

**A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF PEARL S. BUCK'S COME MY BELOVED AS AN
ETHICAL TALE**

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Abstract :

Pearl Sydenstriker Buck felt elevated when she received the Nobel Prize for her novel The Good Earth. While revising this novel she thought of Sons and developed the story of Wang Lung further with the help of his sons. When she started writing novels, novel was an established genre and she wanted to develop her novels on a new pattern. For this she introduced people who migrated to other countries for trade and jobs.

As a young girl she had noticed the horrors and terrors of two world wars and felt shocked with the explosion of two atom bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. When she visited U.S.A..., she was horrified to see the results of economic depression. The sight of unemployed people made her weep. In Come My Beloved she has described the efforts of American Christians who come to India to improve the rigid and poor society. American missionaries' have the best intention to establish schools and hospitals in India so that people may be civilized. Buck's father had done the same in China towards the end of 19th century. This novel is remarkable for moral realism.

Keywords : Imperialism, Capitalism, Nasizm, Facism, Colonialism, manifestations, World Civilization and Western Heritage etc.

Introduction :

Pearl S. Buck got chance to teach literature at the university level. She studied the theory of novel as given by great novelists. Like Henry Fielding. She adopted four essential qualities for a novelist. She met different sections of society. She loved her characters as a mother does. Writing the sufferings of poor rural farmers in *The Good Earth*, she is actually under the influence of William Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy. Wang Lung and O' Lan lead an Ordinary happy life and feel satisfied with their children, But Wang Lung suffers a lot of sufferings due to his possessive nature and ego. The First he buys another farm against the wishes of his wife and then he enjoys drinking wine and flirting with concubines.

In *Sons* she followed the Pattern of a Picaresque novel and described the adventures of bold and brave leaders who wanted to win more and more land. In the novel *The Mother* she created pity and fear after painting the miseries of a poor mother who got no occasion to enjoy life. Being the intellectual of 20th century she noticed that educated as well as uneducated people migrated to other countries for profit and trade. In *The Hidden Flower*, how could lover Kennedy be silent at the critical juncture when his parents did not accepted his love marriage with Josui.

As a bold thinker like Bertrand Russel she expressed her views on peace and war. She condemned the Japanese, the Chinese, the Americans, etc. who practised national prejudices and hated the concept of world civilization and world unity. Once again she asserted the values of Renaissance Movement.

Pearl S. Buck noticed that capitalism had joined hands with imperialism. Traders of Britain had their supporters in the British Parliaments and similarly the traders of U.S.A., Russia, France etc. wanted to earn money with international trade. They produced a lot of dangerous weapons for profits. Just she hated the economy that depended on exploitation of poor Asian and African countries

It is true that she spent a lot of lonely days in China, U.S.A., Japan etc. Her loneliness was her strength. She had wonderful capacity to write almost ten pages every morning and like Virgil, she revised what she had written. She carefully conveyed her ideas to the readers. Quite often she was requested to address the audience on Radio Station. Her lectures on particulars novels are available on Youtube.

Mystery, bloodshed and violence are not missing in her novels. China and Japan fought against each other for many years continuously and the war ended when Japan surrendered due to tragedy caused by atom bombs.

Like James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Buck entered in the subconscious, conscious and unconscious mind of her characters so as to make them real human beings. In his free hours Wang Lung thinks of his wife O' Lan and three sons who were going in different directions. Wang Lung feels unhappy when he finds that his sons do not want to plough his land. All the women of her novel East Wind: West Wind describe the differences that existed between uneducated Chinese people and advanced Americans. At heart she wanted that the poor Chinese and Indian people must study for bright future.

It is true that Pearl S. Buck enjoyed reading political ideology of Karl Marx but she was not blind follower of Marxism. In the novel The Patriot she develops the theme with the help of Marxism as En-Lan and I-Wan are true friends and they propagate Marxian thoughts among the students of the university. In this novel Buck explains many political terms such as democracy, political ideology, sovereignty etc. Often I –Wan recollects his past when he enjoyed talking on Marxian theories with En-La. But he continues to enjoy making love with Tama and marries her.

Pearl S. Buck noticed in U. S. A. and U.K. that intellectuals were divided among themselves on the question on validity of Marxism for contemporary society. She paid a short visit to India and felt surprised to see poor conditions of farmers and labours. She noticed that more than 80% Indians were victims of illiteracy, ignorance, rigidity and orthodoxy. She found no urge in people to study new technology. She had painted the life of refugees in the novel The Good Earth and realized that Indian labourers were worse than refugees.

Nucleus : In the novel Come My Beloved she described the fact that many American Missionaries had come to India to propagate the gospels of Christ. They wanted to build schools and hospitals here so that poor Indians may feel attracted towards Christianity. Like her father, they ultimately succeeded. But she didn't hide the fact that some missionaries criticized Hindu God and Goddesses.

Pearl S. Buck is admired all over the world for art of narration. Come My Beloved is the best example of this fact. This novel deals with the story of a young American Engineer David

MacArd. He travels to China to work on the construction of the Yangtze River Gorge Dam and here he falls in love with a Chinese lady Liang.

Come My Beloved is accepted as a thought provoking novel. It discusses cross-cultural relationship and identity issues of social change. The novel is a manifestation of Buck's experiences living in China and America. With this novel she explores themes of love, duty, cultural conflict and generation gap. The novel deals with the lives of an American Missionary family over three generations for they grapple with their ideals, faith and personal interests.

Pearl S. Buck has beautifully painted the character of David Hardworth MacArd in the novel Come My Beloved. He is seen serving as a bridge between his father and son yet his life grapples with his western heritage and also with his deep connection with Indian culture. Through the lives of David's Family, the novelist discusses shades of love. Is it romantic or familial? It is influenced by political ideologies, cultural conflicts and social expectations?

David Hardworth MacArd visited India with his son and stayed in the hotel in Bombay and met a person named Wahidi, a guide, Wahidi asked David-

'You will be cheated everywhere by
Hindus. As for me I know them. With
met your side, none will dare to come
near you.'(3)

David loved his wife Leila Gilchrist very much. He failed to forget her though she had died three months ago. He feels that she is present as a spirit. He imagined her face. He missed Leila all the time. Since her death, he had not offered prayers to God. One day in his room in India, he offered prayers for her-

'O God! Show me what to do with my
Life and money that in the end I may
rejoin my beloved wife in heaven.'(12)

He took it for granted that Leila was in heaven. But he failed to love her when she was alive. She used to complain against him because he was interested in making money. Perhaps Leila had failed to understand his lust for money.

MacArd came to India with a purpose of spreading Christianity missionary schools. He observed that the Indians educated in English schools didn't know the history of their own country. He planned to train his young men for missionary works in India. He dreams-

'There must be a place to train the, a
Great school, an institution endowed-
Why not in the name of his beloved
Wife? That would be an immortality in
itself, the Leila MacArd Memorial.'(25)

Buck highlights the cultural and spiritual tensions between the Indian and Western perspectives. David met Darya an Indian. Darya believed in Hinduism and tells David that Sanatan Dharma does not spring from one source. David wants to establish a centre of Christianity where Indians will learn the fundamentals of Christianity then such people will be sent to the world for preaching gospels of Christ. David emphasized the need of practical missionary aspects and Dr. Barton agreed with him saying-

'Go ye into all the world, and so forth. A civilizing, uplifting influence, proclaiming the gospel, teaching men the right, revealing the true faith. This is an age of expansion and if our country can carry aloft the banner of God we cannot fail.'(51)

Here Pearl S. Buck has mildly satirized the prejudiced approach of Christian missionaries but she was an advocate of world civilization. David felt tensions in his mind as the problem of the tenements and scattered streets proved fatal. He wanted to see pleasant countryside. His father always asserted that civilization could develop with right religion. Many questions arise in his mind regarding spirituality and religion such as –how did men learn of God? How did they take birth? What is soul? What is body? He analysed thoughtfully his own experiences of religious life.

David met a beautiful girl Olivia on the bank of river. When she showed her house he feels inspired to open the missionary school there. He noticed gardens ready for further cultivation. He asked Olivia that his father was looking for a place to establish a theological seminary as a memorial to his mother. Olivia Desserd was a competent and clever girl and had been educated abroad. Olivia whispered in her mother's ear and advised her to sell this house. David thought of Olivia and her lovely troubled face'. David discusses his plan to own the house for missionary purpose with his father MacArd. He was pleased with his son's creative

approach. He liked having a great mansion at the heart of his memorial dedicated to Leila. He asked her abruptly to buy the house along with the furniture. She told him about her grandfather's about Hinduism intention. David laughed and replied—

‘It didn’t change my father –it merely

Inspired him to want to change India.’

Like many British merchants, MacArd was a successful business man. He had an overwhelming anxiety which he could not explain to the simple mind Bartan. Basically Bartan had nothing to do with materialistic approach of MacArd. Bartan knew the importance, production and influence of the Gold.

David called Dayra and Dayra advised him to marry. David said that he would like to find a wife like his mother. Dayra replied in negative.

‘No, no –a man’s wife and his mother should be totally different persons. Anything else is incestuous in concept.’(76) Dayra explains the benefits of family life. Dayra tells that it is difficult for people outside to understand the relationship between men and women. Here the artist is a realist as well as feminist. Darya asked David –Is there any woman in his dream? Unhesitatingly, he told Darya that he met Olivia but could not express feeling of his heart. MacArd says that the memorial to his dear wife is to be a school of applied Christianity which will train young men as Christians. Then they will go to the world and preach the gospel of the Bible.

He asked Darya –

‘Your people are slack, they are listless, they allow circumstances to overcome them. A real religion a vital faith in the true God, will inspire them to better themselves....your temples are full of superstition litter’.(79)

Darya answered him that he had sometime thought he would like to be a Christian if he could come without giving up his own religion. MacArd intervene that it would be impossible as when a man becomes Christian, He must forsake all other Gods, and believe only in Christ. According to MacArd due to poverty and wretchedness Indians must be taught to help themselves. For this they need a new faith in inspiring religion.

David asked Dayra that they don’t have big families as Indians have. In India there is starvation and population explosion. But Darya answers as a philosopher that individual dies, the species don’t. Darya remarks—

‘Our strength is that we can still reproduce and so we
Have not perished from the face of the Earth. We are
Still taught to respect our parents .to subdue our family
Wills to the family good else long before now world we
Have died as other peoples have died!’(84)

David introduced Darya to Olivia. Darya asked David if he does not marry Olivia, he will prove to be a fool. He should propose her without wasting any moment –

‘It will take courage to be her husband, you understand...
but a task how enticing ! You must be strong, too David,
you must find a source of power for yourself.’(88)

On the advice of Darya David went to Olivia’s home and confessed her that he loved her Olivia turned down his offer. He hurried back from her house and wept and prayed to God—

‘O God, what am I going to do? What
use am I now?’(94)

David had no experience of love-making and took his refusal seriously. MacArd noticed that his son was silent and absent –minded. He asked his father that he wanted to go India as a missionary. David said-

‘I intended to live my own life, under
Divine direction.’(96)

MacArd felt restless as he made lot of money and established large business for his son and he were leaving for India- a country known for snakes ,heathens and filth . David had separated himself from his father. He took the challenge to make his own religion the most vital of all. He realized that missionaries must be loyal to government. David planned an attack upon India itself, through Indians. He planned to open school for the best intellectual gains –a college and university, medical college and hospital as well with free scholarship for those who were poor. Her the novel is remarkable for moral realism.

David stayed with Darya in India. Darya let him come to his home and introduced him with his wife Leilamani and children. Darya asked many questions from David –why do you want to be saint? why do you marry? where is Olivia? Have you forgotten her? Is it necessary for

a Christian to be sadhu? Darya advised David to propose to Olivia again and not to lead desolate life. It would be a mistake not to marry and live in India. But David was adamant and wanted to do what his father not to done so far. He would draw the attention of the best India young people and inspire them with intellectual strength and knowledge. Ultimately Darya agree to sendhis children to his school. David dream that Olivia had come in his arms and stayed with him throughout the night. He found the name of Darya’s wife and his mother was the same .Her the novel is remarkable for psychological realism and Pearl S. Buck follows theory of Frued.

Leilamani asked Darya to write a letter on behalf of David to Olivia Dessard to review her decision and marry David .Darya requested to Olivia to accept David as her husband. Fortunately, she accepted the proposal and assured him to come to India soon. She had not forgotten him.

When Olivia returned and reached India and met David. She told Darya that she was prepared to marry David. David felt concerned and anxious for future life. She must not divide his mind and heart. She must join him in the direction of divinity under which he lived. She should accept him not only as her bridegroom but also a missionary. They were married a week later in Poona church. Olivia noticed that God dwelt in his heart and min.—

‘She was second not first, she was his
Heart but not his soul, but she did not
Know the difference’. (140)

Here the artist described the inner conflict between husband and wife and novel is remarkable for psychological realism. Olivia wanted to join her husband in his work i.e. missionary deeds. Finally Olivia gave birth to a baby in the British hospital. In Bombay the Governor – General admired British policies. British Government had built rail roads, reservoirs and tanks to utilize the Himalayan waters and provide employment millions of people. He added that many irrigation projects had been completed here. In India, the real problem was over population. The medical facility was not good. The death rate continued to be high. Half of the children die during infancy. Starvation breads diseases and Indians were not prepared for epidemics. The plague spread in Bombay and affected Olivia and Leilamani’s children. As a result David missed Olivia and looked after his son Ted. Her the novel is remarkable for socio-economic realism.

Conclusion :

Thus, Olivia and David's relationship raises questions about the roles and expectations of husbands and wives in 20th century. David and Olivia struggle to maintain their individual identity even during days of hardship and starvation. They were conscious of cultural surroundings. David got success in his mission. The Viceroy admired the graduates of MacArd University in his Poona speech and called them loyal Indians.

Thus, through the novel *Come My Beloved*, Pearl S. Buck wanted to assert that love can't exist in isolation. Love is affected by political cultural realities of time. There is no denying the fact that the novel highlights the complexities of human relationship. The novel explores the lives of missionary family and their evolving relationship with faith, cultural identity and human connection.

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