

HISTORY - FICTION INTERFACE IN HISTORICAL NOVELS: A STUDY OF THE HISTORICAL NOVEL *RAIDERS FROM THE NORTH*

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Historical novels are a complex literary genre. Historical novels played a pivotal position in creating the notion of history in the present generation. There was a time when history and fiction were seen as same. But with the renaissance, people began to search for the past through experimental methods. Studying the edicts, coins, archeological deposits on various places revealed about the past scientifically. Historical novels are seen as an introduction to history. The present article looks on, how historical novels interact with the public through the mixing of fact and fantasy. Thinking about the past is a pull of humanity. “An ignorance of the past is a diminishing of one’s awareness of the present, a reduction of a person to his immediate needs, a provocation to recreate the past in fantasy”(Paul Theroux,102). Literature is a communication with the world. Development of man through the ages, changes in the religious and philosophical boundaries, the social, political and historical life of the world appears through the pages of literary texts. A work of art is free to express a variety of issues of the world, that in one way or the other concerns human beings. Life in the past fascinated human psyche all over the world.

Alex Rutherford wrote extensively on Mughal history through novels. *Raiders from the North* is about the settling of Mughals in India. The novel begins by depicting the early years of Babur, the founder of Mughal dynasty in India. The ruling time of Mughals were later noted widely because of the charm of the historical monuments built by them. The Taj Mahal, Red Fort, Agra Fort, Fatehpur Sikri, Humayun Tomb are some among them. The common man is more interested in Mughal rule because of their architectural style, and their great emperors. Alex Rutherford fictionalizes the ruling period of Babur, the difficulties he faced, the loss of power for some time, the death of his father, and how he managed to conquer Hindustan. He fought with Ibrahim Lodi, the king of Lodi dynasty to conquer India. The fierce battle of Panipatt was fought in 1526 and Ibrahim Lodi was thoroughly defeated in that battle that opened the way for Mughals in India. All details of his life discussed in this novel.

The reader of a historical novel is constantly disturbed by the mixing of fact and fiction, while reading a historical novel. He will try to separate fact from fiction. In the post modern era there is no water tight division between fact and fiction. Historical novels have the power to reach for the neglected aspects of history by the proper historians. Novels give priority to the feelings of people, various social formations, groups, communities and other institutional structures in the society. The novelist is free to use history in diverse ways such as truthful to the known facts about history, through satirically, or by framing new invented history. The novelists can use history with several perspectives. He can offer an alternative renderings of the past and even problematise the very process of historical reconstruction to provide adequate space for marginalized groups, communities and other underprivileged sections of the society. Several

scholars defines historical novels in diverse ways. George Lukacs in his work *The Historical Novel* says that,

“Historical novels represent the socio-historical transformations. All society witnessed it. So historical novels should make a feel of such a transformations by the poetic awakening of the people who figured in those events and no need of re-telling of great historical events”.(53)

George Lukacs emphasizes great freedom for the novelist in his artistic creativity. Some thinkers gave priority to the adherence of facts in historical novels. They judged the quality of a historical novel by comparing it with historical accuracy. F J Tickner defines historical novel as;

It must conform to the fact by a reasonable show of historical accuracy. The actual personages who appear in its page must resemble, more or less closely, the real persons of history: the fictitious characters must behave, more or less as if they had been living at the time (Tickner, p 10).

Indian novelists followed the paths of western novelists. They are highly influenced by Scott and his historical novels. A number of historical novels emerged in Indian English novels. They saw literature as a medium to raise their voice against social injustice and for creating an awareness of national history among its uneducated population.

Indian English fiction has always been responsive to the changes in material reality and theoretical perspectives that have impacted and governed its study since the time of its inception. At the earlier stage the fictional works of the writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R. K.Narayan and Raja Rao were mainly concerned with the down- trodden of the society, the Indian middle class life and the expression of traditional cultural ethos of India. At that time, even to a much later stage when writers like K. S. Venkataramani, Markandaya, Bhabani Bhattacharya, Chaman Nahal, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Nayantara Sahagal, Arun Joshi, and Khushwant Singh wrote, Indian English fiction concentrated on the depiction of social reality of the times.(Kushal, Kulbhushan and N K Neb 1)

Raiders from the North is a full fledged historical novel. The entire novel contains the known historical facts about the life of Babur. The action of the novel *The Raidres from the North* begins in central Asia in 1494. At the beginning, novelist describes Babur’s father telling his story to his twelve year old son. He tells about their ancestor Timur’s historical achievements. Many historians opinioned that Timur was a barbarian and killed thousands of people in central Asia. But in the novel he is described as a hero “not that Timur was barbarian my son” (4).A brief description of the death ceremony of Babur’s father is described in the novel. Soon there began rivalry. At the time of his tomb ceremony battles for power started. The twelve year old Babur couldn’t find his way. Wazir Khan an old man in the service of Babur’s father helped to protect Babur from all the troubles.

Raiders from the North reads Mughal history through the official recording of history. It never problematises the known facts about Mughal history. The novel gives priority to the personal feelings of the rulers. Babur’s grant mother Esan Doulat was a clever lady. She helped Babur in managing the state affairs in the initial stages. Babur remembers it in his memoir. In the novel Alex Rutherford also mentions it.

Esan Doulat was a steadfast lady. She was a direct descendent of Genghis Khan The great warrior. She prepares to overcome all obstacles in making Babur as the king of Ferghana (17).

Babur faced the fierce opposition of Shibani Khan, when he took the charge of Ferghana. It was with great patience and with the help of Wazir Khan, his grant mother he fought with the mighty Shibani Khan.

The mighty Shibani Khan, the lord of the world presents his compliments. He wishes it to be known that before three full moon have come and gone he will take possession of the shit-hide that calls itself Ferghana and piss on its throne (24).

In 1483 Babur was able to conquer Samarkhand .But he lost it soon. In 1500, Babur captured Samurkhand for the second time. It was only with his final failure Babur paid his full attention to the conquest of India. Babur started his fifth and last invasion of Delhi in November 1525. A decisive battle was fought on April 27th on the plain of Panipatt. For several days Babur was busy with preparations. On April 27th prayer was read in the capital in the name of new king Babur. Babur captured the royal treasury of Delhi and Agra. Everyone in Samarkhand friends, relatives, holy men was presented with money. Babur was the king of Delhi only. The other areas of Hindustan were under various rulers. They raised rebellion against Babur. Babur's army suffered a lot. They cannot sustain in the hot climate of Hindustan. Rana Sangha of Chittor was a tough enemy that Babur had to overthrow. On February 11 1527, he began his expedition against Rana Sngha of Chittor. The victory was for Babur. On December 26 Babur passed away in his beautiful garden palace at Agra: a man of only forty eight and a king of thirty six years. This is the story background of the novel. That means it covers the entire history about Babur's history. His memoir known as *Baburnama* is a unique source of information about his life and battles. Several of its pages have lost now. His personal matters are highly imagined in the novel. His marriages are described in the novel. A historical novel has the power to imagine a lot of things Thereby it opens up a way for interpretations. Today in the postmodern era History has come down to the level of interpretations. Interpretations can offer new meanings to history as a subject. Recreating the past as such is not possible for a historian. But we can have a shade of the past. Novelists played a vital role in assessing the role of history in the post modern era.

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