalize education and medical sectors in a country, where literacy and healthcare are Primary issues of concern, will they be affordable for masses after liberalization or whether liberalization will provide these facilities in low costs to the masses. Jayojit's changing perspective about liberalization with changing time, expounds the prevalent nature of time in human life. Time teaches us new lessons of life, Time poses the questions, time provides the suitable theory, and time is the solution to all human miseries and problems. The actual time spent in the novel is only two months on the contrary narrative time in the novel swings back and forth from Jayojit's childhood to Bonny's childhood. It is confluence of three generations as well as the confluence of three generations time at once flowing and at once stuck.

Sandeep a child of nine years protagonist of the novel 'Strange and Sublime Address' is not directly commenting upon the globalized time but as he is Bombay bred boy, on school vacation to Calcutta keenly observes the difference between perceptions of time, pace of life, culture in Mumbai and Calcutta. The two versions of globalized time in two Indian cities during the same period are astonishing. Work pressure, constraints of time which were the outcome of globalization has reached Bombay little bit earlier than Calcutta. The pace of life in Calcutta was slow than Mumbai and problems of people in Calcutta trivial as compared to the problems of people in Mumbai is clear from the conversation of Sandeep's mother and her brother Chotamama. When sister was talking about her husband's constraint of time and work pressure in Bombay, Chotamama was listening patiently and sincerely.

The unnamed protagonist of the novel 'Afternoon Raag' who is student of Oxford University is continuously traversing in space and time between Oxford and Mumbai, Oxford and Calcutta where his parents resided, while comparing times in Oxford with Mumbai and Calcutta he is directly or indirectly commenting upon the globalized time in India. "afternoon raag' is the tale of a young Bengali man who is studying at Oxford University and is caught in complicated love triangle of Shehnaz and Mandira, his Oxford friends. As well memories of home haunt him due to his loneliness in foreign land though amidst many friends from all parts of the globe. The present time in Oxford University and past time of his childhood in India, Bombay are the two vertices of matrix which separates his current physical existence from his non-being the real existence and creates the illusion of separateness. As a student of literature in Oxford the protagonist's mind is always oscillating between tangible and intangible time.

CONCLUSION

All the novels of both authors reflect criss-cross undercurrents of globalized time in India which divided the society knowingly or unknowingly in numerable sections, leading them to live in different times during the same period as the process of globalization was misunderstood as the external treatise to be

implemented by the decision makers. On the contrary Vedanta philosophy in India was never against the idea of globalised time, rather it super imposed the values of universal brotherhood, peace and unity over the fragmented society. This amicability underlined in our philosophy was completely forgotten when globalisation gained the sense of only economic treatise to be signed by countries all over the world. It was forgotten that genuine globalised time is not to be viewed in the external world, if we comprehend the real sense of globalisation, globalised time exists in every person's consciousness, internal world. We all are united from the beginning in the sense that we all have presence of Bramhan or Greater Soul in our bodies in the form of consciousness which in turn affirms the idea of universal brotherhood and unity. Human beings in later stages of evolution created boundaries and walls in the form of countries, languages, culture, religion, development, caste, colour, creed etc. After witnessing large scale hatred among the people of different origins, competition for superior position in the world leading to two world wars, irrecoverable human and economic loss, bloodshed in the first half of the twentieth century, governments of different countries in the world decided to collaborate on economic level. It was a ghastly mistake because lust for wealth in the form of manmade currency has devastated not only families, kingdoms but whole countries was a recent history. World War II ended with the destruction of two cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan due to nuclear attack of USA. Still an attempt for the collaboration of countries on the foundation of money during nineties in the form of world trade organisation was theoretical decision without considering its practical applicability. Globalisation is a process which can't be imposed in the form of treatise on people in the world; it is a stream which should flow from internal consciousness of every human being on this earth resulting in ultimate peace and prosperity of the whole world. Globalized time was there, is there and will be there forever in the form of whole as mentioned in Ishawasya Upanishad, though we delete or add from that it will be there as it is. We are viewing and witnessing today the fragmented versions of globalised time, it is due to the failure in gaining Individual consciousness and Individual consciousness of time. As quoted in *Ishvasya Upanishad*

*Purnamad Purnamidam Purnat Purnamudchayate
Purnasya Purnmaday Purnamevashishayate*

(Wisdom of the Rishis, P.4)

That is whole, this is whole, this is part of that whole and that whole is the origin of that whole. If removed this whole from that whole what remains is only wholeness. This is talked about the ultimate truth and it is called as *parabrahma* or *atuchya brahma*. That is complete in itself and needs nothing for it, it is not dependant on anything, it is independent, permanent and self-reliant. When all other things are destroyed, it is still there. It knows only brightness and is far away from darkness. It is perfect and complete in itself. The same can be said about the time itself, the living being who realizes this ultimate truth, leads the complete and satisfied life and those who don't are always at the mercy of time, this is the cogitation of time observed in the selected novels of Upamnyu Chatterji and Amit Chaudhari.

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