

Human Emotion as Resistance to Displacement. In “The Submerged Valley” By Manoj Das

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ABSTRACT

Sudden expulsion of a society brings grief and fear and also evokes the personal sentiments in human mind which prevails them to resist the process of rehabilitation. The human feelings of love for their native land and the fear of rootlessness is found in the story "The submerged valley" by Padmashree Manoj Das. He elaborates the longing of villagers for their native land. The voice of the child narrator who is also a victim of exile brings out the feeling of nostalgia in the story. He is successful to evoke sympathy by portraying the resistance of people. Although in rational point of view the rehabilitation has its significance for development and new beginning with new opportunities but the deep rooted human feelings and emotions plays a crucial role in the story which stands against the process of development and modernisation. The writer neither resists development nor support it, he just examines the human emotion related to relocation. The deep rooted beliefs of ancestors and holy places with deities stands one by one as protestors. The paper aims to bring out the deep rooted human emotion related to the past and the place. The personal sentiment show the land valuable and holy no matter it is sacred or profane. The purpose of the study is to examine the inner feeling of inhabitants. The failed protest of villagers and the emotional character Abolkara who is reluctant to leave the valley even after it is submerged give the clear picture of human emotion in the story. By analysing the characters and their point of view we reach to the conclusion that arousal of human emotion is natural in the period of displacement .

Keywords: Rootlessness, Expulsion, Longing, Native Land , Exile, Nostalgia, Rehabilitation, Human Sentiment ,

INTRODUCTION

Indian English writing has been a great portrayal of human emotion through various characters and events. The distinguished traits of characters and events related to them reveals their emotional attitude towards the world and other. Most of the characters belong to local community. Their local language and primitive life with some instances of superstition gives an exact figure of human emotion. In several cases they are the victim of poverty, displacement which makes them to lament for their loss and the problem of adopting new life style add a unique feature to it. Partition literature is the greatest example of trauma inflicted by partition. Beside partition literature the post-independence literature often makes us witness about the discomfort due to displacement along with the emotion related with superstition and blind beliefs. Manoj Das has been a great pioneer of Indian English writing depicts rural area and its people with an emotional tone. In ‘The Mystery of Missing Cap’ we found the gullible villages unaware about political system. His story ‘The Crocodile’s lady’, ‘Farewell to the Ghost’ exhibits the superstition of villagers where people believe ghost and legend stories. “The Submerged Valley” is the greatest example of human with emotion resisting displacement due to the expulsion. The portrayal of emotional characters and several events gives us the idea about their point of view regarding the world. Although the resistance of villagers is baseless

and lacks rationality but the characters prove their deep rooted emotion with the land which makes them to protest against the project.

HUMAN EMOTION AS RESISTANCE TO DISPLACEMENT

“The Submerged Valley” exhibits different traits of characters. It portrays folk characters as fully emotional being. The characters and several incidents in their life seems strange to the reader which is fully based on human emotion. Although they are primitive but their primitive mindset allows them to see everything with an emotion as everything has its own significance and there is nothing futile in the creation of God. Undoubtedly they are believer of God. They believe God blindly and treats every creation with love and affection. The river, mountain, field, trees, even little insignificant creature seems important in their life.

Manoj Das was born in a coastal village of Baleswar in Odisha district in 1934. The village Sankhari in Bhogra is the place of his born and brought which is a primitive area till now. Although the village has received several development programmes and education but there are still superstitions and blind beliefs in the mind of people. The emotional mindset of people is vividly depicted by Das in his writings as a reflection of personal experience. Incidents and characters in his short stories best fit for village life. The theme through which the stories deal with exhibits great sign of local folk culture where emotion of people for even a small thing plays a crucial role in the stories.

“Manoj Das conveys the poignancy of the human situation through humour. In his short stories the comic always has a symbiotic relationship with the serious.” (Biswal,1982,P.1) The depiction of human emotion with humour is a unique feature in Manoj Das’s stories. In “The Crocodile’s Lady” he depicts the foolishness of villagers and the emotional narrative with an appropriate lady character which makes other believe about the folk story. “The Man Who Lifted the Mountain” gives the morals by depicting some characters funny and humorous. Like ‘Thieffou’ and the businessman ‘Dhanlal’. Although these stories bear some humours but the idea is very clear and authentic. In the current story “The Submerged Valley” although some incidents and chapters reveals humour in one hand but they reveal the authentic emotion in another hand.

Several incidents in Manoj Das’s stories arises humour but reveals a great amount of morals just like the stolen scene of cap in “the Mystery of the Missing Cap” which gives the reader the idea about the lifestyle of ministers who distinguish themselves from common human being just by wearing a mere cap. But in the story “The Submerged Valley” instead of giving morals the writer reveals the deep rooted emotion of the folk people. Sometimes it seems to be based on superstition and blind beliefs. The lack of reason of resistance represents their sentiments.

In the beginning of the story to arise a connected feelings with village the writer gives a portrait of the village through the child narrator where every small things contains their own significance in the eyes of the narrator. By depicting village river, temple and other common places he turns towards some unusual imagery to create a distinguish picture of the village. “A lame crow perched on a crumbling stone arch of the temple and cawed on in an ominous way. Nobody ever dared to scare it away.” (Manoj Das 156) The words itself reveals the mindset of villagers. The deep rotted blind believe can be examined as a crow which is sometimes regarded as ominous and related to evil stories. The crow sitting on a temple indicates the dominance of evil over good. Another characteristic of the crow that is lame gives the bad sign for villagers. The perching of the crow is never understood by people because of the language barrier of human being and different creature but the imagery indicates towards omen and the most remarkable thing

is no one dares to scare it away means no one dares to take horn in his back by interfering in this ominous event. There is neither valid reason of happening something bad nor any consequence has been seen which can prove the act as ominous but the idea in the mind of villagers represent their believe of obeying the voice of elders that is good or that is bad and adopting the idea without any argument or reason.

The romantic elements also found in the story as the narrator look at every living things with a special point of view which reveals the idea of “inner soul of nature” (lyrical ballads). “The trees that stood in front of our school used to appear as human to us as the wondering bull of Lord Shiva. One of the trees looked as it was kneeling in meditation. Two more were never tired of chattering to each other. If the teacher had scolded or thrashed us they seemed to be sympathising with us.” (Manoj Das 157) In Odia “ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପଛପଟେ ବ୍ୟାପିଥିବା ମୈଦାନ ଚକ୍ରଧର ବୃକ୍ଷ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆମେ କେବେ ଅଚେତନ ବୋଲି ଭାବିନାହୁଁ। ଗୋଟିଏ ବୃକ୍ଷ ଆଶୁରୁମାଡ଼ି ହାତଯୋଡ଼ି ବସିଥିବା ଭଳି ଏବଂ ଅନ୍ୟ ଯୋଡ଼ିଏ ବୃକ୍ଷ ସର୍ବଦା ପରସ୍ପର କଥାଭାଷା ହେଉଥିବା ଭଳି ମାନେ ହୁଏ । ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଆମକୁ ଭାଷନା ବା ବେତ୍ରାଘାତ କଲେ ସେ ବୃକ୍ଷମାନେ ଆମ ପ୍ରତି ସହାନୁଭୂତି ଦେଖାଇବାର ଆମେ ଅନୁଭବ କରିପାରୁ।” (Manoj Das 178) , One hand these lines reveals the romantic ideology on the other hand it reveals the emotion of children for which they assume the tree having human qualities by personifying the trees the narrator evokes their kindness. The idea has reference with old grandparents who use to sympathise their grandchildren when they are punished for their naughty deed and reluctant nature to study. No one has listened the conversation between these two trees and there is no valid reason which proves the meditation of the tree neither it has knee or hands which is appropriate for the words “ଆଶୁରୁମାଡ଼ି”(kneeling down) and “ହାତଯୋଡ଼ି”(folding hands). But it reveals the insight of local people for their land and every living and non living entities.

There are also several instances of other living being i.e. “the wandering bull of Lord Shiva” that means it is not a mere bull but a sacred bull belongs to Lord Shiva in the eyes of the villagers. The insane woman who had a dog and a cat. The people have attributed the madness even to the dog and the cat without any prof. The son of the mad woman also belongs to the family of madness. In several other stories of Manoj Das we found mythical elements like in “The Crocodile’s Lady” the crocodiles in the river are regarded as friends of villagers because of their relation with the lady. The lady who became a crocodile by reciting the spell. In “Farewell to the Ghost” the initial ghost building and eventually the tree reveals the insight of villagers where they attribute some qualities to something and rest of the people accept it with emotion by suspending rationality.

The most distinguished feature of Das’s story is his depiction of characters which remains unchanged throughout the story and reveals the perfect ideas for which the character is framed. There is no change in character’s traits during the progress of story and characters are always simple which allows no complexity. “Whether a character remains stable or changes, the reader of a traditional and realistic expects ‘consistency’ the character should not suddenly break off and act in a not plausibly grounded in his or her temperament as we have already come to know it.” (Abrahms 33) “The characters in Das’s stories are purely rustic and they are depicted in a distinct quality either good or bad. These are not like the characters of modern literature that changes their personalities in accordance with the situation. But they remain same in nature from beginning to the end.” (Jyoti, 2021,P 2)

In stories like “Mystery of The Missing Cap” we found such unchanging characters throughout the story. The minister shows no change in his behaviour even after the cap is stolen. In “ The Crocodile’s Lady” the lady character remains same throughout the story. In “The Submerged Valley” we found some tribal villagers who arise their emotion throughout the story. They accept the wandering bull as the bull of Lord

Shiva, although their point of view is baseless without any valid reason. They called the old woman mad and also attribute madness even to its dog and cat. The mad old woman with her dog, cat and insane son remain as the insane figure throughout the story. The mad son of the old mad woman named Abolkara which perfectly reveals his character traits. “Abolkara meaning the disobedient funny hero of a series of folktale popular in our region.” Although the character is depicted as insane who claims to have conversation with jackals and ravens but the character can be seen as the proper representation of human emotion. Instead of saying him mad he can be attributed the name of a greatest emotional being. Several deeds of the man can be analysed as emotional reflection. “One had introduced him to the spinning wheel. He found running the wheel for its own sake good feel, but not for spinning.”(Manoj Das 159) “An affluent farmer commissioned him to guard a pile of paddy. An hour later people show Lord Shiva’s bull lying in place of the paddy ruminating with eyes closed and the young man entertaining it to a post banquet song.” (Manoj Das 159)

The writer here depicts Abolkara as an emotional and generous human being. Whose point of view for the other character is different as he treats every creature as human being. He claims to be talking with jackals and raven and the most remarkable thing is his song to make the bull entertain after the banquet. He does not consider the eating of paddy by the bull as a loss rather he is happy for making the bull to eat and entertain. He lives his free life with his own free will and enjoys instead of working under pressure of society. He is unaware about the development and progress of society where he does not consider the system of earning money and progress in life. But his love for his own land without any reason to love arises the deep rooted feelings and emotion. His emotion does not end after years of departure when they make a visit to the valley after few years everyone has lost the feeling of attachment with the place but Abolkara is the only one who decides to stay there forever without any fear of starvation or flood. When all the launches are ready to come back and people started to scold him he resists the proposal of returning and claims he is living there for last five years. The reluctant nature of Abolkara can be seen as his madness but on the other hand it can be seen as the madness and the love of one for his native land. He is emotionally mad for his land and even ready to be submerged with the land.

The narrator and his mother being the rational character of the story also show some emotional attachment with the land. As the news of making dam arrives their ears the narrator seems upset and his mother started to sob and releases tears from her eyes. Although they are away from the land for a last few years but the love for the land remains same in their heart. The emotional attachment with the land makes them to sob. They were unhappy with the decision but as a rational being to support the system of development they make their mind to accept the sad reality of change. The emotion of narrator reaches so high that he consider his father a cruel man who shows no emotion for the expulsion.

Displacement has been a basic theme in Indian English writing. With alienation and identity crisis it gives fuel to the diasporic literature in Indian English writing.

“A diasporic text can be investigated in terms of location, dislocation and relocation. The changing designation of home and accompanying nervousness about homelessness and unfeasibility of going back are recurrent theme in diasporic literature. The expatriate literature also deals mostly with the inner conflict in the context of cultural displacement. The immigrants away from the families fluctuate between crisis and reconstruction. They are thrice alienated from the native land they left behind. From their new host country and their children. Diasporic literature is the constant conversation with the meta home. The longing to regain lost home often culminate in creation of different version of home.” (Suman Rani, 2018, P 1)

Indian society has been a victim of displacement. The period of partition witnessed a large number of displacement due to partition of land and communal violence. Apart from partition the country has witnessed the displacement of 'Kashmiri Pandits' due to communal violence in Jammu and Kashmir. Apart from political reason there are several economic reasons also. People displace themselves for a better earning and better lifestyle. Several development programmes also make people to leave their land. The story "The Submerged Valley" exhibits the expulsion for a dam project. In rational point of view the project will bring development and new earning for the villagers. But emotionally it snatches the land of villagers and their emotional connection with it. Through the child narrator Das exhibits the theme of displacement. The child is also a victim of exile due to his father's engineering job. Which makes him to see his village in a different angle. The point of view of the child is very poignant. The mother of the child being a mature woman and also rational being found to be shedding tears when it comes to the topic of their village and their homeland. Although they have experienced the life in exile but Das represent the pre stage of displacement of villagers who are unwilling to live their land by grabbing their emotion agenda. They first try to persuade the narrators engineer father by giving examples of pious ancestors. Which is a pure example of emotional treatment of the people. They try their best to persuade him by the examples of deities, shrines and fertile land. They try to depict the land with some pious history which is unique in such kaliyug era. But their demand is discarded with the rational argument of the engineer. The villagers are even ready to stage protest but lack of experience of city life makes them fail and eventually makes them return. The protest in the city, the fear of villagers for motor vehicles indicates their hardship to survive in a new land and their lack of experience to fit in developed city culture.

The story does not fully exhibits post displacement situation rather it exhibits the partition of villagers from their homeland. Which arises poignant imagery. The acts of villagers during their departure reveals their greatest sentiment which also makes the reader sentimental. "They carried the deities with them and also laid away the bull of Lord Shiva." (Manoj Das 161) "On the eve of their departure the villagers rolled on the ground crying and beating their heads against it and smearing themselves with dust." (Manoj Das 161) These activities of taking deities with the bull and smearing themselves with dust has no rational significance but it is the greatest representation of human emotion and the love of one's land even for creatures like bull. The lamentation of the villagers arises the sentiment of departure from loved ones to whom they love too much and deeply connected with it's air, water and soil. There is no rational point of view to resist the project work it is the emotional attachment which enables them to stage protest against it.

Manoj Das depicts some post displacement situations with nostalgia in the minds of villagers after few years. Due to lack of rain when the valley raises its head due to the downgrade water level the villagers throng to the temple to pay a visit which rekindle their love for the land. The narrator depicts "There were tears of joy in mother's eye" (Manoj Das 162) Although the place was not a famous tourist place to visit but it is the love and emotion of villagers which make them to visit their sacred temple. The presence of Abolkara on the rock and the narrative of his staying there for last five years represent the emotion of villagers which suspends their rationality. At the end reluctant nature of Abolkara to leave the place even after knowing that the place will be submerged fully reveals the dedication of the emotional being ready to be submerged with the land.

CONCLUSION

The story "The Submerged Valley" is the greatest example of human emotion which stands as the resista-

nce force against the dam project. At the end the villagers fail and forced to abandon due to the expulsion but the act of love for their homeland depicts their deep rooted emotion. Their perspective about their village and their point of view of looking at things in a different angle make the reader aware about the love and emotion of the villagers. They even care for the little futile things in the village and also scared by superstition with an emotional connection with them. The emotional connection prevails them to protest against the dam project.

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