FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HISTORICAL NARRATIVE: ADITI MUKHERJEE'S LOVE IN TIMES OF TERROR

Dr. S. Sabitha
Assistant Professor
Department of English Literature
SRM Arts and Science College (Affiliated to University of Madras)
Chennai -603202.

Annotation

Through its nonlinear narration, the novel Love in Times of Terror (2017) takes the readers on a journey back and forth between the years 1989 and 2008 to depict the love story amidst the "Babri Masjid" tragedy in Bombay. The love blossoms between the Bengali Brahmin girl and the Muslim boy takes twist and turns in the voyage of their journey. The novel provides historical context, people, language, details, and above all the event that took place during that time. From a historical standpoint, the research analyzes the novel, bringing attention to the communal clash between Hindus and Muslims and shedding light on the struggles and tragedies that unfolded at Ayodhya. The paper attempts to analyse the novel under the framework proposed by Georg Lukács, who came out with three significant features of historical novel. Through the analysis it will become obvious, how far the primary source parallels with the framework offered by Lukacs.

Keywords: Historical narration, Babri Masjid, Love, Tragedy and Communal clash.

INTRODUCTON

Documentation of any important event always relays on history but when it to literary contribution it is always under evaluated. Historians sustainably doubt the authenticity of the content offered in the genre. Historical novel is an amalgamation the historical event with the curious modes and narrative techniques which enable the text to be grabbed by many. Now the there is an obvious changes we could observer that the literature serves to historian for their historical research. As stressed by Slotkin,

"If properly understood, the writing of historical fiction can be a valuable adjunct to the work of historians in their discipline. A novel can be as accurate as a history in telling what happened, when, and how" (2).

Historical fiction is a literary genre which are set in the past. For authenticity, historical novels include as much detail as possible about the era, including social mores, etiquette, traditions, and customs. Numerous books in this category are fictitious narratives that include real-life historical personalities or events.

Early in the 19th century, historical fiction began to take shape in modern Western literature. Leo Tolstoy, James Fenimore Cooper, Honoré de Balzac, and Sir Walter Scott were among of the first authors to investigate the historical setting as a novel notion. With a concentration on war stories, such as William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom about the American

Civil War or Kenneth Roberts' Arundel about the American Revolution, the genre was flourishing in the United States by the early 20th century.

"Scott had made his "history" most fascinating; it was an age of Romanticism; what more natural than that his contemporaries and followers should begin to write histories very much like romances also?" (Taylor 462).

In the famous book *The Rise of the Greek Epic* (2006), Gilbert Murray has argued that,

The Iliad and Odyssey teach us a lot about early Greek conventions, including marriage, land ownership, worship, farming, trade, war and government activities, and, most importantly, the methods of seafaring, even if they are entirely fictional. After reading the Odyssey critically, let anybody consider how much he has learnt about the history of the Aegean, during the seventh century B.C., from three pages of poetical fiction about Eumaeus, the swineherd (9).

Historical novel is the compilation of a great deal of useful information for the vast majority of individuals who lack the time or educational resources to do their own historical research and serves as a dynamic alternative to the scientific study of history and is extremely important. According to Hutchen, The creation of a historical fiction may undoubtedly be influenced by historical inspiration (11).

"In all these ways an historical narrative may have a meaning as a whole over and above the meaning of its parts, its constitutive sentences. Narratives of Fiction can be given meaning in these ways too". (Behan 30)

CRITICAL SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

A romantic thriller, Aditi Mukherjee's novel *Love in Times of Terror* (2017) describes the intense love between the Bengali Brahmin Swati and the Muslim male Zubair. The romance between the young lovers is shattered by the religious dispute between the Muslim and Hindu populations. Parallel plotting is used in the narrative, which alternates between 1989 and 2008. In the story, the Mumbai Taj assault and the "Babri Masjid" tragedy were discussed. On November 26, 2008, a momentous day, Swati and Zubair had been scheduled to meet. It was a terrible experience for both of them. Swati and Zubair reunite after eight years to demonstrate that love endures and thrives despite animosity.

THEORITICAL FRAME WORK

Gyorgy Lukacs, a Marxist philosopher and literary critic from Hungary and he was educated in the German philosophical tradition of Hegel, Marx, and Kant. In 1933, he fled Nazi persecution to the Soviet Union. He wrote *The Historical Novel*, which was originally released in 1937. In his book he asserts that, "historical fiction is concerned with historical truth, whatever that is" (8). According to Lukács a good historical novel should have three key elements: first, the setting of time and place.; second, the historical events that are faithfully and meaningfully portrayed; and third, the historical figures and characters that are a part of the historical events

First, Lucacs insists that characters and other details which is presented in the novel must belong to the particular historical period to do the justice. The place where the vent happen is equally important and its depiction must create the exact historical place in the fiction as "its characters as belonging to any concrete time and the portrayal of historical time also affects the portrayal of historical place" (19).

The second trait accentuates the accuracy of the historical event in portraying in the novel. The artistic representation of historical events is necessary because history teaches important lessons that should be preserved. "[A]uthenticity of local colour" is in actual fact this artistic demonstration of historical reality. It is portrayal of the broad living basis of historical events in their intricacy and complexity in their manifold interaction with acting individuals" (43). The third feature comprises the Characters, or historical personalities, and those who were a part of the historical event. The author's chosen character must be a protagonist who also serves as a historical figure (301).

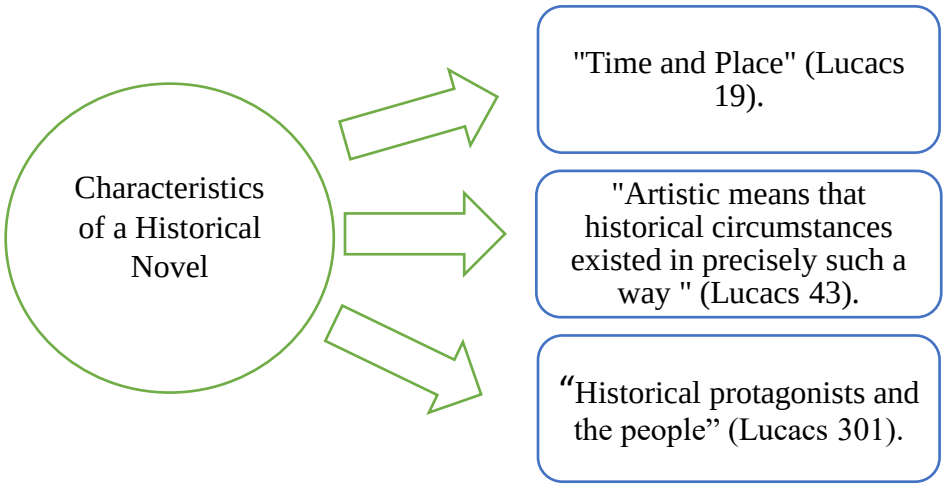

Figure 1. According to Lukács, the three traits of the historical novel (1962).

ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL *Love in Times of Terror* (2017)

The analysis part has been dissected into three as: Setting of time and place, faithful and meaningful portrayal of the historical events and personalities and historical individuals who are involved in historical events.

a) Setting of Time and Place.

In the novel, historical event of "Babri Masjid" problem has been focused. The situation in "Ayodhya" is very crucial and the clash between Hindus and Muslims intensified day by day. The author has taken the readers to "Ram Janmabhoomi" and the chapter begins with the date of 6th December 1992 where Swati and Zubair were there to report the happenings in "Ayodhya" (Mukherjee 177). Presentation of this chaotic situation bring the moment to life. Exact time and place has been cited to fix the novel in the right "framework or timeline" (Hamid 21). The narration has transported the audience to the place of Ayodha.

"The *Ram Janmabhoomi* cause gained momentum again in the 80's after a hindu political party was formed from the remnants of its earlier nationalistic model" (Mukherjee177).

"In the yea, when Mir Baqi, one of Emperor Babur's generals built a mosque supposedly by destroying a temple, naming it *Masjid-i-janmasthan/ Babri Masjid"* (Mukherjee176).

The author travels back to 1528 to inform the readers one of the Emperor Babur's general named Mir Baqi built "Babri Masjid" by destroying the temple. He has done that to please the Emperor .The readers could able to experience as if there were at Ayodha in the year of 1528 and 1992.

b) Faithfull and meaningful portrayal of the historical events

In order to provide the confident and faithful narration the author must be well aware of the incident which happened and his familiarity with that historical event only provides the accuracy. Lukacs stress the accurate and meaningful narration of the event and also offers the liberty to the author to incubate his artistic creativity along with the historical occurrence.

"By the afternoon, all the three domes were covered in the color of saffron. *Kar Sevaks* attacked the mosque with the tool they had brought along cheered and egged on through slogans and *bhajans****, the domes on either side of the central one quickly gave in to the onslaught. When the resilient central doom finally collapsed in a cloud of dust, it buried over two dozen men in its debris. Press vehicles were converted into makeshift ambulances carrying the injured to hospitals. The taxi Zubair had hired for the day was too distant to be summoned" (Mukherjee 183).

The narration of how the domes were forcefully brought down in the name of religion and many people were injured and taken to hospitals. This pandemonium would offer the first-hand

experience to the readers. Therefore According to Lukács, historical events in a novel must have historical significance of their own, as fictionalised history may capture the distinctive local flavour that other civilisations lack. To summarise, the fictionalisation of the factual happening should carry the valuable lesson from the past.

c) Personalities and historical individuals who are involved in historical events.

In literature, characters are the actors or individuals who advance the story. The storyline and the events that shape the story are intimately related to them. The novel deals with the Hindu and Muslim clash and demolition of "Babri Masjid." In the historical novel, the chosen character should parallel the issue in the novel. The author has done that pertinently because Swati is a Bhramin and Zubiar is a Muslim. In the beginning, the love between them was intense and unique, but later Zubair's entire family members were burnt alive by Hindus. After this tragic event, he was badly disturbed and demanded Swati convert to his Islamic religion. The departure between them created a deep impact on the audience. Characters in historical novels are essentially historical people who actually existed and are imaginatively brought to life by the author.

"Convert or else what? She challenged.

Zubair did not want to answer that question. Sati insisted.

"Or else, we cannot marry," he muttered.

[….]" I am a Hindu Brahmin. That's my identity, just like you have yours," her voice trembled as she spoke" (Mukherjee 236)

The lives and inner lives of the characters should be the focus of a historical narrative. This encompasses the characters' actions, thoughts, emotions, aspirations, and internal conflicts. Lukács, insists that, the characters "must seem human and interesting, but they must be creatures of their own time, believing many things we no longer believe, feeling emotions we no longer share" (302)

CONCLUSION

All things considered, the novel *Love in Times of Terror* distinctly fits Lukacs' definition of a historical fiction based on the debate above. The author accurately and thoroughly illustrates the context of time and location, which is the first feature of a historical fiction. Actually, every historical event is well portrayed in the book and gives the story life. The main character best exemplifies the historical novel's last feature, which is about historical characters who lived in a certain culture. "If properly understood, the writing of historical fiction can be a valuable adjunct to the work of historians in their discipline. A novel can be as accurate as a history in telling what happened, when, and how" (Slotkin 2) Regarding this, it is crucial to remember that the past has greatly influenced the development of the current civilisation. This book actually demonstrates that history may be understood in literary terms.

WORKCITED

1. Hamid ,Mohamed Nazreen Shahul Hamid.*Reading History in Historical Literature: An Analysis of The Historical Novel Kalbu Qalha*, Researchgate, 2019. https://doi.org/10.1080/13642520500149152
2. Hutcheon, Linda. *A poetics of postmodernism history, theory and fiction*. London: Routledge, 1992.
3. Lukács, Georg. *The historical novel*. London: Merlin Press. Marston, DorisRicker,1976.
4. McCullagh, C. Behan. "The Truth of Historical Narratives." *History and Theory*, vol. 26, no. 4, 1987, pp. 30–46. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/2505043. Accessed 17 Oct. 2024.
5. Mukerjiee, Aditi. *Love in Times of Terror*. Dark Horse, 2017.
6. Murray, Gilbert. The Rise of the Greek Epic. Alpha Edition, 1 June 2019.
7. Slotkin, R. *Fiction for the Purposes of History. Rethinking History*, *9*(2–3), 221–236. 2005
8. Taylor, Alastair MacDonald. "The Historical Novel: As a Source in History." *The Sewanee Review*, vol. 46, no. 4, 1938, pp. 459–79. *JSTOR*, http://www.jstor.org/stable/27535485. Accessed 20 Oct. 2024.