

COLOURS OF THE RAINBOW: QUEST FOR SELF

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Abstract: Contemporary Dogri literature is replete with short stories revolving around the theme of tormenting soul of man in the modern world. The story “Colours of the Rainbow” by Chanchal Sharma presents the alienation and rootlessness of the protagonist in the contemporary world. The present paper taking into consideration the story of Chanchal Sharma analysing the self-realization and also identifying ones true self.

Keywords : Isolation, conscience, contemporary, modern, tension, anguish.

“Colours of the Rainbow” is the story of a clerk who is a victim of his times, and is represented as an individual oscillating between the past and the present and finds himself hanging between the traditional upbringing and new ways of life. The story offers food for thought on human relationships and emotions. The author very beautifully articulates the feelings and emotions of the characters in the story. The story presents the dilemma of a man who faces inner conflict and is in search for self. He finds himself incomplete and has a quest to find himself. Quest for the self and discovery of own is a natural phenomenon among the human beings. The opening of the story tells about the dilemma, he is facing and compares it with the rain drops. The author portrays it as:

The rain has just stopped. I was looking out of the window. Occasionally a drop of water fell from the awning of the window. The clouds had cleared and the sun had also come out. If the sun shines immediately after rainfall, it looks very pleasant. I was watching the beauties of nature, lost in thought. Just outside the window were some chilly plants. They had grown quite tall and were sporting red chillies. Drops of water were dripping, sliding down the plants. All my attention was centred on the rain drops. The plant of our life also gets rain – a rain of happenings, some pleasant, some painful. Only yesterday we had such a rain in our house. Rather, it was a storm, with all the rumblings and lashings. It was followed by calm but the droplets were still lingering and sliding down the plant of our life, just like the rain slipping down the chilly plants under the awning over the window.(21)

The story depicts the individual’s struggle with himself and his transformation. The protagonist is a clerk and his father was also a clerk. He is dissatisfied from his life as well as from his job. In the story he shows the miserable life of clerks who live in poverty and spend whole of their life in false hopes. In the story, the anger and frustration of modern man amidst the transitoriness of life and times is best depicted through the character of the clerk. He is very much confused and alienated in his anger as he getting very less amount of pay and is overburdened with his work. He is so much frustrated that he does not even want to talk to anybody as always thinking about his father’s job and life. He remains confined to his world. He always remains in his exile struggling with an inner crisis of chaos, rage and confusion. His anguish of working as a clerk is depicted by the author as:

I am just a clerk with a very low salary. It is the clerk who runs the office. Fat files – some old, some new. He has to read them all and remember all sorts of things. New rules are framed every day and he has to remember them also. If the officer happens to ask how a certain thing happened or how it could happen, the clerk has to explain. The officer has only to write yes or no or simply sign. But after doing all this, the poor clerk gets only that much too barely keep his body and soul together. The generations of clerk trace their genesis to the time when the British consolidated their empire in India. They brought officers from their own country but took clerks from this country only. They got things done through them. If they wanted to slash somebody’s throat, they did it with the sword of clerk. If they wanted to help somebody, they got it done through the clerk. But they did not give enough to the clerk to live comfortably.(21-22)

The search for self and completeness could begin with the discovery of the roles we are expected to play at once this is clear this is to be complemented by the appropriate actions. Human beings perform different roles at different stages of life and wear different masks according to the roles they are expected to play. The role of the Protagonist unveils the theme of search for self and the idea of incompleteness and search for identity. Identity crisis is one of the major conflicts faced by today’s generation. The Orist Erik Erikson described identity as:

a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be

gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. In him we see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given—that is body, type and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals—with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, mentors met, friendships made, and first sexual encounters. (176)

The protagonist in the story while looking at the rainbow thought of his childhood that how good it was when he dreamt of swinging on the swing of rainbow. He becomes nostalgic and thinks that his grandmother used to tell him that it was the swing of the *gudda-guddi*. He thought himself as *gudda* and dreamt about his *guddi*. But, now when her daughter asks him about the swing of *gudda-guddi* he becomes angry as he is not satisfied from his life and always lost in finding the meaning of his life and wants to run away from all the complexities of life. The story tells us that the man grappling with the complexities of modern life, yearns for freedom: freedom to choose, freedom to decide, freedom to one's own individuality so that they can make space for their own amidst all. The protagonist is so much frustrated from his low income and other complexities of life that he wants to flee from his family. He always remains in the vicious clutches of his inner fury which is gradually pulling him down into complete degeneration. The characters in the story point out the frustration and chaos of the modern world. The other significant character who symbolises incompleteness is his wife. She too is on the way to discover her completeness. The wife of the protagonist is also shown as a discontented person and fed up from him as he is not responding to him and lost in his own world. She wants to talk to him about her problems but all futile as he is not ready to listen to her. She states:

I have been shouting for you for so long! Are you going to have your tea or not? You must've got fed up with me, but I am no less fed up with you. What happiness have I got since I came to this house? I started working as soon as I get up in the morning and I go on and on till late at night. See what has happened to my health, with lentilsoup and *Buddhi Prakash*. (23)

The clerk gets angry on her and states, "I don't want any tea. It is better to drink poison than have tea from the hands of a woman like you. Who the hell are you to tell me to have tea" (23)? Both of them gets angry and their anguish present their annoyance and bitterness. The love between both of them is now converts into hatred. When love dies, it leaves only ruins around. Death of love, of humanity has pushed the whole world to the brink of destruction twice: another time, and it won't survive. When love is betrayed and innocence is led astray: love transforms into hatred and a home like paradise turns into hell.

I returned late at night. I took my morning meal out and spent the afternoon in a cinema hall. In the evening I went around with friends. But now my anger had subsided. If you ask me, actually I was feeling home sick. When I returned, the kids had gone to sleep. The wife was sitting all by herself. As soon as she saw me, she went to the kitchen and brought me food in the thali. My anger had gone, but looking at her face I felt that her anger had also disappeared, leaving behind only sadness and regret. In order to keep my pride, I said, "I am not going to eat. I will go without food and it will be good if I die. Good riddance for you also." It was apparent that I had not gone without food, that I had had my fill. On the other hand, she had not eaten since morning. Her face showed it: it was wan and weak. But I kept up my manly hauteur. With her head down, she said feebly, "Now come on. Please eat. Forgive me. It was my fault." (24)

They are dissatisfied from their lives and want to know the real meaning of their life. Ultimately at the end of the story, they both reconcile with each other. The author seems to say through the story that it is only the love that gives meaning and completeness to their lives. In today's world everybody wants to find his identity. But the most important thing is whether the individuals be happy and content even if they find their self? The individuals will still remain the same even after the discovery of their own. The protagonist in order to retain his identity finds himself in a fix, and has to choose between life and death, illusion and reality, alienation and belonging, freedom and bondage, agony and ecstasy. The story primarily focuses on the poignancy of the protagonist's struggle to discover the meaning of life and his perennial search for values. In the end of the story they both reconcile with each other. It is only the love which reconciles the tormented souls. The wife of the protagonist consoles him and because of the end of their fight, their children also feel happy and delight. The situation is presented in the story as:

"If you don't eat, how can I eat? Spit out this anger. Why be angry with food? What was said was said. And after all what is it that I said? You get angry very quickly. I don't know what was happened to you these days?"

"Not me alone. Something has gone awry with you also. If you find it difficult to cope with all this, you should have asked your father to marry you into a well-to-do family where you could get a bag of rupees every day." She remonstrated with loving fretfulness, "All right. Now come and have your food. I don't need any bags of rupees." Simultaneously she caught hold of my arm and made me sit down to eat. I had already eaten and had no appetite. But I could not hold before this remonstrations. My fortification had been breached. I washed my hands and broke a morsel of *chapati*. She seated herself close by and began fanning me with a hand fan. I dipped the

morsel in the vegetable curry and looked at her. She appeared to me like the incarnation of Sita. My hand holding the morsel automatically moved towards her mouth instead of mine. She pushed my hand back to my mouth and said, “*Oon, hoon!* Now eat!” I pushed my hand again towards her mouth and disregarding her “*Oon hoon*”, forced the morsel into her mouth. She grasped not only the morsel but also my finger with her teeth and I howled out in pain. She released my finger instantly and said in panic, “Quiet! the kids will be awakened!” Then both of us burst into laughter. The next morning when my wife brought tea to me, Munni was walking up Bitti, “Get up, Bittoo, see, Pappa and Mummy who were cross with each other, are friends again and are talking to each other.” We both laughed. Half an hour later when I was having my bath I heard Munni saying, “Aha! Bittoo, there is the swing of *gudda* and *guddi* in the sky again” and Bittoo was saying, “Yes, Munni, but its colours are brighter today.”(25)

The study of the story points out the theme of exploring self and identity. The protagonists are invariably presented as to forge their identities against the background of this new consciousness, coming to terms with the sheer expanse-geographical, cultural, intellectual and psychological- which constitute the complex contemporary reality.

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