



The background of the novels of Pearl S. Buck

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Abstract:

The Pearl S. Buck Historic Site is presently developing its tours to emphasize the themes of Social Justice. Thus, my aim in this paper is to clarify actual "Acts of Injustice" which Ms. Buck experienced, or observed, and how she responded to such acts. Ms. Buck's maiden name was Pearl Comfort Sydenstricker, or in Chinese, Sy-Jen-Jhu. Her family, Presbyterian missionaries did not live in the missionary compound but out among the Chinese people. Pearl had some freedom to encounter people in public. She had blond hair and blue eyes and therefore, among the dark-haired and dark-eyed people of China, she looked like a wild beast, a foreigner. People would laugh at her. This upset her, so she went home and looked up the curse words in the Chinese language. She had a Chinese tutor, Mr. Kung. One day she was out among the Chinese and she was laughed at for her appearance. Suddenly she began to curse the people with these Chinese curse words. They were shocked because they did not realize that she knew how to speak Chinese or understand what they were saying of her. This paper presents ideas of Pearl S. Buck about social relation & cooperation for each other. She explains the real sense of human life. Her most of the novels are based on social, political & religious positive relationship to maintain peace & harmony in society for each other. Most of her novels present real sense & purpose of life. This paper is an attempt to present the background & positive ideology of Pearl S. Buck about creative & supportive them to make this world peaceful & harmonious for each human being.

Key Notes: *Background of novels, Social relations, Humanity & social harmony, Positive environment for human relationship.*

Pearl S. Buck's first book of fiction was published in the year 1930, when she had attained the age of thirty eight. She was born in America, but she was nurtured in eastern atmosphere in China. There were other nation's culture that supplied a background of divers cultural milieuto the novels of Buck. About the Chinese background Pearl S. Buck writes in her autobiographical novel.

"But around china clustered a host of other nations and peoples, whose citizens I frequently saw and some of whom I knew well. Thus I learned about India very easily indeed Among our friends were Asians too, from the Philippines and the Siam from Indonesia, Burma and Korea. Thus early I conceived a world where in china was the center and around us where these other peoples, all friendly, all interesting and ready to be visited".

From her very childhood after imbuing this cosmopolitan atmosphere Pearl S. Buck went back to America at the age of seventeen and thus got a thorough knowledge of her own country and its beauties. The novelist reached America by crossing the continent of Europe through train and thus she got a chance to see Russia, Poland, Germany, Switzerland and England. After the publication of The God Earth Pearl S. Buck completed her study of almost all the cultures of the world, by visiting France, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Japan and also little of India and Ceylon. During her college years America Pearl S. Buck served there as an assistant professor of psychology. Thus naturally with that personal life, Pearl S. Buck's whole work bears the cultural, psychological and international stamp. In some of her works philosophical, scientific and historical elements are also mixed, but the chief trends are cultural, psychological and international Pearl's autobiography My Several Words reveals the existence of several worlds related to her own life. The three elements international, cultural and psychological are mixed together and they form an international studies of cultures derived from the bulk of her themes through individuals or otherwise, and the psychological approach is her fixed approach to human nature, but the difference and degree and proportion is there.

In her first novel East Wind: West Wind, Pearl S. Buck writes about the cultural study of eastern and western custom's value especially in relation to marriage, work, upbringing of children and love. The difference in orthodox Chinese customs has been brought out clearly in comparison with the cultural metamorphosis, which took place in China after the impact of western education. It describes the story of a girl whose brother returns from China. With an American wife. He explains the psychological relations with the girl. Her parents and old domestic maid servants are almost bewildered at all the manners and mannerism of the west. Similarly the American girl find herself surrounded by the peculiarities and strange behavior of eastern culture and outlook. The novel also emphasizes an important aspect of international culture and that is the inter-cultural Marriages, which should be permissible and acceptable in the society. The novel deals with an international and cultural study of Chinese and Japanese life. The first part delineates the modern phase of Chinese life in the wake of revolutionary ideas but the second part deals with the cultural life of a Japanese family- the Japanese character, domestic life conjugal ceremonies, mode and manners. In the third part of novel the novelist explain the theme of intercultural marriage. The novel also concludes certain timely political declinations, but the heart of the tale lies in its cultural and international themes.

On reading the novel Voice in The House, we find that it is a pure psychological novel based on the problem of low work, high aspirations and an unsympathetic attitude of the world. It deals with the tragic tale of a beautiful girl's ruin born of a German housekeeper in the family of an American lawyer. The dreamy, convent educated beauty is forced to marry the Chauffer by the mother. The girl does not like to forsake her dreamy world, in which she had established imaginary relation with the members of the master family. The environment does not soften and the girl finally goes to stay in a lunatic asylum for proper treatment of the complex. The conflict between heredity and environment has been developed to the last point, and sexual problems of these maladjusted marriages have been vividly portrayed. The conclusions of one case have been wisely applied to the case of daughter's family. She

developes relation in her own turn with a vigorous simpleton. Thus the abnormal psychology becomes the subject of the novel.

The Bond Maid is a good novel of Pearl S. Buck, which highlights the international study of the Jewish and Chinese mixed cultures with each other. There is a portrayal of a Jew family against a Chinese background. A thorough picture of an alien culture with all its religious fanaticism and business shrewdness. An intense psychological study has been done in the Chinese culture. The Bond Maid is a great lover but not entitled to marry the master, but throughout her life a lover and well wisher of the master. Cultural, psychological and international elements are fused together in the novel.

In author's novel Pavilion of Women, the novelist writes about the women's condition and their psychology. This novel originates in the sex psychology of a married woman at the age of forty. It becomes a philosophical novel preaching the gospel of spiritual love, between an aristocratic Chinese wife and a priest, coming from Italy. It is a mystical tale discussing all the religious ethical and metaphysical problems of life and death. In this novel the novelist discusses about domestic, social cultural, international, psychological and philosophical problems, the philosophical texture survives dominant. It also gives us a glimpse of the cultural pattern in the aristocratic Chinese family.

The novelist Pearl S. Buck highlights the background of Come My Beloved with India. This is an international novel connected with the three types of missionary experiments done by the American missionaries in India. Cultural, religious, social and poetical ideas of east and west have been discussed and hints for their proper handling caste here and there. Love and marriage relations are dealt with and in the end a very realistic sex tangle has been inserted between an Indian doctor and an American girl. This episode becomes the psychological touchstone of the novel, which reveals the ultimate character of the American Missionary, his narrowness and intolerance and lack of vision. At the sometime it reveals the weakness of Indian character in a passivity and fatality shows the American girl in all her stead fastness in love, her open, honest and bold nature in this novel the novelist reflects the views of the British rulers in India and gives an analysis of the Gandhi an outlook on life.

Portrait Of A Marriage is a pure psychological study of married American life dealing with the problem of art and heredity. The novelist presents her own ideas of conjugal adjustment and a Freudian analysis of father and son relations. War and mixed marriages creep up in the along with the deep philosophy of real love and possibility of the best married relationship between the opposites.

In the novel The Mother we read about the duties and responsibilities of a mother towards her children, Mother is the best teacher for a child. The novelist presents the psychology of a mother. The mother is an universal psychological study of motherhood under Chinese circumstances, but applicable to womanhood of any nation. A graphic portrayal of the day-to-day routine of a farmer's wife, her duties at home towards mother-in-law, children, husband and in the field. The small bickering and quarrels and finally the desertion by the husband. Incessant waiting under harsh duties

and sexual urges, and traps of crafting people under the from town. Innocent surrender absorption, marriages, then death and birth in the family. The novel is a study of woman's heart in all phases of its instincts.

Other Gods deals with the study of an American Hero's life and the psychology of his worship has been revealed. The setting of the tale is in China, America and India. The eternal instinct of worship in the human heart, the absence of a visible God finds shape in its blind, devotion to some Other God. Although the other God might be as frail and full of weakness as any ordinary human being. In this novel the novelist also reveals the hollowness of greatness which is achieved through publicity and propaganda. Greatness is thrust and heroes are made out of the sheer craze for the worship. In the struggle of kit the wife of the hero, much psychology of women's heart has been revealed in relation with the hero. The study of the hero is also way psychological analysis of eternal man as a bundle of strength and weakness.

In the novel The Good Earth Pearl S. Buck press the cultural and psychological study of a Chinese peasant's life under the stress of natural calamities. The background of novel The Good Earth is Chinese otherwise it is a study of human heart under all sorts of circumstances ranging from poverty and beggary up to landlordism. It includes deeper suggestions towards universal philosophies of earth and skies.

The Angry Wife is a novel dealing with the problem of inter-racial marriage, between an American soldier of civil war and the Mulatto maid servants. The tangle takes place in a family dominated by haughty and imperious wife of the older brother. For whom the white were white and the black were black. The white wife is beaten at her own game, when her one daughter elopes suddenly with a Brazilian, and son supports the marriage of the uncle with a black girl. Her frustration does not end here, her own husband fails a prey in some degree to the femaleness of the Negro slave girl's sister. A study of abnormal sex thirst is also there in the relation of Macbin and Molly. Macbin is made important through a wound and Molly is desirous of motherhood through any one. It is a study of various types of characters psychology to the core forms the basis of novel.

The novel Bright Processions was written by Pearl S. Buck in America and its background is American culture form. It deals with the Author's philosophy of the 'Good' and incorporates a plan of universal happiness through the concentration of 'Good' against all the evil forces of the world. Taking goodness is an infectious power. This novel is vision of a Bright Processions of the good and happy people. It suggests the possibilities of an idealistic world, and heavenly in nature. In the beginning of the novel sex and sin are there, but in the end it becomes an abstract thesis of Good. Psychological discussions are there through an expert in psycho-analysis. Religious propositions of faith and good have also been discussed in the novel.

When an atom bomb was splitter on Japan in Hiroshima and Nagasaki innumerable innocent people died. The incident made the novelist very sad because it was against humanity. We are not God. We

have no right to kill anyone. The novelist Pearl S. Buck wrote a novel Command The Morning which is a very thoroughly international novel based on the manufacturing of atom bomb about the most awesome of four time. The novelist contains her views against the slotting of the atom bomb and manufacture of atom bomb in America. The scientist of various countries co - operated in its completion in America and the circumstances which compared its use made it a matter of international significance. Side by side reflections have been cast on various political ideologies of the period. The reaction of its use has been vividly and politically described along with the uglier implications of war in general. It is a character study of so many scientists of world fame. The novelist includes spiritual and religious aspects of the problem created by the use of atom bomb. Psychological and human interests have been maintained through sex hunger, its satisfaction through love relations and realistic portrayal of the life of scientist's wife. It is an international problem, which has been very explicitly deal in the novel. It is an achievement of human intellect in its various aspects.

In the novel Letter From Peking there is a tragic ctale of an American girl and American Chinese husband. They are united in marriage, but separated due to political upheavals. The tale of the American father of a man, a separate study of inter racial relations with deep psychological reasons compelled the man to marry a Chinese girl, not out of love but out of fury and revenge because he was rejected by his American beloved. The problem of inter racial marriages have been carried further, when the mixed heritage of the boy Renee becomes a hindrance in the materialization of marriage with a pure American girl. Cultural reflections and comparisons are there along with the psychological study of separated hearts. The book reveals the attitude of Pearl S. Buck towards the theory of dreams and her belief in the world of spirits.

Gods Men is a novel, which reflects an international problem of human moral reflections. It also includes morality psychological problems through two extreme characters. Sons of two types of missionaries in China, it reveals their hollowness of dolor psychology ideals of service humanity and the solution of the worst evil of humanity, which is at the bottom of all evils, have been propounded. The setting of the tale is almost universal. America-China-France-India-England and Germany all the countries have been included in the telling of the tale. Like other novel it is not free from the psychology of sex and love.

The Long Love is a good and psychological novel. In this novel Peael S. Buck presents the psychological study of a publisher's family, domestic life, revealing the slow stabilizing of love relations, which were very thin and meager in beginning. Other problems of marriage and love also have been dealt with in the form of an abnormal love tangles between aged people and young girls. The problem of love ideals and hereditary trades have been dealt inside out. The outer manifestations of love, and its inner solidarity are sometimes deceptive and mislead people to wrong conclusion. Infect these relation stabilize through the impact of distressing circumstances. The psychology of love is root of the novel.

The novel Imperial woman is a psychological study of historical personage. It deals with the international and political problems relevantly connected with the novelist. The colorful personality of the last Manchu empress of China has been pointed from concubinage to express hood but the analysis of permanent human instincts have not been last sight of in relation to sex, child, love and family. International relations have been dealt with, according to occasions and situation. The French, The British and The American interests in the nature land, their treatise and spread of cultures have been discussed at length. The historical theme is mixed with cultural, psychological and international elements.

The novel Hidden Flower highlights the problem of daily life, it takes the Problem of a mixed child born out of an American Japanese marriage, through an adopting agency in America, but in its development. It also includes other international problem and the reaction of war on the psychology of American soldier stationed in Japan. The novelist presents the effect of foreign education upon young native minds, The patriotic attitudes, born out of bitter experiences of elderly people in foreign lands, the psychological weak point of such impulsive marriages, the American weakness of character and lack of responsibility in the face of harsh realities of life, and side by side a parallel comparison has also been done of the eastern and western characters and cultures. It ends in the glorification of the world child, culture, psychological and an international study.

In Kin-Folk there is a comparative study between China and America. This is a cultural and an international novel. The novelist highlight the the deep contrast between China and America and points towards the role of the western educated youth in the up liftmen of their country. Subtle problem of love, marriage and sexual adjustment have been given due place through the characters of Dr. Ling and uncle Tao in the novel also presents the orthodox views of eastern thinkers about the western conception of life and love.

This novel Dragon Seed highlights an international tale of the semi-Japanese war fulfilling psychological aims by revealing the metamorphosis of human nature under the climate of the war. It is a tale as to how during war lust and cruelty predominate, simple farmers turns into crafty cheats, innocent youth becomes nerciles murder, suspicion, distrust and treachery predominate abnormal small activities in sex life, which change the whole life and career of people, and the air is pervaded with revenge and inhumanity.

This novel The Promise is a continuation of Dragon Seed. The theme of novel is set against the Burnese background. There is a romance at the bottom but many international problems have also been dealt with side by side. The British colonialism, the American handling of eastern problems and the discussion of Indian-Japanese-Chinese relations. It reveals especially the hollowness of British war promise, and discusses their superiority complex over the darker races of mankind. Uncounted opportunities have been availed of studying cultural lives of The Burmese, Americans, The British and The Chinese people.

The novelist read the life, customs and traditions of American of the novel This Proud Heart. She presents a psychological study of an American feminine artist Susan Gaylord. The philosophy of art is discussed in relation to various duties towards life. The problems of a lady sculpture are dealt with the face of the utter realities of the world. It is a parallel study of a male and female artist and gives all the complexities of their carrier. A man can be hard towards his duties and responsibilities, towards family life, but for a woman they are as precious as the creation of art.

In all novels Pearl S. Buck we read about cultural, psychological and international issues. In Sons the novelist presets its theme rooted in the psychological problems of sex. The novel Sons is a study of a second phase of life, which began with a peasant and spread in shape of a merchant, a warlord and a land lord. The phase's Chinese life forms the basis of this novel Sons. It is a exciting tale of warlord's life with all his made furies, hated of women and complexities having psychological reasons.

Pearl S. Buck has read more about the Chinese, American and Indian and other cultures. The novel A House Devided completes the study of the novelist about the last phases of the Chinese cultural translation, which came with impact of the west. The merchants, landlords and warlords were breathing with their last political awakening in China. Some international interest centers in the book as it deals with the career of the Hero in America. Ultimately the power of the land is shown supreme. This lure of the earth is apart of Pearl S. Buck's philosophy.

This novel The Towns Man by Pearl S. Buck highlights the settlement of town in the heart of America prairies, and the plantation of older cultures in the newer lands have been depicted. All the problems of practical life connected with this transplantation of life have been dealt along with the problems of sex, marriage and love. The novel The Towns Man includes the problems of side detail of the black and white relations in America and also offers its solutions.

Thus the three elements Cultural, psychological and International pervade the whole work of her work. They are found mixed with historical, scientific, philosophical and political elements. The last being the least and the philosophical being the foremost elements of Pearl S. Buck's fiction. As an American by birth and tradition at home, everything that saw in China, Japan, India, Burma and England became and enegm,a to her cultural. She has describes the dresses, man, women, children their manners, behaviors, foods, festivals, ceremony customs, birth, deaths and betrothal also. Their domestic life, family traditions and mutual relations, all these forms one aspect of her work. She herself belonged to to totally different traditions an way of life, hence there was a very natural scope of comparison, contrast and conclusion about the cultural and philosophical values of her life. As her own life has been spent in international settings. The theme mixed marriage with the central theme of her novels. To sum up, inter-racial marriages occur in the following manner in the novels of Pearl S. Buck:

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| 1. East Wind : West Wind | Chinese – American |
| 2. The Patriot | Chinese – German, Chinese – Japanese |

3. The Bond Maid	Chinese – Jewish
4. Pavilion of Woman	Chinese – Italian
5. Come my Beloved	Indian – American
6. The Promise	Chinese – Muslim, Chinese
7. The Angry Wife	Negro - American
8. Hidden Flower	Japanese – American
9. Letter from Peking	American – Chinese
10. The Long Love	Italian – American
11. The towns men	{English – American} { Negro – French }
12. Command the Morning	Anglo Indian – Indian American
13. Kin Folk	Chinese – American

Because of the above sex tables, the above novels dominantly become international novels. The following may further be added to the list dealing with international themes, not through marriages, but in other ways also.

14. A House Devided
15. Imperial Women

The novels of Pearl S. Buck purely about Chinese life are very few.

1. The Good Earth
2. The Mother
3. Sons

The Cultural studies of the novelist include the studies of the following cultures.

1. Chinese
2. Japanese
3. Jewish
4. Indian
5. American

Psychology in Pearl S. Buck's novel is very approach to human nature and it is at the bottom of all her characters but the following novels reflect psychological tendency more prominently.

1. The Good Earth
2. Voice in the House
3. Portrait of the Marriage
4. Other Gods
5. This Proud Heart
6. Letter from Peking
7. The Long Love
8. Sons

It will be better to group her novels purely about American life. They are infact much more than her novels about China.

1. Portrait of a Marriage
2. Other Gods

3. Town Man
4. This Proud Heart
5. Voice in the House
6. Long Love
7. Command the Morning
8. Angry Wife
9. Bright Profession

Her philosophical novels may also be numbered.

1. Pavilion of Women
2. Bright processions
3. Other Gods

Pearl S. Buck has openly admitted in her autobiography that the material of some of her novels was supplied by actual accident of life about the background of The Good Earth she writes.

“My story had long been clear in my mind. Indeed it had saved itself firmly and swiftly from the events of my life.

About her novel Kin Folk pearl S. Buck writes that how the material was supplied to her for novels. About Kin Folks she writes.

“In all my book I have made such mixture. Years later for example, I put into Kin Folks bits of the same northern country. Uncle Tao’s tumor, which he kept so proudly in a glass bottle of everyone to see grew first and actually in the stout body of madam change”

In The Mother the novelist has given us the story of her faithful women servant. Accordingly –
“The story of this women is so complex to tell here and perhaps no one could understand in it detail who had not heard her tell it and explain all that had happened, year later. She became the material in the very rough for my novel my mother”

The background of Pearl S. Buck’s work is so diverse wild and of such universal nature that it secures a place for her irrespective of any consideration to its merits.

Conclusion:

Pearl S. Buck was truly a pioneer in appreciating the People's Republic of China and its emergence as a world power. Through her writings and humanitarian activities, she often made attempts to reduce the cultures of China and the United States to their lowest common denominator in order to bridge the two worlds in which she lived.

Although Pearl Sydenstricker was born in America (1892), she was taken to China by her missionary parents when she was only a few months old. She spoke Chinese before she spoke English, played with Chinese children, and listened intently to the Buddhist and Taoist legends related to her by her Chinese nurse. She later called these legends her first literary influence. Another strong influence on the young girl was her mother, Caroline Sydenstricker, who told stories about America to Pearl. She

also read books available to her: *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and various works of Shakespeare, Scott, Thackeray, George Eliot, and, especially, Dickens.

Her love of these stories and her interest in people's lives made Pearl S. Buck determined at an early age to become a writer of stories. As she later writes in *My Several Worlds*: "Even then I had intended to be a teller of tales, a writer of novels, though how that ends was to be achieved I did not know. One long to make what one loves, and above all I loved to hear stories about people. I was a nuisance of a child, I fear, always curious to know about people and why they were as I found them." Aided by her mother's encouragement, Pearl got her first youthful selections published in the children's section of the *Shanghai Mercury*.

Because of her childhood in China, Pearl S. Buck was very sympathetic with many aspects of Chinese culture. At an early age, she studied Confucian scholarship and Chinese history. Later, she worked in an institution to rehabilitate slave girls who had fled from the cruel treatment of their owners. These experiences made Pearl aware not only of the evils and injustices within the Chinese culture, but also made her sympathetic to the plight of the Chinese at the hands of Western imperialism. She personally felt the results of this exploitation in 1905 when her family, though each member had been a dear friend to the Chinese of the village, was forced to flee to the seacoast for protection during the Boxer Rebellion. For the first time, Pearl realized that she was somehow an alien, merely a visitor in the only world of which she had any direct experience. All the ideas by Pearl S. Buck indicate that real sense of human life is to live a life filled with love & happiness. The real purpose of our life is to create a positive environment in the world to make this world a family to move or live for every citizen of the world. In her most of the novels Pearl S. Buck has explained the real destination of human life. She also highlights the purpose of life. According to her "Killing to each other is not purpose of our life or humanity. It is only to love & have faith in each other thinking that we all are the best creation of God."

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- 4-*Fighting Angel: Portrait of a Soul* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936) – about her father, Absalom Sydenstricker (1852–1931)
- 5-*The Spirit and the Flesh* (New York: John Day, 1944) – includes *The Exile: Portrait of an American Mother* and *Fighting Angel: Portrait of a Soul*

6-*Het China-gevoel van Pearl S. Buck* (The China-feeling of Pearl S. Buck, Uitgeverij Brandt, 2021), by the Dutch sportswoman and writer Bettine Vriesekoop.^[45]

7-*East Wind: West Wind* (New York: John Day, 1930)^[46] – working title *Winds of Heaven*

8-*The Good Earth* (New York: John Day, 1931); *The House of Earth* trilogy #1 – made into a feature film *The Good Earth* (MGM, 1937)

9-*Sons* (New York: John Day, 1933); *The House of Earth* trilogy #2; serialized in *Cosmopolitan* (4–11/1932)

10-*A House Divided* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1935); *The House of Earth* trilogy #3

11-*The House of Earth* (trilogy) (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1935) – includes: *The Good Earth, Sons, A House Divided*

12-*All Men Are Brothers* (New York: John Day, 1933) – a translation by Buck of the Chinese classical prose epic *Water Margin* (Shui Hu Zhuan)

13-*The Mother* (New York: John Day, 1933) – serialized in *Cosmopolitan* (7/1933–1/1934)

14-*This Proud Heart* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1938) – serialized in *Good Housekeeping* magazine (8/1937–2/1938)

15-*The Patriot* (New York: John Day, 1939)