

## Understanding Emotional Ecology between a Writer and a Reader: A Study

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### Abstract

In the novelistic universe the writer creates an emotional atmosphere or ecology for the reader within the text. The creation of this atmosphere promotes the comprehension power of the reader and establishes a cognitive and emotional relationship between the two. In most of the contemporary novels referred to in this paper the authors have taken the reader on an emotional voyage by means of their writing. Emotional ecology has gained currency in various pedagogical spheres due to the deteriorating relationship between the educators and the students. On both levels it is beneficial to promote an emotional atmosphere for creating a

better society. This paper aims to focus on emotional ecology in terms of literature with a focus on various writers from across the globe. It opens new dimensions to strengthen the bond between the reader and the textual world.

Keywords: Emotional, Ecology, Environment, Reader, Writer, Pedagogical

Emotional education has gained currency in recent years. Other than scholastic pursuits the educators aim to educate themselves about the impact of emotional education. However, the sphere of emotional education is not restricted to pedagogical pursuits alone. It has far-reaching impact in the sphere of literature as well. If the novel is a discourse that mirrors real life, then all literature is in a way written with the purpose of emanating knowledge. As stated by Horace, literature is for 'Utile dulci' if it pleases and educates. The utility of literature is when it makes a person aware of his surroundings and develops empathy in him. Literature is also centric in nature because even with all the differences in language, gender, race, class, and culture literature is the same and so is human nature.

Novelists attempt to create a bridge between their writing and the emotions of the readers. This awareness of the emotional connection is a primary issue for many writers. Fiction and other literary genres relate to human emotions and create an atmosphere that solidifies this bond. The better understanding of emotions between reader and writer, the better the response of the readers. Without knowledge of emotions, the literary works are lifeless and dull. Emotional content gives literature its needed nutrition. Legendary authors like Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, Tolstoy, and Wilde have all at some or the other point reflected on the utility of building a connection between the written work and the readers.

Emotional education in classrooms is a heated issue of discussion in the contemporary scenario. Many educators are expressing the relevance of this subject by means of their written and spoken word. In simple terms, emotional ecology is the emotional environment. The knowledge of ecology, or the environment is imperative for understanding any situation

in a better way. Donald Maass in his seminal work *The Emotional Craft of Fiction* deals with the importance of emotions in terms of fiction-writing. He affirms that, “The language of emotion in a novel also makes a difference to readers’ experiences” (3). He suggests that as a writer a person is on an emotional voyage that establishes his identity as a writer and that of the idea that he wishes to convey. It creates an emotionally charged ecology for the reader. Acquiring the knowledge of the emotional bond that develops between the writer and the reader is significant. The novelist educates the reader by absorbing the reader in the verbal matrix and emotional map of the work. Every piece of literature is built upon an emotional foundation. It is this base that strengthens the narratological structure of the work and provokes a response from the readers. Faiqa Mansab, a female author from Pakistan in her debut novel *This House of Clay and Water* creates an enthralling ecology for the readers. The ecology of betrayal, alienation, and love provides a perfect picture of contemporary life in Lahore. The women are leading meaningless lives with men who victimize them frequently. They are buried under the dictates of patriarchy and marital norms. Some women are dreamers as they long to lead unreal lives full of borrowed happiness, and like Gustav Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* die of debt. The marginalized characters are targeted by the guardians of society like the policemen and the clergy. The prostitutes, the transgenders, and poor people survive on the edges of the social order. Alienation is a central emotion that populates the novel as each character is somehow alienated and lonely in his or her life.

Similar concerns are found in the first novel of a Pakistani novelist Faiqa Mansab. In *This House of Clay and Water* Mansab recounts the trauma of a transgender protagonist. A myriad of socio-political issues is reflected upon by the writer in this epic like novel. The emotional ecology of the novel reverberates with alienations of the peripheral minorities like the transgenders and dalits. It has strong overtones of environmental concerns. It educates the readers about the various issues of the environment related to our nation. The emotional

toolbox that is used by the writers arouses response in the readers. The writers teach us to be true to ourselves in order to understand the characters in the narrative. If we know ourselves only then will we know others well. Writers like Tehmina Durrani and Sanam Meher have written accounts of real women who have faced trauma in their lives. The emotional upheaval of these women inspires other women to show courage and live independently. In her novel *Blasphemy*, Durrani creates an environment that is not only terrifying, but realistic to the core. She narrates the story of a woman who suffers under the pseudo religious man who is belligerent and toxic. The writer understands the emotions of the women she writes for. There may be elements of fiction in the novel, but the emotional ecology of the characters reflects the reality of many women. If these women seek freedom they need to change their emotional environment. In Sanam Meher's debut novel *A Woman Like Her* she tells about the miserable life of a social media star Qandeel Baloch who is killed by her own brother in the name of family honor. This novel creates an emotional ecology where we find how young girls aspire to attain fame and economic stature by revolting against a strictly orthodox society. Freedom of women is equivalent to death in most of the cases.

Writers from Turkey like Elif Shafak and Nawal El Saadawi from Egypt also portray embedded emotions in their novels. They understand how important emotions are for the writer and the reader. Elif Shafak in most of her novels like *Honour*, *Three Daughters of Eve*, *Forty Rules of Love*, and *Bastard of Istanbul* recount the way life evolves in Turkey. The emotional connection that Elif develops is strong and promising. The emotions she creates have an impact on the readers. The emotional ecology of her novels differs, but the wavelength of her choices appeals to the readers not only due to artful storytelling, but the emotional impact. Nameless emotions are given names by Elif.

In Saadawi the emotional ecology of the novel is such that it provokes a response from the readers. Her readers connect viscerally and emotionally to her writings. The

environment she creates stirs the thoughts and feelings of the readers. Even the writers like Naguib Mahfouz (Egypt) and Orhan Pamuk (Turkey) arouse such emotions in readers.

Many writers are also creating an emotional ecology between their writings and the readers by retelling myths. Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's in *The Palace of Illusion* and the *Forest of Enchantments*, Kavita Kane's *Sita's Sister*, Devdutt Pattanaik's *My Gita*, and Amish Tripathi's *Sita: Warrior of Mithila* is retelling tales from Indian mythology to recreate an environment with which the youth can relate. Their emotional ecology reclaims the past in a way that makes it convenient for contemporary readers to relate to and comprehend the ancient myths in a new way. Donald Maass asserts that Daphne Du Maurier in her novel *My Cousin Rachel* gives the user an emotional method to convey the emotions. As Maass affirms these four steps of Du Maurier's emotional methods are:

1. An Anthology
2. Alternatives
3. Moral Judgment
4. Justification

The writer focuses on the emotional possibilities of the narrative to create an emotional ecology that is both informative and enigmatic. It can therefore be concluded that like in a classroom an educator builds an environment between himself and his student so does a novelist. A novelist crafts an emotional environment between himself and the reader to convey the true meaning of his work and make reading pleasure and a utility.

Tahmima Anam's trilogy of Bangladesh includes *A Golden Age*, *The Good Muslim*, and *The Bones of Grace*. Her trilogy becomes a doctorate in social anthropology. *A Golden Age* is a journey of a mother with the passion and revolution of hope, faith, and heroism. Rehana Haque, a mother, and the protagonist of the novel narrate the emotional ambivalence of a woman. She underlines the condition of women before, during, and after the liberation

war of Bangladesh. With the technique of ambivalences, Tahmima Anam brings to light the fears and faith of a mother. How she becomes extraordinary for the sake of her children's custody during the ongoing chaos of war and sufferings. This novel portrays the struggle of an individual family during the war. She asserts, "This war that has taken so many sons has spared mine. This age that has burned so many daughters has not burned mine. I have not let it" (274). Writers like Kamila Shamsie, Naemat Imam, Taslima Nasrin, Avijit Roy, Salman Khan, Sorayya Khan, Monica Ali, Adib Khan, Fazlur Rahman Khan, and Tahmima Anam explores the issues of identity crisis because of diasporic dislocation. Sorayya Khan's *Noor* explores the theme of memory, family, and tragedy. Sorayya Khan focuses on the impact of violence. While Kamila Shamsie and Tahmima Anam draw the issues of Islam, secularism, and female salvation in their writings. Shamsie's *Broken Verse* and Anam's *The Good Muslim* focuses on the contexts of how Islam become a political consignment of secularism. Each novel is deeply enriched with layers of meaning and unsharable narratives of struggle and trauma.

History evaluates the existing literature on the subject of trauma and its narration in fiction. Literature follows culture. *Brick Lane* is a novel about Muslim immigrant culture in London. In this novel, Monica Ali addresses the absence of an individual woman. The novel depicts the struggle for independence with other themes of oppression, immigration, segregation, racism, and sexism. Monica Ali has been criticized for her portrayal of a Bangladeshi woman in London. The community she portrays in *Brick Lane* is narrow-minded and backward. The novel centers on the life of Nazneen, who married an older man Chanu. She affirms, "Amma hugged her fiercely. She took Nazneen's wide face between her two palms and spoke to her. "If God wanted us to ask questions, he would have made us men" (53). Nazneen is filled with the quest to make her own choices of desires. Family is the core

of Nazneen's life, but she is often unhappy because she is torn between her family origin, and the family she creates after her marriage. Haleh Afshar in *Muslim Diaspora* states:

Women, who have been the bearer of nations, have been given the nationalities of their fathers and husbands, and when migrating have lost their birthrights to their homelands, only to acquire that of the male on whom they have been defined as a dependent. (171)

Taslima Nasrin is well known for giving *Lajja* (shame) and *Farasi Premik* (French Lover). Nasrin attempts to fight for woman's suffering, oppression, and secure women's rights. *French Lover* resonates with the author's strong feminist ideas. Nilanjana Mondal or Nila, the protagonist becomes a victim of western prejudice in Paris. She marries a Punjabi Non-Resident Indian (NRI) to escape from the trauma of a broken relationship, hoping to find a better life in exile. This novel is a fine example of women's suppression in marriage. Nila is treated as an object of pleasure by her husband. Nila undergoes the dilemma of identity crisis that motivates her to be self-reliant. She affirms, "You should have married a dumb girl who'd silently do the housework and never protest at anything, who doesn't have a soul to call her own and cannot read or write".(56)

According to Simone De Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*:

In the first years the wife often lulls herself with illusions, she tries to admire her husband unconditionally, to love him unreservedly, to feel she is indispensable to him and her children; and then her true feelings emerge; she sees her husband can get along without her, that her children are made to break away from her: they are always more or less thankless. (496)

Likewise, Nasrin challenges and deconstructs the traditional image of the silent woman. She introduces the new woman theme, who is educated, awakened, assertive, and empowers her life and body in a patriarchal society.

Manjushree Thapa's novel, *Seasons of Flight* is a perfect expression of exile. Thapa explores the bitter experiences immigrant Prema, the protagonist of the novel, suffered in her tour to America. Thapa insights the psychology of a small-town girl who is working in a forest NGO. She is independent and the bread-earner of her family. The death of her parents is the main factor that gives her independence to live with liberal ideas. Prema embraces being American, not Nepali, not hyphenated. She wanted to be known as an American. Nepali born Prema is forced into the rift between reality and dream, between immigration and nation. She dealt with the sorrows of estrangement. The loss of something left behind, living the life of spiritually hyphenated and alienated. She opines:

The other is that we have all come under the sign of America. In Nepal, no one would ask me if I were Asian American or Asian. Here we are part of a minority, and the vision of being 'unserved' comes into our consciousness that I create my life and new identity. (16)

Emotional ecology is the atmosphere that creates a bond between the reader and the text. It gives space for freeplay of imagination and connects the cognitive power of the readers to the textual universe for a better understanding. Each text has its own emotional ecology that must be explored by the readers. Emotional ecology between the writer and the reader is created during the process of reading and the text mediates between the two.

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