

**NOVELS OF VYANKATESH MADGULKAR & THOMAS HARDY-COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF SOUTH ASIAN & WESTERN LITERATURE & CULTURE**

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Abstract

The paper attempts to study novels of Vyankatesh Madgulkar and Thomas Hardy to compare South Asian and Western Literature and Culture. Hardy's regional novel concentrates on some particular region, and it is remarkable for its vivid and illuminating presentation of its scenes and sights, of its landscape and geographical features. These geographical features form the background or setting to the human drama that is enacted in the novel. As the same scenes and sights, the same geographical features-rivers, hills, dales, etc;-appear and re-appear in successive novels. Thomas Hardy uses the novel to inquire into the cause of things. His novels are questionings about life. Vyankatesh Madgulkar is a hidden gem in Marathi literature. Presentation of his writings at global level will inspire many others to follow same path. Glorification of Wessex and Maandesh can be done through comparative study of the novels of Hardy and Madgulkar. They tried to immortalize these regions. Comparative study of these writers may prove fruitful to the budding regional writers and research scholars in England and India, especially from Western Maharashtra. Such comparative study will pinpoint some unexplored similarities of both writers and thus, it will be helpful for clear perception about both writers & literature & culture of South Asia & West for coming generations.

Key Words: Maandeshi, Wessex, Atpadi, creature struggling, Marathi literature

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South Asia plays crucial role in modern human world. South Asian literary masters have broken the legacy of colonialism & forwarded new cultural & socio-political paradigms. Now, thinkers started thinking India as a subcontinent in South Asia significant for philosophical, cultural, ethnic & literary issues. Foundation of South Asian literature aims at strengthening the cultural connectivity & cultural interactions. To form such literary link between South Asian & Western literature we need organization of such literary events that will surely help to form new literary link. For such consideration we have to think of the resolution of SAARC writers' conference,

"We are the mad dreamers of the SAARC region.

Let governments do their diplomatic & political work.

Let us the writers & the creative fraternity of the region

Endeavor to create bridges of the friendship across the borders."

(Concept Note: International Seminar on South Asian literature & Culture)

Above lines form a perfect link between common literary & cultural heritage of South Asian & Western literature. Its reflection can be seen through different literary forms & writings of many writers. We notice many common trends & literary linkages in South Asian & Western literature & culture. Many comparatists from different countries have tried to compare South Asian & Western literature on the basis of culture. Moreover, we can also think of some other grounds of literary comparisons such as – regionalism, marginality, locality, weather conditions, social norms, customs, manners, habits and dress codes, languages of the South Asian societies & that of the Western society. Such study will be helpful for creation of broad perspective. Culture itself plays a crucial role in the development of a particular society. It is nothing but proper reflection of that society. By making use of above ideas & concepts we can form a common thread to study South Asian & Western literature & Culture.

For comparative study we need different tools & literary techniques. It means that for comparative study, we must try to throw light on some

particular aspect of that literature & culture. Common cultural literary features of similar regions can be studied together through comparison. Inter-disciplinary techniques can be used for it. Comparative literature sets aside national prejudices & provincialism but, it doesn't ignore independent existence & vitality of different national literary traditions. Definitions of comparative literature are different but, in general, comparatists study literature beyond the confines of a single language or national tradition. It examines the literary relations between East and the West. The concept of comparative literature has been changing from 19th century. Comparative literature studies have become a respectable academic discipline today. We notice that comparisons have extended over distant parts of the world or areas of the Indian sub-continent. "Regions like Europe or India display many common cultural, literary features. They can be connected together by historical, geo-social or geo-political factors. Such studies are useful to highlight common as well as different backgrounds of literatures from East and West. i. e. Indian means South Asian and Western. Comparison of the writings of the regional writers from South Asia & the West is one of them. We can better think of some common socio-cultural issues reflected through such writings. We compare writings of one regional South Asian writer & the other from the West. This common thread of reflection of particular region can be found in the novel writings of Vyankatesh Madgulkar – a famous South Asian regional writer from South-West Maharashtra & that of the novel writings of Thomas Hardy, a famous regional writer who depicted Wessex as a typical Western region. Some major happenings in their lives shaped their regional aspect. So, for such comparison, we must form bird's eye view about their life & works.

Life and works of Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy was born at Upper Bockhampton, in Dorset, on second June 1840. His father was a master mason. He owed much to his parents- love of music, love of reading and their rural background. He attended school in

Dorchester. In 1856, he became an apprentice to an architect John Hick. In 1862, he went to London and become an assistant to Arthur Bloomfield. Due to illness, in 1867, he returned to Dorset and started working at the old architect. In 1868, he started writing stories. In 1871, he wrote first novel 'Desperate Remedies'. In 1872, he married Emma Lavinia Gifford. Two years they wandered about Europe and England and in 1878, returned to London. Between 1878 to 1912, he wrote nine more novels, three volumes of short stories and published three collections of poems. His wife died in 1912, unexpectedly and in 1914, he married Florence Emily Dugdale. First World War disturbed his peace of mind. He worked for the wounded soldiers. He died on eleventh January 1928. In his life he suffered a lot, from his early childhood to the end. So, perhaps he has presented role of fate in man's life through his novels. Along with fine description of Wessex, he touched the concept of Man and Destiny through his novels and very sensibly depicted it.

The Regional novel is the novel which depicts the physical feature, life, customs, manners, history etc, of some particular region or locality. However, this does not mean that regionalism is mere factual reporting or photographic reproduction. The regional artist emphasizes the unique features of a particular locality, its uniqueness, the various ways in which it differs from other localities. But as in all other arts, so also in regional art, there is a constant selection and ordering of material. In other words, regional art is also creative. Through proper selection and ordering of his material the novelist stresses the distinctive spirit of his chosen region and shows, further, that life in its essentials is the same everywhere. The differences are used as a means of revealing similarities, from the particular and the local, the artist rises to the general and the universal. The selected region becomes a symbol of the world at large, a microcosm which reflects the great world beyond. The greatness of a regional novelist lies in the fact that he surmounts the bounds of his chosen region, and makes it universal in its appeal. That explains the continuing and world-wide popularity of regional novels of Thomas Hardy.

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landscape and geographical features. These geographical features form the background or setting to the human drama that is enacted in the novel. As the same scenes and sights, the same geographical features-rivers, hills, dales, etc;- appear and re-appear in successive novels. Thomas Hardy uses the novel to inquire into the cause of things. His novels are questionings about life. He constantly inquires about the why and whereof of things and constantly attack accepted beliefs. Man's Predicament in the universe is the theme of Thomas Hardy's novels. He has no faith in the benevolent and omnipotent God of Christianity. He conceives of the First Cause as blind, indifferent and unconscious. Man suffers owing to the imperfections of the powers on high.

Life and works of Vyankatesh Madgulkar

Vyankatesh Madgulkar was born on sixth July, 1927 in Madgule, a small village, with a population of over a thousand, in Atpadi taluka, Sangli district, and part of 'Maandesh'. Five brothers, two sisters and parents was Madgulakars family. Poverty was the main difficulty. Due to residence in drought affected region, he couldn't continue his studies. But, he picked up father's narrative technique and mother's art of painting, these two qualities and further he developed them. He did his schooling at Madgul, Kundal, Atpadi, Vibhutwadi, Kinhai... etc. He studied up to metric, but, he was a good reader of Marathi and English literature.

His grandfather and earlier generations lived off the land, but his father took job in the govt. of Aundh, a princely estate, which ruled over the region 'Maandesh'. The job took him to various villages and small towns of Maandesh. In this way Vyankatesh Madgulkar got to see, observe and experience life in many parts of Maandesh. He freely mixed with children of other castes and communities & learnt various 'arts'—how to climb trees, how to identify birds, how to trap fish, how to hunt.etc. Further, all this is presented through his novels. He studied at Madgule and Atpadi. But, he was average student. Teacher told him, he had no future. So, perhaps in teenage, he left home and joined freedom struggle. He took active part in 1942 Quit India Movement. For two years, he was considered criminal by British Government.

After independence, he returned home. Up to this time his elder brother G.D.Madgulkar achieved great success as a song and story writer of Marathi films. So, perhaps, he thought to be an artist. He loved sketching and painting. He developed enormous love for reading. He read John Steinbeck, George Orwell and the Irish writer Liam O' Flaherty, and several other Western writers by using a dictionary. He went to Kolhapur to be a painter but, at the age of nineteen, he became a short story writer. Also, he worked as a journalist. In 1946, he published his first short story. Then, through different periodicals he wrote & published many short stories. In 1949 he published story collection 'Maandeshi Manse'. & it popularized him as a known rural short story writer in Marathi. Realistic presentation of Maandesh has done through his memorable, rural character sketches.

All strata of society are the integral elements of rural social society. Their beliefs, traditions, manners, superstitions are presented with social emotive, cultural and economic issues of the time. Along with short stories, he handled novel writing. In 1975 his Bangarwadi was published and it became the milestone in Marathi literature. In modern novel what is importance of regional aspect, it is shown by this novel. Local language, drought, social life of people living in Bangarwadi made this novel very popular.

He left Madgul as a poor fellow and entered Mumbai but, he had inborn qualities of an artist and he used them very effectively and he became famous short story writer and famous regional novelist. His easy made character sketches enriched Marathi short story and novel. Having less education many Marathi writers produced such literature. But, Vyankatesh Madgulkar is at the top among them. In 1950, he went to Mumbai. In 1955, he took up a job in All India Radio and worked upto 1985 on different posts. All this time, he continued his writing and developed his own art of writing. He was chiefly known for his unsentimental depiction of rural life in a part of southern Maharashtra called Maandesh in the 15 to 20 years before and after Independence. Presentation of Maandesh with most details was his main aim. He was affectionately called as Tatyaa, (grand old man) by all. On 28th August,

2001, he died due to illness, when he was 74 years old.

Madgulkar's all writing is an artistic revelation of an artist's self and emotions. He tried to explore secrets of nature. These landscapes and sights present his revelation of man and destiny done with concentration. It made him to be aloof from all bias and literary arguments. His writing revealed the idea that original writer selects and uses particular words in particular places. He fought like tough man. He learned all this from the society in Maandesh. Hovering drought, difficulties made Maandeshi man as a creature struggling, hand working & facing blows of destiny bravely.

All what he did, firmness can be seen through it. He was a photographer, a painter, a hunter and it made him to observe society, birds, and animals very keenly, and then, he described them with most details. He was a well read man. Madgulkar started writing after 1945. It was the period of new writing in Marathi literature. Ill effect of Second World War and the freedom struggle in India changed the society. It affected Madgulkar's writing. His novels are totally different. New type of beginning, end, and characterization is used. Depiction of vagaries of nature & how it changed lives of Maandeshi people is the main objective of his writing. He presented plight of Maandeshi people through his novels. Reader's interest is maintained up to the end by using rapidity. Perfect selection and use of words, no diversions, made it perfect. His subject matter, narrative technique, language, characters all is totally different. Rural maandeshi scene, he created before us. Poverty, superstitions, innocence, misunderstandings destiny of maandeshi man, and simple philosophy of their life-whole maandeshi life he painted through his short stories and novels. He presented poverty & prosperity, ugliness and beauty, meekness and power of people living in maandesh. All this is depicted with utmost details. It made him storywriter of mass and not for few. His different narrations made his writing modern. It is pathetic, simple and flowing. Use of simple words, phrases and sentences made him to describe everything with accuracy. This perfect use of experience and language made it powerful. He achieved the rare skill of powerful sketches. He presented simple, straight forward life of men living in maandesh, ineffectiveness of

urban culture. All accepted role of destiny in human life. No one challenges it. They face blows of destiny and endure everything. Poverty, drought, diseases and different calamities are the forms of destiny but, maandeshi man endures all this. He never complains. He tries to overcome all this.

It shows that both of them have written novels and presented ineffable beauty and charm of selected regions. Thomas Hardy's presentation of 'Wessex' and Vyankatesh Madgulkar's presentation of 'Maandesh' attracts reader's attention. Thomas Hardy's 'Wessex' contains- Berkshire, Wiltshire, Hampshire, Somersetshire, Dorsetshire and Devon – 6 counties, whereas, Vyankatesh Madgulkar's 'Maandesh' contains- Atpadi, Jat, Kawathemahankal, Mangalwedha, Maan and Sangola- 6 main Talukas in South-West Maharashtra. Both these writers presented common people with different professions, dress codes, languages, customs, manners, and morals, social habits from Wessex and Maandesh respectively.

Great comparatists emphasized relevance and need of comparative studies from different literary traditions. Hence, this paper attempts to highlight need of comparative study of selected novelists of different literary traditions, South Asian & West. Vyankatesh Madgulkar is a hidden gem in Marathi literature. Presentation of his writings at global level will inspire many others to follow same path. Glorification of Wessex and Maandesh can be done through comparative study of the novels of Hardy and Madgulkar. They tried to immortalize these regions. Comparative study of these writers may prove fruitful to the budding regional writers and research scholars in England and India, especially from Western Maharashtra. Such comparative study will pinpoint some unexplored similarities of both writers and thus, it will be helpful for clear perception about both writers & literature & culture of South Asia & West for coming generations. Following common grounds can prove useful for such study.

- As Regional writers their literary qualities are not fully exposed. Such comparative study is useful for it.
- Both of them presented wildness in man and his cultural ideas.

- They presented problems generated due to illiteracy, superstitions, vagaries of nature etc. displacement; unsettlement due to frequent migration is common.
- Both were impressed by tragic pathos of humanity caught in between its craving for happiness and the harsh limitations of material and social facts.
- Hardy's novels present an important stage in the growth & development of regional English fiction. In the same way, Vyankatesh Madgulkar's novels are milestones of Marathi regional fiction.
- Both depicted plight of characters set against agricultural society threatened by the forces of the change.
- Both confined to the relatively small setting of the regions- the Wessex & the Maandesh respectively. By depicting these small regions, they described their countries & characters.
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We have to think of formation of some such new literary & cultural links between the East & the West. Comparative studies never think of barriers of country & society. It can be now realized that modern comparatists should try to form such new literary links between South Asian & Western literature. Regionalisms, presentation of culture are the main fields to be handled & exploited for such comparative studies. Through this, writers can create the bridges of friendships across the borders. Socio-cultural changes in different societies can be studied. Better understanding of regional literature is possible. We can now place it on the global literary scene.

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