

The Influence of Manto and Maupassant on Social Life

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Abstract

Literature is expression and interpretation of life. The Realism of life is exhibited in the literary masterpieces of the writers who understand life and possess enough courage to express it in their creative writings. This is quite befitting for French writer Guy De Maupassant and Urdu writer Saadat Hassan Manto. They, through their world famous short stories, put a great impact on world literature. Their special field is Realism. They painted life as it appeared to them. They were blamed for vulgarity and resultantly suffered for that matter. The researchers and critics have acknowledged their love for humanity and their superiority as writers and as trend setters.

Manto, Maupassant and Social Life

Every artist is the embodiment of social norms of the society he lives in. The more he transmits the social values and norms through his writings the more his art gets enriched and attains enough perfection to contribute to the episteme and paradigm of the age. He paves powers the way for his contemporaries and successors towards enlightenment and learning. Hence the thoughts of every great artist are reflected in social life. Maupassant (1850-1893) and Manto (1912-1955) influenced life in their societies. The people benefited themselves and followed their foot prints by appreciating their art and thought.

Maupassant a great French short story writer who has deeply studied different aspects of life around him and reveals its secrets by relating its ups and downs. A thorough study of his short stories manifests his deep analysis of bitter realities of life that the people usually overlook. For instance Maupassant's short story 'Idyll' depicts abhorrent poverty through seemingly odious act of breast feeding of a woman to a young man openly in the train. The woman is in deep trouble. She requires someone to suck her milk for she has left home a very small baby. She is a vet nurse and is leaving for her new job in another town. On the other hand the young man is job-less and has been starving since last many days. He is compelled to take milk from her breast. This is against social norms but there is tragic pathos deep inside it. It reflects Maupassant's direct approach to life for which he is called the Realist. The realities of life are painted in his short stories that have made him a trend setter. Realism is his special field. Olin. H. Moore writes about him.

“ If we are willing to allow to Maupassant the restricted field of his choosing-namely the Present, not the past, the world of sense, not that

of a spirit, it is necessary to admit that he was on the whole the most perfect of the French Realists'.(1)

Maupassant is a Realist who concentrates more on present rather than past. He prefers 'senses' rather than spirit. He inspects everything around him, listens every voice, gazes at every color, grasps every scene and tastes every flavor. He particularly looks at those aspects of the things that are usually ignored. He invites the people to address those matters that are neglected by them in daily life. He believes that the past takes man away from the realities of present. Even while painting the past he makes the reader to pay attention to the present. He is considered to be the greatest 'Realist' of France. In the process of painting realities he, sometimes, jumbles up the contents of his short stories. The adjustment of the material in his stories has been considered to be his weaker point. A sensible reader sometimes feels that the material could be arranged in somewhat more appropriate manner. Probably its reason is his commitment to realism. Its examples are vivid in his short stories like 'Julie Romain', 'Idyll' and 'Boul de Suif'.

"As a realist he had a few shortcomings, both in his manner, and in his method of assembling materials. In his manner, he is frequently subjective, especially when dealing with those feelings which have an instinctive basis. More rarely, he allows his realism to be impaired rhetorical devices, such as the pathetic fallacy which he introduces for dramatic effect". (2)

The sequence of incidents and arrangement of material is the most essential element of a short story. It constructs the plot. The sequence of the incidents embellishes the story that contributes to overall grace of the story to be the literary master piece at national and international level. Maupassant loves suspense, dramatic element and sharp ending and doing so consciously his attention is diverted from the core task of arrangement of material. It up to some extent deprives him of the subtleness of his art and it appears as if he could knit a better plot. The same was followed by some of his successors.

"While professing to record only what he has observed, he is really guilty of adjusting, his materials arbitrarily, as on a checker board or perhaps altering them altogether in order to obtain a desired effect. That he generally creates a wonderful impression of reality". (3)

Maupassant has not evaluated the material of his short stories on the checker board. That leaves at times the short story loses which affects the perfection. In this way short story cannot create complete impression. In spite of all that plot construction, Realism and sharp ending are considered to be the best qualities of Maupassant's short stories. His short stories bear the realities of life at such a standard that hatred, love, lovelessness, kindness, virtue, evil, peace, unrest, scrupulousness, unscrupulousness purity and impurity can be vividly seen in them. He shows the powerful evil still a ray of hope in the form of virtue is visible. In the darkness of harsh cruelty a beam of light is also envisaged. He thinks that a man is neither completely evil, nor full virtuous. His study of his characters is very deep. He opens the spirit of his characters before the reader, that is why he was followed not only by the French short story writers but also Russian, English and even Urdu short story writers. So is true about Saadat Hassan Manto who was fascinated by Maupassant in the early days of his literary career when he translated French writers in Urdu and edited 'Fransisi Adab No. (Sep.1935)' of "Humaiyun"- a well

known monthly journal of the subcontinent. Like Maupassant Manto also locates the slightest glimpse of goodness in his most evil characters.

Maupassant worked extremely hard in Plot construction of his short stories, especially the sudden and sharp end leaves the reader a back. This kind of end hoisted Maupassant's popularity across the globe.

His art and thought impressed the short story writers on a wide scale. He won fame not only in France but also in the societies where short story was written and read. Resultantly following Maupassant countless writers came forward and revolutionized the world of Literature.

One of them is Saadat Hassan Manto. His age borrowed two kinds of effects from Maupassant. One Realism and second spontaneous, vivid and original expression. Whatever life appeared to Manto he expressed it in his short stories. Realism is his special field. His eye is a powerful camera with its shutter open that draws pictures of life as life is. Manto searched for human pathos, located it and expressed in his stories. They are replete with the realities of life. Manto raised his voice against injustice, poverty and cruelty. His sight and imagination are deep and affective. His life span and social circle both were limited yet he brought jewels and gems of human realities with a particular reference to social, economic, civil, cultural, individual and national affairs of human life. He penetrates deep into human soul. This is the excellence of his art and craft. As a writer his short story at times becomes Browning's 'Monologue'. His main focus is human life. He never thought other than that in his life. That is why in his views man is synonymous to prosperity and amelioration. Manto's same passion seems prevailing as a whole in his literary creations. Manto's love for humanity sometimes becomes a guiding star and sometimes a complete expression of love and care, sometimes civilization and sometimes human bonds. Manto at times consolidates human relations. At times in his short stories man seems a collection of human weaknesses, just helplessness and defenselessness, vulnerability and forlornness, and, infirmity and impotence. For that matter he pin points a variety of issues and concerns that he takes from life and gets them assimilated to social life. For instance his short stories, 'Khali Botalen Khali Debbe', 'To To', 'Khalid Mian', 'Majeed Ka Mazi', 'Liscence', 'Nafsiyati Mutalia', 'Siraj', 'Khuda ki Qassam', 'Anjam', 'Ji Aaya Sahab', 'Shughal', 'Sho Sho', 'Baanjh', 'Mantar', 'Divali ke Diye' and 'Darpok' are the complete expression of life and realism. Here life exists with all of its colours. Here Manto brings to light all those aspects of life that usually go unnoticed. This is the real Manto who lights the candles to remove darkness from people's life. He has created countless such characters that cause, 'self discovery' for the reader, who identifies himself with them. Manto's astounding treatment with them has created havoc. For instance Siraj deen('Khhol Do'), Shehzada Ghulam Ali('Suraj Ke liey') Seen('Darling'), Nasir('Bud Tameez'), Kabeer ('Dekh Kabira Roya'), Akhlaq('Ishq-e-Haqiqi'), Pervez ('Bari'), Ghiyas('Khud Farebi'), Shahab ('Fobha Bai'), Gundasa('Garam suit'), Amna('Amna'), Phato('By By'), Salma ('Bus Stand'), Iffat('Ram Meishgar'), Saleem ('Inqlab Pasand'), Ram Dei('Shughal') and Sho Sho ('Sho Sho') are the Characters who live in our surroundings. We meet them every day. Their problems seem to be our problems of everyday life. Their grief, gloom, pathos, bloom, joy, emotions, feelings, handicaps, deprivations and even rewards are common with us. This is also a fact that Manto's most characters breathe tragedy. They seem sorrow

stricken. This kind of Poignancy results in lassitude. Manto's Point of view is that our age is foul, Pathetic and destructive. Its values are devastatingly low, which are inimical and unbearable. He says he paints life. If it is unendurable and un-acceptable that means the society we live in it oppressive and intolerable. According to him his stories contain the evils of the day. He has only unveiled them. In the words of Dr. Ibadat Barelvi.

“Jadeed afsana nagaron main woh wahid fankar hai jis k mizaj main romaniat ka asar nahi milta, is ki wajah ye hai k Manto takhayul parast nahi tha. Woh jo kuch apni ankhon sy daikhta hai isi ko apney fun ka mozoe banata hai. kharji halat ko daikh kar jo batain is k zehan main aai hain woh inhi ki tafseel-o-jazbat ko paish karta hai. Manto nay apni khali dunyaaain nahi basaain, jo kuch is ki ankhon nay dekha hai woh is kay labo'n per aa gaya hai aur is ki tafseel is kay qalam say afsano'n ki shakal main chalak uthi hai. Woh shuru'e say aakhir tak zindgi ki sangeen aur talakh haqeeqto'n ka tarjuman aur akkaas hi rehta hai.”(4)

During his time Romanticis was in full bloom, which at first was denied by Prem Chand. After that it remained alive with some short story writers. Even Krishan Chandar and Ismat Chughtai could not escape. It is Manto's singular honour that even in the expression of the most delicate feelings he has never been emotional. Perhaps he looks at life as it is and while presenting it he never personalizes it. He puts his own being at a distance. Hence a deep consciousness embellishes his stories which are dominated by the perceptive insights.

Some of Manto's critics like Mumtaz Shereen and Ibadat Barelvi are of the view that Manto was deeply influenced by French and Russian short story writers and realists, for they found the some standard of realism in Manto's stories. Chekhov, Balzac, Tolstoy and Maupassant are the short story writers who painted life with all of its original colours and as Manto fancied them all of it exhibited high impacts on his own short stories.

It is true that Manto since his early age was captivated by the above mentioned writers and at a particular age he mesmerized the world by translating their masterpieces into Urdu. Naturally when Manto started writing his original stories a slight reflection of those legendary writers especially of Maupassant was visible in them. But that does not, at all, mean Manto was a mimic or an impressionist. Rather he founded a unique kingdom of style and expression like Allama Iqbal got influenced by Dagh Dehlvi but after some evolution steps he surpassed him in art and vision. Similarly Asadullah Khan got inspiration from Beidil but he excelled him to be Ghalib. Similarly Manto started his literary career in the light of certain western writers but passing through a hard process of life and its hardships he finally attained his own unique style and a matchless glory of fame and honour. His realism up to a great extent is different from that of Che-khov, Balzac, Tolstoy and Maupassant. The realism with these western writers seems slightly dim from that of Manto. Dr. Ibadat Barelvi Said about him.

“ Aik tezi, tundi, aur tekha pan hai. Jis kay asraat is kay fun main har jagah apnay aap ko numaya'n kartay hain. Manto ki haqeeqat nagari isi tezi, tundi aur teekhay pan say pehchani jati hai.” (5)

Manto's Pen has very sharp blade that cuts very deep and quick. Its effects can be seen everywhere in his art that distinguishes him among the short story writers of the whole world. Manto's realism is determined by its sharpness, subtleness and at times bitterness.

Actually Manto is an original artist. His realism is strengthened by the strong sentiments, feelings and consciousness of life. He tried his level best to probe deep in life, felt it deep and strong and his liberal mind grasped it to a prodigious level of maturity with understanding and commitment. In the words of Dr. Sahail Ahmad Khan

“Manto kay khakay aur afsanay mukhtalif kirdaro'n ko talakh haqeeqat nagari say samnay latay hain. Haqeeqat nagari aur khud Manto ka fun tah dar tah , satah ba satah, jo dairay banatay hain in ka idrak ... funkay ka vision, muzahir ko cheerta hua ameeq tareen satah tak pohanchta hai. Manto ki kahaniyo'n ky aik do naqdeen nay jo yeh sat'hi sa dawa'a kar rakha hai keh fla'n afsana nigar tawaif ki zindgi ki juzyat say Manto say bhi zayada bakhabar tha woh dastawizat ki satah per hi ulajh kar reh gaey aur is nuktay tak na pohunch sakay kay Manto kay han waqiat ki sat'hain itni hain keh is tarha kay daway murabiyana tanqeed ki missal hain.” (6)

So with realism his Manto has influenced his contemporaries and successors with a particular reference to sex. That is why it is said that Manto's influence on social life has been tremendous. He brought a change in the thinking style of the people he lived with. He has left long lasting effects on the short story writers.

A thorough study of Manto's short stories accused for nudity proves that he was not guilty for that matter. The decisions of the judges also support him and he stands blameless. He did not intend to create nude literature and spread it in the society. He was trapped in law suit on purpose. These seven short stories are 'Thhanda Gosht', 'aoper Niche aor darmiyan', 'Bu', 'Balauz', 'Phhaha', 'Khhoh Do' and 'Dhowan'. He was released in all the cases. Moreover the judge while writing the decision of 'Thhanda Gosht', said that he gave this short story to his young and mature daughter and secretly noted her expressions. She was scared. He added that the literature that creates insecurity and terror can never be nude or obscene. Dejection, melancholy, misery, resistance, challenge and wretchedness are the marked features of Manto's short stories. All this contributes to build great human values. The cruelest attitude is that he was dragged to law suits but no critical appreciation was written on the master pieces of the international value and standard created by Manto. Faiz Ahmed Faiz on the occasion of Law Suit of 'Thhanda Gosht' said,

“ Meri ra'ay mian afsana fahash nahi hai. Aik afsanay kay alag alfaz ko fahash ya ghair fahash kahnay kay koi mani nahi hain. Afsanay per tanqeed kartay waqt majmui tor per tamam afsana zer-e- nazar hona chahiey. Mahez uryani kisi cheez kay fahash honay ki daleel nahi, main samajhta hon keh is afsanay kay musanif nay fahash nagari nahi ki.” (7)

In the opinion of many of the thinkers and writers Manto's creations are not obscene. There is nothing like vulgarity in them. A story having nakedness at some parts of it can never be blamed as immoral and immodest. It is the overall impression that makes vulgar and non vulgar literature. If we separate physical attraction from a man then all the sweet emotions will die out. Life will become dull without those elements that create beauty, grace and warmth of life. Therefore, some psychologists consider sex as the integral part of art and literature. That is why it is a fanacea and an elixir for an artist's life. Freud, very truly, has discovered some connectivity between sex and all other mental, spiritual,

moral and physical affairs. Hence cultural and religious sanctions segregated a man from woman that created pathos to be the first cause of creating great literary master pieces. In other words sexual desires and passions promoted world literature. Creativity and sex are bound to each other. Its best example is Flaubert, world famous novel 'Madame Bovary'. The Law suit was defended by the lawyer named Sinar. He argued that the book that arouses sexual desires has been written with constant concentration and drudgery by the writer. In this case it is a crime itself to blame the writer for obscenity. The people who accuse such writers are themselves the real culprits in this society.

The most essential parts of literature are expression and passion, while obscenity is a normal problem. We cannot relate literature with any particular values, for, literary masterpieces can only be evaluated by the passions. The moral values of every age affect its literature. The values of Passion and expression can only be augmented by the principles of art and literature, historical and social consciousness, moralities and mental tendency. The evaluating measures and meters of literature change with the passage of time. Therefore, accusing a literary masterpiece for obscenity is ridiculous. Dr. Firdaus Anwar Qazi writes that Manto seems alien to the sexual aspects and charm of human life.

“Manto insani zindgi kay jinsi pahlu aur litafto'n say bilkul munkir nazar aatay hain.” (8)

It is not sex that appeals to Manto but the frustration that creates social unrest. Resultantly the society suffers due to uneven values and traditions. Manto Challenges the society that creates prostitutes. He blames the male dominating society for sexual exploitation 'Sao Kamdal Power Ka Bulb', 'Fobha Bai', 'Hattak', 'Khool Do', 'Thanda Gosht' etc. He accuses man for trailing woman into scandalous degradation, mortification and humiliation.

“ Roti aur burbarati is ki biwi darwazah khol kar bahar nikal gai. Ashok chand lamhat khali-u-zahan betha nangi tasveerein dekhta raha jo haiwani harkaat main mashghool theen. Phir aik dam is nay muamlay ki nazakat ko mahsoos kiya. Is ehsas nay isay khajalat kay sumandar main gharq kar diya.” (9)

In fact Manto criticizes man's unbalanced behaviour towards sex. He wishes to stabilize the sexual behaviour in the society. He very strongly condemns the sexual crimes and disparages the existing values and norms of sex. His stories 'Aurat Zaat', 'Pehchan', 'Bu' and 'Hattak' stand evident to his protest launched against the double standards of the society towards sex. Here are some lines from 'Aurat Zaat'.

In this story Ashok's wife pretends to dislike a naked film. At his insistence she starts crying just to show him how pious is she and how she hates such nakedness. At this he is ashamed of himself. His concern is that she will form a negative opinion about him. She will tell all this to her mother and sisters who will also consider him an evil. The very next day the same woman is found watching the same film with great enthusiasm in the company of her friends.

“ kamray main aik dam garbar shuru ho gai, cheekhain band hueen. darwazo'n ki chatkhanian khulnay ki aawazain aain, khat khat , phat phat hui, Ashok corridor say hota pichlay darwazay say kamray main dakhil hua to is nay dekha keh projector chal raha hai aur parday per din ki

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roshni main dhundli dhundli insani shaklain aik nafrat angaiz mikanki,
yag ahangi kay sath hewani harkaat main mashghool hain.” (10)

Here Manto himself calls this sexual act as hateful and beastly action. That means Manto’s short stories do not focus on sex but only on sex-sociology. His creations do not at all have the external attraction towards sex. In the words of Dr. Firdous Anwar Qazi.

“ in kay haan jism sirf muasharti jabar, rayakari aur majbooriyo’n ki
saleeb per latka nazar aata hai.” (11)

In actual Manto’s courage of expression, material and form of his short stories and the most objective style have invited troubles for him. He was abused and cursed by so called religious and social values protectors.

In short Manto has expressed the bitter facts of his age. He has tried his level best to control and normalize the beastly emotions in man. He has put a new and novel angle of thought before the people while converting the evil into good. The same was contributed by Maupassant to his people and society. All of their efforts were fructified and there has been a ray of hope that continues to shine even today.

Today, Fifty six years after the demise of Manto all the progressive writers confess that the greatest among them was Manto himself. His form and style are unique. Through his technique in the short stories he has induced amazing awareness among the people. All of his critics like Mumtaz Shereen, Anees Nagi, Muzzafar Ali Syed, Waris Alvi, Iftikhar Jalib, Ali Sana Bukhari, Rawish Nadeem and Mubeen Mirza consider him and value him as the greatest revolutionary and visionary of the age.

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