References to Indian Religion and Social Conventions in the Novels of L.H. Myers

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Developed the idea of writing novels based on the Moghul court from the publication in English of the Japanese classic, Tale of Genji. His series of novels on India The Root and the Flower and The Pool of Vishnu are not actually attempting to recreate the Indian scene but rather India Provides the setting for his philosophical ideals. Nevertheless, his depiction of India, reflects the then contemporary image of the sub-continent. Myers realized that both present and future inevitably grow out of the past or bear its stamp; and to deny this is like today's building without foundation and to cut off the roots of progress and prosperity. Past reveals that man has not been able to conquer his own selfish nature. As such it has given birth to misery and injustice in the world. It is only the experience of the past that moulds the discriminatory faculty of man's mind. It enables him to make wiser choices and to take better decisions he looked to it for an answer relevant to his time. He liked India's past, loved to dwell on it. He drew solace into the company of the extinct men, women and children who were the denizens of that bygone Akbar's age. For Myers, to think was to feel and to feel was to act. His esamplastic imagination and comprehensive vision made the life of thought and emotion really equal to him. He honored traditions and values of life. He regarded tradition as the transmitter of something that humanity could not afford to lose. His Root and the Flower Clearly expresses the liberal tradition and his liberal spirit. It reveals his taste, an eccentric and antique taste, rather unliterary. Probably this was the reason that Myers had no faith in the values of the coterie. He found it consisting of egotistical revelation of self to the moral judgement and affection. He was of the opinion that experience mattered nothing It was only what experience could lead one to deduce about the fundamental nature of existence that interested him. He thus, distinguished 'ideas' from literary from and expression. His ideas prevail in the novelistic scheme of writing by virtue of their utter sincerity, moral fervor and universal appeal no less than by their aesthetic value and intellectual excellence. His Root and the Flower is a fruit of his nature mind, an expression of ripened genius, an outcome of philosophic calm. He himself wrote to his friend Marchesa Iris Origo in 1940 about The Pool of Vishnu:

"I feel that this is a grown-up book and very few people are grown-up. Also, this book is a censure. Many people will obscurely feel themselves censured."

The Indian novels sum up the most ripened thought of a sensitive and ethical writer who, living in an age that was wanting in moral earnestness and faith in mankind, raised a beacon light of hope and trust of a better way of life. Thus, the Indian sensibility that abounds in Myers's novels is the result of his study of Eastern religious and philosophy.

In the Pool of Vishnu says:
"... All communion is through the Centre. When the relation of man with man is not through the Centre, it corrupts and destroys, itself...

... Here in the world of truth is the glory of the morning and the evening, the beauty of companionship and the grace of communion with God! why do they live to fabricate something small ?"1

Myers believed that the Centre is the symbol of the spiritual union of the divine in man, after the ascent to the one the descent to the many must be made. Myers discerned that the environment and people in the Sixteenth Century of Mogul India were almost identical with the twentieth Century milieu in which he lived. The original pattern of the incidents and characters lend charm and vitality to his novels. The Indian scenic background with its ilexes, rhododendrons and lilies scattered throughout the Indian novels, the willows and the grasses surroundings the cottage of the guru in the valley are all consciously portrayed to impart a national backdrop to the whole human action. Not only this the exotic Indian animals like Jali's pet "cat bears", the trumpeting elephants under the Agra Palace, the white peacocks and doves docilely fluttering around Ranee Lakshmi, the pet crocodile, the monkeys and the snakes that abound in any tropical locale are all presented as fulcrums to set off the actors in the novels. Martin Buber's concept of the three-fold unity of the worlds of "I", "Thou" and "It" influenced Myers's in paying to the forces of phenomenal Nature so much attention that it enhanced the quality of his writings. The totality of Myer's attitude towards Buddhism throughout his Indian novels runs completely parallel to Buber's astonishing pages on Indian thought and the person of the Buddha as is evident in 'I-thou' translated by R.G. Smith. He was politically conservative, though of course socially critical; and he always" retained a sense of spiritual aristocracy in strong contradiction to the social one. But the progress of events and his hyper fastidiousness in social relationship." Thus, it is apparent that his hypertensive reactions to moral and ethical aberrations led him to study Indian history and philosophy. There are a large number of references to Indian religion, philosophy, history, manner of dress. Social conventions modes of behavior etc., in the novels that successfully evoke the atmosphere of India. He never visited India but was widely read in Indian history and philosophy. India is not presented as merely a backdrop in his novels or solely the creation of his imagination. India operates not merely as a geographical landscape in his novels but her religious and philosophical thoughts are also subtly interwoven. India's ancient wisdom and spiritual attainments assisted Myers to caste his view of life in an adamantine mould never to yield. But it is not exactly the object of exploring
India only as distancing device or lending enchantment of the remote and strange to the view or having an escape from the stark realities or drab, tedious preoccupations of day to day life in modern England that he made 'use of India but because he could treat the moral and spiritual issues with the large scope which the India of the sixteenth century with its varied, caste, color, creed and religions and philosophies ha enough food for his lofty mind and imparted him vicarious satisfaction. Myer's curious mind scanned the horizon to descry transcendent reality uncontaminated and undictated by dogmatic conventions of his time or puritanical theology. His conviction as that Man is a part of Nature, and Nature is complex interminable system of which the parts are subjected to objective forces governing the whole. As such "resignation" is a duty because Nature is as it is a part of virtue and it is the moral reality implied by Myer's comprehensive attitude.

Works Cited

[1]. Myers, L.H. The Root and the flower, P. 9
[5]. Bantock, G.H.: L.H. Myers, a critical study, P. 150