

A SYMPTOMATIC STUDY OF HOME AND HISTORY

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ABSTRACT

The notion of home and its intricate relationship with history forms a compelling lens through which to explore the works of renowned authors such as Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, and Bharati Mukherjee. These writers, each hailing from diverse cultural backgrounds, navigate the complexities of identity, belonging, and displacement in their literary creations. Through a symptomatic analysis, their texts emerge as rich tapestries interwoven with personal and collective histories, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the concept of home. Rushdie's exploration often delves into the upheavals of postcolonial societies, where the search for home intertwines with political turmoil and cultural reclamation. Naipaul's lens scrutinizes the legacy of colonialism, revealing the tensions between tradition and modernity, and the elusive quest for a sense of rootedness amidst cultural fragmentation.

KEYWORDS: Home and History, multifaceted nature, cultural reclamation.

INTRODUCTION

A short story is a short narrative, usually fictitious, almost always in prose, which creates a mood, illuminates a character or two, and develops a single series of events. It is as old as the history of literature. But it has been changing according to the times. In the twentieth century it is characterized by brevity, texture freedom from excrescence, and a unity of effect. As Edger Allen Poe says, "A 'tale' is capable of being perused at one sitting." According to Poe, a short story is to be pursued in one sitting. .

Brander Mathews asserts, "The short story was a distinct genre, a separate kind, a genus by itself."² He further says that the short story, "Deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation. "³

With regards to the tenets of the short story the theme, character, plot, situation, language etc are important. The story must have a theme, which is congruent with its moral. It is the underlying thought that pervades a short story, which makes it something more than a mere narration of

events. The theme will have a vital significance for it is capable of producing in the reader an emotional uplift and an intellectual satisfaction.

With regards to characterization it is as important as the theme. The author gives a brief description of the character in the beginning of the story itself. He gives him a name and gives a brief physical description but it should not be built by what the author says about him. The character should reveal his/her individual traits by what he does, how he thinks, the way he talks, the gestures he makes, the philosophy he expresses etc. The character description is not too lengthy and it is often woven into the story as the story moves forward. The character thinks, the way he talks, the gestures he makes, the philosophy he expresses etc. The character description is not too lengthy and it is often woven into the story as the story moves forward. The character should also be visualized according to the theme and situation of the story. If the writer wants to write about a New England farmer he should paint a word picture in accordance with the general description of the character somewhat differently from other persons of the same class,

In some stories situation plays a more important role than the character. These

stories are called atmosphere dominant stories where the situation or an event dominates the whole story than a character. Eudora Welty rightly observes of the atmosphere in a story. Thus, "We are bearing in mind that the atmosphere in a story may be its chief glory- and for another thing, that it may be giving us an impression altogether contrary to what lies under it."⁴

Narratology also plays an important role in the short story. The short story writer puts forward his/her theme in the story in three ways, in first person, third person, or in an omniscient way. The first person narration in other words is called authorial narration, which creates a close rapport with the reader. The storyteller strikes a direct contact with the reader, for instance, in Updike's "Wife-Wooing" the story is narrated in first person and present tense, it greatly enhances the reader's sense of immediacy. The reader identifies closely with the narrator, who is telling and seeing it all- inevitably in a light favorable to himself.

In the third person narration the contact with the reader may be less but the scope for understanding the situation is wider. Sometimes it also creates a tension between what the characters do not know completely, between the external action and the internal reactions, between the

grossness of gesture and the refinement of thought, between what really is and what the character thinks, About the third person narration as is seen in his short story "The Beast in the Jungle", Henry James felt, "that the most effective point of view for a story was to submerge the storyteller into a character he called the "central intelligence".

Dialogue also plays an important role in the short story; every short story has a certain percentage of dialogue, which depends entirely on the writer. As Abrams rightly observes, in a character dominant story, "Nothing more happens than an encounter and a conversation between two people."⁶ In Hemingway's, "A Clear Well Lighted Plays" a dialogue between two waiters discloses the story of an old man, who is always in a drunken mood* Dialogue used in the short story is qualitative rather than quantitative. The character always speaks about something that is relevant to the story's problem and not about some distant incident that is irrelevant to the subject. Dialogue is always relevant to the character and to the situation. Thus all these tenets of the short story are to be developed well in order to create a good short story.

In the distant past, generations were bound together by oral narrations in varying spacio-temporal locations. The roots of the

modern storyteller lie in the century's old, unwritten part of history, whether he revisits it or creates it. A storyteller thus has always been finding a solace in his/her society regardless of time whether the story is an account of events, a version of the past, a narration of some supernatural events, a description of an experience, a riddle, or an anecdote. The tale of the present and of the mysterious past has, at all times, enamoured the listener as the prime source of entertainment and knowledge. Stories differ if one moves from one place to another, the logic and the manner of the telling also changes as we move from one country to the other, but the story in general aims to fulfill the same basic social and individual needs.

Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories

he says,

When was a boy, four or five years of age my grandfather convinced Vedatin (from a family that can boast of having been Vedanta's at least since the thirteenth century, and again brahmin advisers to kings, first in Rajaputna, another thousand years earlier, and yet again Brahmins to other kings, may be the Greco-Indian ones in Gandhara, earlier yet- at least such our mythical genealogy tells us) — and my grandfather taught me Amara, that wonderful thesaurus which, like a grave and

good brahmin boy, I had to learn by heart, and thus never have to ask who the Two-headed one is, of course he is Ganesha, or Kartikeya, his brother, who of course is Commander-in-chief of all the armies ,etc,
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This training from his grandfather had a great effect on his writings. The allpervasive philosophical, religious references in his works exemplify this. Raja Rao's father was a teacher and scholar in Nizam's schools. So he went to Hyderabad and entered the Madarssa-Aliya school, which was meant for Muslim noble families. At school he was greatly influenced by his headmaster Durand, who taught him philosophy,

Prisoner of Zenda, and later Aristotle's works. He was also introduced to Sufism by him. Every year Raja Rao spent some time in Malnad Hills where he enjoyed the company of priestly-Brahmins. This contact with the Brahmins developed a sense for philosophy and interest in classical literature. This also provided him with the capital material for his works.

After the completion of his primary education in Hyderabad he left for Aligarh for higher studies. He joined B.A with History and English Literature as optionals. Luckily an Englishman by name Dickinson taught him "Avignan, Michelangelo". Jack

Hill, his French professor, taught him French and introduced him to Valery and Gide. In the mean while he received letter from Sir Patric Zedus who invited him to join at an international college at Montpellia at Frances Then the Government of. Hyderabad awarded a scholarship, "Asiatic Society Scholarship" and Mr. Brunet, who taught him Aristotle provided with him the required money. So he left for "College-des-Ecossaise" Montpellier in France. There he studies these for five years. Later he perused research at Sorbonne under the guidance of Cazsamian on the Indian Influence on Irish Literature. But unfortunately he couldn't complete his Ph.D. It was there he started writing stories in

Kannada and French languages. In 1932 he was appointed to the editorial board of Mercure-de-France (Paris) a position held until 1937.He married a French woman,

Camille Mouly, a professor of French, who translated The Bhagavat Getha and Aurobindo's Commentaries on Indian epics into French. Soon after his marriage, he started writing in French, English, and Kannada. But he witnessed the most recent literary trends in France, especially the literary innovations of symbolists like Valery and Gide.

This in a way influenced his works markedly.

He finally left France in 1939 just before the outbreak of World War II. At that time he was drawn towards India. He was passionately concerned with India. After his arrival to India he first met Sri Aurobindo and had a dialogue with him on various matters about India. He even visited Benaras, which found place in his writings particularly in his short

stories. Later he went to Ramana Maharshi Ashram in Tiruvannamali, Madras. His contact with Ramana Maharshi inspired him to touch upon Indian philosophy and religion in his short stories and novels. After a short stay in the Ashram he went to Pandit Taranath at his Premayatana Ashram in Mysore. Mr.M.K. Naik feels that, "Pandit Taranath had a lasting influence on Raja Rao and his aesthetic theories suggest that the

Master in the stories "Narsiga" and "The Cow of Barricades", is modeled on him" ⁸

In 1942 he met Mahatma Gandhi in his Ashram, at Sevagram. He was very much attracted by his philosophy of Karma yoga of Bhagavat Gita. This type of thinking in Gandhi appealed to him and inspired him to participate actively in the freedom struggle.

M.K.Naik comments on what Raja Rao believed, "Besides having faith in Vedic and Upanishad values, and his idea of good and evil as the resultant of moral outlook on life, are clearly the evidence of Gandhian influence on Raja Rao',

Rao's quest for fulfillment was not completed until he met Sri Krishna Menon (Atmananda Guru) in 1943 at Tiruvallaouram in Travancore. The novel, *T-bg-S.Z.p.gn.t-@Ld the Rope* ends with the protagonist's search for his Guru at Trivandrum. There is also a strong autobiographical element in this novel, which describes the failure of his marriage with Camelley in 1949. After his stay in the Ashram he became an active member of a cultural organization of Sri Avidyanantha at Vanaparti in South India. He also became a member of Chetna cultural centre. For him literature basically is a means to achieve spiritual discipline and self-realization.

Raja Rao was influenced by many French writers, like Andre Gide, Ma]raux, Romain Rolland, and Heidegger. Andre Gide's influence brought home to him the 'precise sense of the play of ethics.' He was also greatly influenced by Andre Gide's 'metaphysical activity', which reflected in some of the short stories like The Cow of Barricades and Other Stories. In his own words, "In my mature years two authors,

both French, have influenced me Paul Valery and Andre Gide...Andre Gide brought alongside Valery, a great humanity and a more precise sense of the play on poetical sensibility." Apart from the French writers, Raja Rao was also influenced by writers like Shakespeare, Russian Dostoevsky, Kafka, and Ignacio Silone. He was very much attracted towards the modern American youth for they were at once direct and profound. As he says, "The American is abstract. He is interested in the essentials of life They are interested in the joy of existence. Now they have only to learn the art of life. Essentials of Life, quality of life, art of Life, joy of existence are the things which interested Raja Rao the most.

Raja Rao started writing in his native language Kannada during 1931-32. As he confesses, "I started writing in Kannada. I wrote a novel in Kannada and then started writing in English again. Then my Macaulay English was left behind. I started translating my Kannada texts and began to find the richness of the English language".¹ Actually his literary career started with the publication of a short story, "Akkayya" in English while he was in France. More stories appeared in French and English Journals. His wife was his first literary critic and so he dedicated his first collection

of short stories The Cow of Barricades and Other Stories.

Rao's first novel Kanthapura appeared in 1938. It is about how Gandhi struggled for Independence from the British. A Major part of the novel was written while he was in a thirteenth century French Castle in the Alps. The novel did not win much popularity for him. Raja Rao's second work of art The Cow of Barricades and Other Stories was published in 1947. His second novel The Serpent and the Rope was published in 1960. It is autobiographical in tone. His next novel The Cat and Shakespeare appeared in 1965, Comrade Kirilloy was published in 1976 but Raja Rao's second volume of short stories The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories was published in 1978. What is remarkable about these stories is that Rao makes a generous use of metaphor drawn from European register and places them in his own Indian tradition to exemplify the worldview. His writings thus acquire a universal authenticity. Rao, s next novel The Chestmaster and His Moves was published in 1988. His metaphysical bias is much more apparent in this novel for which he enlarges the dimensions of his novel by appropriating the domain of metaphysics. The narrative derives from the indigenous katha tradition in Sanskrit literature. He

uses the metaphor of the game of chess to animate philosophical ideas. On Ganga Ghat published in 1989 is about Benaras.

While first volume of Raja Rao's short stories The Cow of Barricades and Other Stories appeared in 1947. The second volume, The Policeman and the Rose and Other Stories appeared in 1978. The second contains a six page 'preface' by Raja Rao, which throws light on his motives for writing short stories. Raja Rao is better known in India and abroad for his novels than for his short stories. He says,

I write because I cannot but otherwise, I would not write for anybody. You may say: why do you publish? Because I want others to enjoy what I enjoy. It is very simple. I see a beautiful rose. I want others to come and see it. That is all. C.V. Venugopal comments on the stories that, "Rao's short stories however are not merely an expression of an inner joy, they are that and something more mundane too, a desire to satirize, a desirer to reform the social scene all around M.K. Naik says "The form of the short stories is of popular folk tale and epic legend, with all the simplicity and credulity, its myth-making power and the strong moralistic sub-stratum on which it is, in its popular wisdom, often grounded." Though the short stories of Raja Rao are attempts at revealing the social evils or at preaching

Gandhian idea of non-violence, they are folk tales first, forming an integral part of Indian tradition, interpreting the joys and sorrows of peasant people through an artless narration. In these stories he deals with the social problems faced by a low-caste woman like Javni, a Brahmin widow Akkayya, and an unfortunate wife like Rati.. Vignettes of Indian Freedom struggle are found in "Narsiga" and "The Cow of Barricades" while "The True Story of Kanakapala, protector of Gold", is a typical Indian folk-tale with a well-etched village grandmother as the narrator. The metaphysical dimensions of India, figure in the later stories such as "Nimka" "India-aFable". "The Policeman and the Rose" is a convoluted allegorical tale, yet it holds out attention because of the imaginative vigour of the narrative. It is not just content but the variety of techniques, which makes his short stories memorable.

CONCLUSION

In the realm of literature, the need for a comprehensive study on the intricate relationship between home and history remains paramount. Such a study, with a focus on acclaimed authors like Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Anita Desai, and Bharati Mukherjee, promises to unveil profound insights into the human condition, cultural identity, and societal dynamics. In

the future, scholars will delve deeper into the narratives crafted by these authors, examining how they intricately weave together themes of home and history. Rushdie's works, characterized by magical realism and historical allegory, offer a poignant exploration of the complexities of belonging and displacement against the backdrop of colonial legacies. Naipaul's narratives, deeply rooted in the landscapes of the Caribbean and India, provide a nuanced examination of post-colonial identity and the enduring impact of historical trajectories on individual lives. Similarly, Desai's evocative prose delves into the intricacies of familial bonds and the sense of rootedness amidst cultural flux. Furthermore, Mukherjee's oeuvre, often exploring the immigrant experience in the United States, offers a compelling lens through which to analyze the intersection of personal history and the broader tapestry of national identity. A symptomatic study of these authors and their works in the future will not only enrich our understanding of literature but also shed light on the ever-evolving dynamics between home, history, and individual agency in an increasingly interconnected world.

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