



A Multicolored Glass – Cultural Conflict in Jai Nimbkar's Come Rain

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Abstract

A multicolor glass in the context of cultural conflict symbolizes the diverse perspectives and values within the same society. The concept multicolored glass represents the richness and complexity that arises from the diversity. A society with diverse cultural background can be a source of great creativity discovery and innovation, like a piece of multicolored glass that refracts light in various ways. However, this diversity can also be result of religious, ethnic, societal and familial conflicts which may result into loss of lives and wealth, misunderstanding, prejudices, ending of personal relationships and setting up of barriers of caste, creed and religion.

Keywords: Demeanor, Stratification, Prejudiced, Subservience, Sabotage

The word "Multicolored Glass" is a metaphor, throws light on intricate complexities of cultural dimensions and potentiality of positive interactions. The novel is an explicit bird eye view of Ann, an American girl who came to India to get settled with her husband Ravi. It could be seen as a comparative study of American and Indian culture, seen and experienced by an American girl and her suitable Indian boy and their reactions to the customs, beliefs values of the two respective countries. American culture represented by Ann and her relatives and Indian culture represented by Ravi and his relatives. The novel also illustrates the subservience of women sabotaged by strong hold by male culture. The narratives of Joanna Russ who was an American writer, academic and feminist, aptly show the of subservience woman.

"Culture is a male.... There is a female culture, but it is an underground unofficial, minor culture, occupying a small corner of what we think of officially as possible human experience. Both men and women in our culture conceive the cultures from a single point of view- the male." (What can a heroine do or why women cannot write? p.4)



The novel *Come Rain* is also an expedition of Ann from America to India and Ravi's from America to India and back to America. the expedition exposes their hidden traits and authentic selves. Ann has respect for the culture of every country. Her ideas are crystal clear and that could be seen in her narratives.

"Each culture has is appropriate demeanor and behavior and it did not make sense for anybody who was not merely a visitor, to be conspicuously different." (Come Rain, p.10)

In America the government give paternity leave to male employees so they can help look after the household. Ravi had spent many years in America and was aware of the American culture, a way of life and it seemed that he was very proud of American culture. Through the conversation between Ann, his two friends Shri and Vijoo, we come to know his hatred towards Indian way of life. He said,

"In America they are at least aware of the dangers of pollution, they are trying to do something about it. We merrily let our chemical pollutants into the air and our sewage into the water and don't know it can do harm." (ibid, p.12)

Vijoo's apt remark summarizes the Indian culture. Vijoo said,

"Talk endlessly but do nothing, that's th Indian way." (ibid, p.12)

The novel *Come Rain*, points out the difference between Indian culture and American culture but at the same time the novel talks about the difference between American people and Indian people.

"Indians are not as outgoing as Americans. They don't make friends as quickly. They take time to get used to strangers." (ibid, p.22)

"Things don't work here the way they do in America. In a joint family it doesn't matter who pays for what." (ibid, p.22)

Nuclear families are very common in America because individual freedom is given more importance. In joint families, the head controls the economics of the family, maintains communication with other people. Collective responsibility, emotional support was one of the most important aspects of the joint family. Over population, the impact of western culture, migration due to industrialization and urbanization resulted into the disintegration of joint family. In India children are very much dependent on their parents till they become marriageable. But in America and other western countries children try to become independent. So, the conflict between Ann and Ravi basically arose due to the money taken by Ravi from his



father. Ravi doesn't find it strange because in Indian culture, sons and daughters have the lawful right to inherit the wealth accumulated by father. Ann as she was brought up in a different milieu find it very strange to accept money. So, she openly expresses her resentment,

"Because I don't like to be dependent on your father." (ibid, p.24)

Ravi always wanted that Ann should live according to his notions but Ann symbolically represents the women who wanted to be independent, advocating social and financial independence. Ravi didn't like her ideas; he symbolizes typical male who was a part of patriarchy who controlled women for centuries who were given voice but were voiceless and mute sufferers of patriarchal society.

Ravi's reply shows how he wanted to control the life of his wife,

"You had better get rid of some of your American ideas if you want to live happily in this country." (ibid, p.24)

Ann's mother-in-law did not like her, there is a kind of drift between them, it may be because of education. Gitabai was the cleaning woman, at forty, she already had several teeth missing. But she was energetic, if she said that she had not lived with her parents many years before she came to India, it would probably be incomprehensible to her. Through the conversation between Ann and Gitabai, we come to know about the American culture. Ann defends American culture and Gitabai advocates Indian culture.

Ann tells her, *"In our country parents don't arrange children's marriages."* (ibid, p.27)

Gitabai- *And what happens if the parents don't approve of the match? What if the parents threaten to throw a boy out and not to support him?*

Ann, *"Most young boys are on their own earning their own living by the time they marry."* (ibid, p.28)

Through the character of Gitabai and Ann the cultural conflict arises due to the contrasting views as they represent different nations and different cultures.

Mrs. Palmer Ann's mother did not approve the marriage because she thought Ann would not adjust in India as she was from well-developed culture and India is the place where tradition, caste and creed play a pivotal role not only in the politics of the country but also in the economy. So, when she heard from her daughter about her decision to get married to a non-American, she got very angry.



“She could not imagine that Ann would ever get seriously involved with Ravi, and was outraged when Ann announced her intention not only to marry him but also to go to India with him.” (ibid, p.26)

Indian culture, with its rich history and diversity, is incredibly important for several reasons. It fosters a sense of identity and belonging, promotes unity in diversity, and provides a foundation for ethical and moral values. Furthermore, it plays a significant role in the economy through tourism and the preservation of traditional arts and crafts but Mrs. Palmer had no good opinion about India, she was prejudiced about India. This prejudice was the outcome of going away of her daughter forever to a foreign land where she never set a foot. Being possessive, she could not possess Ann even after her schooling. Her narratives show her helplessness and despair,

“Even if we grant that you that you are in love with him, it’s not enough to help you adjust to life in a country as far removed from the U.S as it could possibly be. It is one think of India as aromantic faraway country, and quite another to actually live there and put up with all the poverty and disease and dirt and heat day in and day out. the food, the absence of simple amenities you take for granted here, love won’t help you then.” (ibid, p.30)

Through the conversation between Mrs. Gogte, Ravi’s mother and Ann, we come to know the approach of Indians and Americans towards the people who are working in their houses as servants and maid servants. Ann always enquires about her family and her in-laws, sometimes she shares her personal matters with her. That is objectionable to Mrs. Gogte, Ravi’s mother,

His mother had commented,

“She has nothing to say to us, but she seems to have a lot to say to Geetabai. These Americans go overboard with their ideas of equality.....But fraternizing with them is never a good idea. They will take advantage of you every time.” (ibid, p.28)

Ann told Ravi and his mother about Geetabai, who had six children, only four of them living she lives in one room with children and her mother-in-law and her husband occasionally gets drunk and beats her. When Ravi heard this, he points out the dark side of our society,

He said, *“There is nothing extraordinary. It is the story of million other women.” (ibid, p.28)*

The remark made by Ravi shows how in Indian culture women are treated not as a human being but to vent out anger and to show the supremacy of patriarchal society. Through the



character of Mrs. Gogte, we come to know the stereotype thinking which is expressed in her dealings with other characters.

"It must be very nice for her to have a husband who changes his life-long habits to suit her instead of expecting her to adapt to the ways of his family. Even in little things it's she who dictates you who follow like a meek dog." (ibid, p.33)

"The moment you marry, your mother becomes a bit of garbage for you, to be thrown out and forgotten. Overnight you forget all that I did for you and can be rude to me for the sake of this white-faced monkey." (ibid, p.33)

The relationship between Mrs. Gogte and Ann was not a normal one the obvious reason behind the indifference was Ann was not her choice. When Ann came to India from America, she was unwelcome guest for them.

Indian culture is quite different but special than that of American, where individuality is of prime importance. Parents don't live with their siblings after certain stage of youthhood but in India, to live with parents is a matter of pride not only for the family in which he lives but in society he is considered a well cultured, decently brought up and respectable. But if son lives independently, away from his parents in the same city is considered ill-mannered, careless and disobedient. Every Indian mother expects that his son should live with the family even after his marriage. In Indian culture, what other people say is taken very seriously in America it is not the same. When Ravi decided to live separately, his mother Mrs. Gogte was outraged.

"What can people say? We live among people, don't we? We don't live in the jungle by ourselves. How we ignore what people say? And they will have a right to talk. It's not custom here for a son to make a separate home in the same town where his parents live." (ibid, p.59)

"Well, average Indian mother expects her son to marry and continue living with her." (ibid,p.33)

There is one psychological reason behind these expectations, being old the parents think that their siblings should support them in their old age. Both Ann's and Ravi's mothers wanted that their siblings should get married according to their wishes but that did not happen.

"It's just that you are not her idea of the kind of girl she wanted me to marry."

"Well, you weren't the kind of husband my mother visualized for me, but she tried to argue out of it, she wasn't rude to you." (ibid, p.33)

The narratives of Ravi and Ann show that they were not the choices of their parents, that was one of the reasons which resulted in spousal and family conflict. When two



individuals belonging to different caste, creed, religion and country decide to live in long term relationship, conflict is bound to take place. In American society it has been accepted custom for children to marry whoever they want without bothering about what their parents think. So, the parents accepted it and have learned to live with it. Indian society is very rigid society in which parents traditionally arrange their children's marriages. A son's mother at the time of his marriage is the proudest mother in the world. Naturally Ravi's mother, who is a traditional woman felt hurt because he didn't consult her about his marriage. And the most important fact that he married a girl who didn't belong to his caste or religion or race. When Ann suffered from amoebic dysentery, she was taken to Dr. Durvey who had been The Gogtes' family doctor since Ravi was a child. He suggested Ann to drink boiled water Ravi told the doctor that none of them drink boiled water. The reply given by Dr. Durvey shows how Indian people are not aware of the basic precautions like drinking pure water.

Dr. Durvey-

"Yes, but don't you think it's necessary precaution for an American who has not been immunised from birth by drinking our dirty water?" (ibid, p.34)

He says,

"We are not a people who set any value on beautifying our surroundings. The only criterion we apply to anything is utility". He further points out that, because there are no jobs for an educated girl in our village and if she becomes get a highly educated, it would be impossible to get her married".

This shows the typical Indian mentality and one of the reasons why child marriages are not uncommon. The Indian societal culture is very much influenced by the parameters based on the thinking of others.

The industrial estates which were small had now grown into enormous complexes. They brought crowd, noise, pollution as well as wealth. Sangampur was a British Army Headquarters for the region. Through the character of Ann, the author expresses her views on culture,

"Each culture has its demeanor and behavior and it doesn't make any sense for anybody who was not merely a visitor, to be conspicuously different." (ibid p.10)

Indian society is so intricate because of the diverse social structures with social stratification, where some individuals have more power, wealth and prestige. But in reality, this



wealthy group doesn't assimilate with the group that share the same strata of society. Today man has set his foot on the moon and setting up colonies on the moon is not a distant dream. But still man has not come out of the clutches of caste creed and religion. Ravi wanted to marry a girl from his community but his parents were against this marriage because they considered that the girl he wanted to marry was very fast. Mahesh told his brother Ravi's attachment with another girl.

He said,

"It's nothing to do with caste. There was a girl from our caste whom Ravi wanted to marry but my mother still didn't approve of her..... well she had the reputation of being a fast girl."

(Ibid, p. 40)

In Indian culture marriages is not just coming together of two souls but coming together of two families, so both families are involved in match making process. Before the wedding, the groom and bride whether they fulfill the cultural and the social expectations is evaluated. The arrange marriage offers emotional and practical support to the couple. Arranged marriages have been a foundation of Indian culture for centuries which has been shaping societal structure and personal relationship. In the Indian culture, the head of the family controls financial matters of the family. In the novel *Come Rain*, Appa is given all the responsibility of Gogate family.

Ravi Said,

"Appa is the one who takes all the decision In fact, the account is operated by him. He draws cheques for payments, and all the produce is sold by him."

This remark made by Ravi shows Appa's strong hold on the family. He is, symbolically, a representation of the strongly rooted in our society – patriarchy.

When Ravi's mother came to know that he was marrying Ann, Mrs. Gogte replied,

"It's not that I am against it, I think only in terms of your happiness and I know that in the long run such marriage cannot be happy. An American girl can never adjust to our way of life. She will never become part of our family and she will take you away from your family."

(ibid p.45)

Mrs. Gogte always felt insecure, she always felt that Ann would take her son to America forever.



His mother had given him an ultimatum. Unless he stopped seeing Usha and had nothing further to do with her, he would be thrown out of the house.

“And would not receive a single paisa from his parents.” (ibid p.55)

Here we find how sons and daughter submissive in front the wishes of their parents. Ravi was very practical and he knew the losses. So, he ended his relation with Usha.

Usha said,

“Well, I suppose he must have felt that he would have to sacrifice too much.” (ibid p.55)

Through the narrative of Usha, we come to know that Ravi was very practical in life. He always wanted to be part of America where individual freedom is given prior importance whereas in India your individuality is controlled by relations, responsibilities and social taboos. The relationship between Mohini and Prem Sivsasani was not taking any concrete form due to their religious backgrounds. In Indian culture it is defined that marriages should take place amongst the same religion, same caste same creed. Those who cross the boundaries, either they face resentment from near and dear ones or threats from the so called religious orthodox and despotic people. Thus, the novel *Come Rain* is about accepting the cultural pluralism of India where there is unity in diversity.

In Indian culture, men had been given the primary place and women had given secondary place, but education has brought a change in the lives of women and the traditional roles are changed. Women have changed their stereotyped roles and altered themselves from oppression to assertion but at the core there is not a sea change in the dominance of male. The patriarchy, being male is superior is still flows in the blood of male and it is proven while dealing with mother, sister, spouse and daughter. Man doesn't allow his spouse to participate in decision making. She is not allowed or she is told after a particular decision is taken.

When Ravi decided going back to America for his better prospects, he didn't tell Ann about his decision.

He told Ann, *“I don't think a wife has to be told everything her husband is doing or thinking.”*

(ibid p.119)

“You are very good at the wheel. You American girls are so competent it is frightening.” (ibid

p.120)

Ann asked him,



“Do you find competence in general frightening, or competence in woman?” (ibid p.120)

The novel *Come Rain* is about the cultural catastrophe faced by Ann. This catastrophic conflict is directly or indirectly faced by the other members of the family. The novel is about Ann's experience and response to the Indian culture and Ravi's response to the reactions of Ann. Ravi pointed out to Ann that there is very large difference between American culture and Indian culture because of geological, historical and sociological paradigms. The American society has been built on fluidity and on the possibility of breaking down the barriers, while the sanity and stability of the Indian society is functional for thousands of years by keeping them intact. The strength of the social fabric, over centuries lay on the flexibility by allowing changes, it availed equal opportunities for men and women, significant attempt to increase the minimal legal marriage age, acceptance of couples who married according to their own choice, with complete disregard for caste, social position, religious affiliation and nationality.

The world is changing very fast; in the world of information and technology it is very important to keep in pace with the world. To avoid the clash between two cultures it is very important to honour and respect everybody's culture but at the same time scientific approach has to adopted. Bhabhini Bhattacharya, a well-known Indian writer illustrates this approach in his novel '*Music for Mohini*',

“There has to be a cultural synthesis of horoscope and a microscope.”

(Music for Mohini, p.53)

Thus, the novel *Come Rain* illustrates the cultural conflict arises from clashing of different cultural values traditions, beliefs and expectations.

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