



Rewriting History : 'The History of Consciousness' in Bhalchandra Nemade's *Hindu*

Dr. Alka S. Nathrekar

Dankuwar Mahila Mahavidyalay, Jalna (MS)

A recipient of several awards for his creative writing, the Sahitya Academy award for his critical writing and the Padmashri for this year, a path breaking novelist in Marathi, beginning with *Kosla* (1963) Bhalchandra Nemade impacted generation of young minds with his radical representation of Indian modernity. His subsequent novels *Bidhar*, *Hool*, *Jarilla*, *Zool* and most recently *Hindu : Jagnyachi Samruddha Adgal* (2010) showcase his engagement with multiple strands of modernity and complexity of socio – cultural formations through the intellectual and emotionally poignant central consciousness of his male protagonists. *The Hindu* is about the various trends of consciousness in the History of Hindu culture, the trends which were useful once upon a time but are now in junk. It is the retelling, rewriting the history of the way people used to live in the past with creative percipience and which is totally absent today. It is the history of their living culture, their way of life. The novel deals not only with the research of the protagonist's work with the history of consciousness but also with the consciousness of the Hindu culture in the Hindu minds in the past.

The paper deals with Bhalchandra Nemade's long awaited novel *Hindu* (2010) that appeared almost thirty years after his earlier novels. It always takes time to understand that Nemade's pioneering attempts in the literary field have a seminal validity and this novel is not an exception. The novel becomes controversial because of its title *Hindu* and especially because of its paradoxical subtitle *The Gorgeous Junk Amidst living*. [जगण्याची समृद्ध अडगल] With the subtitle and the overall perspective in the novel, it's a novel with post- modern approach where oppositions can co- exist, where opposites are not necessarily contradictory. The subtitle denotes the various trends in Hindu culture which were useful once upon a time but are now in junk; they are not used yet not thrown away. The novel is a comment on the society that has lost its time dynamism. It is a juxtaposition of the society which was richly accommodative once



upon a time and has now become stagnant losing its conscience, percipience, consciousness, the choice of what is to be preserved and what should be thrown away. The experience of living with consciousness in *Hindu* is sans moral judgment. It is so rich that it does not entertain any moral judgment. This experience is not an emotional thrill or a subjective fancy but a response of the writer's whole personality, the integrated self to the central reality.

The multiple discourses and themes in the novel are but the variations on the same theme – the staunch nativism at the background, the juxtaposition of the gorgeous past and the degenerated present of the Indian culture visualizing threatening future, the rapidly changing Hindu society wherein the rapidity is in terms of distortions, the archaeology of Hinduism with the idea of history consciousness, overall retelling the history of Hindu culture and its consciousness with two appalling questions: Is there any society in the world except Hindu society having the history of five to ten thousand years and how this society has so much changed and so rapidly. This is best reflected in the course of narration in the novel-

Khanderao, dhyankar, Samadhi lavu.

Ashagunglelyaavasthetkharyajaniwasamoryetetu.

Tuzyajanivanchahe prachand warul jaminit kiti kholahhe he paha.

Gatkalaplyalanehemichhalwakaruntakto, ahenā ?(93)

One of the foremost themes in the novel is the protagonist's idea to do research with the idea of history of consciousness. The male protagonist of the novel Khanderao is the student of archaeology. He wants to study the archaeology of Hinduism with the idea of history of consciousness. He wants to study the scripts, pictures, images, *Mudra* designing of houses, roads and towns not only materially but also along with the sensibilities. While discussing with his research guide prof. Sankhalia, he says-

Janivanna sthalkalachya palikade

astitwaaste ki nahi?

Vaiyakticjani waya samajik astat,

aaitihasik astat ,

far kay vaunshik hi astat..(23)



Prof. Sankhalia tries to convince him that archaeology takes note only of material culture and that also for temporary reconstruction, and that such consciousness hampers history as a social science. He even becomes angry saying that with such study archaeology will be outdated and the researchers will go mad.-

Yaarth shunnyavish wavyaparat

janiwa mhanje aplya nagannya

jagnyalaa adhardenyachya farach krutrim sababiahet. (23)

However Khanderao goes on insisting the significance of history of consciousness with the example of Haripura, Harappa, Kamakshi temple where such consciousness helps us to find out meaning beyond time and place. Pendhari's attacks on Haripura can be still felt with the half burnt woods lying there along with the forsaken knife while cutting the vegetables and the women who might have run away out of fear. Khandu, intellectual and emotional at the same time is trying to understand not only archaeology but also anthropology, the multiple strata of time, the layers of Hindu consciousness which necessarily belong to different times. The time in the novel is a geological sense of time. Khandu is trying to interpret history in terms of geology. Therefore thousands of details are subsumed here in the larger context, without disturbing the interlink and giving sensitive picture of the history of the Hindu culture. Thus Khanderao, the student of Deccan college, basically the son of a middle-class farmer at Morgaon in Khandesh, is engaged in the excavation project at Mohanjodado in Pakistan along with Prof. Sankhalia, Prof. Jalil, and Prof. Mandi. Before his completion he gets the news of his father on deathbed and so decides to go to his place Morgaon. Morgaon is at the centre of the novel representing Hindu society and Hindu culture. On his way to Morgaon Khandu restores his past. His mind is crowded with memories. Despite so many fascinating and skillful descriptions, so many characters that aptly suit the epic form of the novel the interweaving link doesn't get disturbed. While interweaving all these memories in one thread the polyhistor skillfully uses his linguistic competence making the novel more polyphonic with different ways of narration. It also is a part of history wherein the writer covers the dialects at different periods of history, the folk stories, folk songs and myths.



The culture at Morgaon which is both *Rushipradhan and Krushi pradhanis* the epitome of Indian culture. While doing research in archeology Khanderao is investigating the archaeology of Hinduism in his consciousness. In order to forget his present, he goes in search of past. It allows the writer to open the vast canvas of Hindu culture raising many questions in the mind of the reader. Morgaon in the past had a culture wherein people of different casts were living amicably with harmonious relations, with mutual cooperation and understanding. It was a compact community where only primary relations were maintained. It was a richly accommodative culture where even the prostitutes like Zendi, Vara and her sister were adjusted just with the idea of fellow – feeling, where customs and traditions grew along with culture and with innate wisdom people helped each other and fought with the destiny forgetting the distinctions and discriminations. It is a grave tragedy of the situation that this culture of five to ten thousand years is devastatingly changed. The increasing urbanization and industrialization have changed its pattern completely. There was a time when the bonds of love created out of cooperation were honestly preserved. Now the artificial relations gave rise to insensitive sterile culture and such sterile culture is taking its roots a part of present culture. Agriculture which was a way of life is going out. With the decline of the old values a new social order centred around the city developed. The earlier set up of this community was natural and had many qualities like social unity, religious understanding etc. But all these values and the sensibility are now destroyed. The compact community and the homogenous structure of the joint family have turned to a nuclear family where the parents have no place, they are just neglected, they become a junk. With the behavioural approach of the younger generation Nemade gives hint of the threatening culture. Pathetically, the visionary Nemade advises the present generation to build shelters for their old age. Exploding the myth of Shraavanbala, Nemade asks the question – why didn't Dasharatha kill the old parents instead of ShraavanBala? The straightforward ways of life having faith in God and moral values are totally degraded and degenerated. It has now become a disintegrated, sterile society, physically and emotionally. It is a generation which has lost its sense of priorities. While depicting the multilayered



harsh realities of this plural society representing India in his tongue in cheek humour, Nemade expresses his comic vision that does not create laughter but makes the reader restless and even introspective. Juxtaposing the past and present of Indian culture through Morgan with his stream of consciousness method, speaking in the language smart and shoot, Nemade points out the moral dilemma, the decadence and degeneration of Indian culture in the present context making us aware that this is the way we live, we speak, we behave, and if we are ashamed of such absurd existence, such ways of life it is up to us to find out measures and we are sure to find them out in our gorgeous junk. The causes behind this topsy-turvydom are that while distortions and deformations in the culture are at its climax, our rich gorgeous culture of five to ten thousand years itself became a junk, just litter. In a very humble tone but optimistically Nemadesuggests –

Pan tula wachawel tuzis watahachi paywat.

Ti tula sodun kadhi janar nahi.

Karan tuchtitayar kartos.(94)

Thus with the theme of history of consciousness the novel becomes a canonical India text having epic sensibility par excellence. The arresting intensity and the poetics in the novel lie in the history of consciousness, this rewriting of history. It also lies in the vision of the writer depicting the present society, the deep anguish, anxiety and restlessness that he feels and makes us feel.

References:

- Nemade Bhalchandra (2010): Hindu - Jagnyachi Samrudha Adgal, Popular Publication, Mumbai.
- Ramakrishnan, E. V.; Trivedi, Harish; Mohan, Chandra, eds. (30 May 2013). Interdisciplinary Alter-natives in Comparative Literature. SAGE Publications.
- Nandgaonkar, Satish (6 February 2015). "Marathi novelist Bhalchandra Nemade chosen for Jnanpith award". Retrieved 25 May 2018.
- Nemade, Bhalchandra: The Influence of English on Marathi : A Sociolinguistic and Stylistic Study, Rajahauns Prakashan, Panaji