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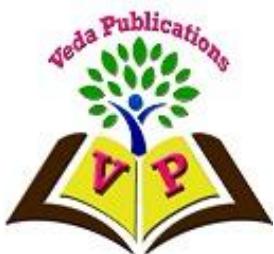
THE PROTAGONIST'S YEARNING FOR THE CELEBRATED RECOGNITION - A STUDY OF G B PRABHAT'S *THE SILENCER*

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ABSTRACT



Alienation, identity, discrimination, indifference and so on have been the pivotal themes of many a story today. The search for identity and the identity crisis have been the globalized problems that persist among all sorts of human lives that exist on this planet. It is no wonder people struggle for identity which is quite a natural instinct. The present paper is a study on the story written by G.B.Prabhat which focuses on celebrating the identity achieved automatically. The anonymity involved with it is discovered by the protagonist and his idea of choosing the unacceptable ways to achieve what he wants is studied closely in this paper. None is bad and none is good totally. Every Man is a puppet in the hands of God. The protagonist proposes opposing the will of God, who automatically disposes his strong desire to retain his character gigantic in the minds of the readers amidst great sympathy for his inability to accommodate in this system. His yearning for the celebration of his recognition is justified to place the justice in the higher position through this study.

Keywords: Yearning, Celebration, Identity, Recognition, Anonymity, Silencer, Reformer.

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The lack of identity has been the hindrance to the growth of many like the blacks, the women, in the present society, all over the world, even in the countries like America.

In many places of America, segregation on the basis of colour was highly observed. There was humiliation and degradation due to the colour of the skin. The Black women faced suppression and oppression and also class and race variations. (R.Raajitha 112)

The reasons are also many like the colour difference, status variation, male chauvanism, gender discrimination and so on. Hence, one can see the struggle for gaining identity, just similar to the struggle for existence, in almost all the sects all over the world. In contrast to it, the protagonist, an identified and honoured educated, yearns for the celebration of his identity in the short story 'The Silencer' written by G.B.Prabhat. According to him, his identity is, It was a fame that had to be recreated on a stage every time the lights came on; it was extinguished when the lights faded after each valedictory address.(Prabhat 87)

Striving for identity is one of the essential things for Man after one's basic needs are satisfied. This obviously depends upon the behaviour of the society and its reflection over one's identity in a particular situation.

Identity can also be influenced by codes and norms of the society, or reflect the personal choice of an individual. It becomes a kind of spectrum that deals with many aspects of life. There is also the possibility of one form of identity becoming more important than another form of identity depending upon the situation. This happens at a time when one is forced to abandon one form of identity by subscribing to another form which may be politically required at a given time. (Nonglait 357)

Raghu's identity is also formed in the same way. As a student of sociology, he wishes to save the villagers of Kuyili from the burning water problem and for the sake of it, he sacrifices his life. The recognition of his work, focus on his activity etc. are not his intention behind his selfless service to the rustics. All he wants to do is to bring water to Kuyili, as he finds that 'Water sharing makes every civilisation insecure' (Prabhat, 83). But, all this fame

is forced upon him by the business corporations, which are 'eager to make their name in social services' (Prabhat, 82) initially and the media later. He is habituated to give lectures, distributing prizes in the functions and making speeches on particular occasions even after his retirement. Again after his retirement only, he finds both anonymity and artificiality involved with his recognition and also the affection and the permanent remembrance of the person, Kamal Hasan, in the following of the mass fan to him. Then he decides his identity also to be celebrated, to be discussed frequently, to be observed and awaited by many.

Belonging to a certain group can either help a person to move about freely or restrict his or her movement. The frequencies of such identity politics depends on the situation, the place, the background a person belongs to, or even the colour of the skin. An individual also face conflicts and friction of choosing a particular form of identity over another. (Nonglait 358)

The protagonist struggles to be remembered forever in the society, just like a movie star or a cricketer, who live alive ever in today's modern world. If one pays a close look at the background of Raghu, the protagonist of 'The Silencer' by G.B.Prabhat, he is a student of sociology. He, the brightest student, favourite of his professor in the college. He has to stay for some period in Kuyili, a remote village near Coimbatore in Tamilnadu, for his dissertation work, to study the various roles the human beings play in their lives to prove the established theories of sociology. Contradictory to it, by the time he finishes off his stay, he could come to know that many problems surround Man today and the rustics don't find time to play different roles, instead they behave as their life demands, but not as to suit the situation. He discovers the vacuum is Modern Man's life. In the process, he is unable to agree with the reputed theories and ascertains that Man does not play the roles, but adjusts to the circumstances accordingly. Inspite of his efficiency in the work, his professor could not award him the best grade, as his dissertation is against the theories of the great sociologists like Goffman and other thinkers.

Raghu could find the water problem existed in Kuyili, where there was lot of water in the olden days. For decades, they have this water problem, because this village is in higher planes and unable to get water easily. Nallur, the village two miles away from here, will get more water as it is on the way to the river. Yet, they are not willing to divert water to Kuyili with the fear of shortage of water in the future. Hence, the villagers, here, have to satisfy themselves with only two buckets of water per day, per head, for all their households, drawn from the only well available, which is 100 feet down. Surprisingly, they do not have police stations in their village and they themselves guard that well during nights, protecting from water thieves and pronouncing punishments through unanimous decision. Means, water seems more precious than all the other properties there. Hence, he, a specialist in water management system, decides to help the villagers in getting water to their village with his efforts.

After his undergraduate degree in sociology is completed, Raghu again goes to the same village and convinces the rustics to cooperate him for getting water to their area. He plans to help them by deriving monitory assistance from the sources outside. He begins and names his organisation 'Eeram', a non-governmental one and starts raising funds from various business corporations. His friend Venkat joins to assist him as the second employee of their NGO. At Kuyili, Raghu and his friend plan to clear the pond, which was once used for bathing and other needs but now is filled with rubbish and thick parthenium weeds, free from sewage and plastic waste, as their first task.

The first task was to shield the pond from sewage. It took about eight weeks to dig 20 feet deep along the perimeter of the pond, locate the seeping point of the sewage and raise a semi-circular bund. In another three weeks the sewage was redirected to the eastern side of the village, where no agriculture would ever be possible because of the rocky terrain. (Prabhat, 83)

This activity raises confidence among the villagers of Kuyili. Raghu, being the only educated man in the surrounding villages, could convince the villagers of Nallur to divert the excess water to Kuyili on the condition of over pouring their pond, after

some painstaking meetings with them. Slowly this mission is added with 100 staff working on 50 villages almost, receiving contributions from both corporate and government sectors.

The efforts of Raghu are brought into lime light by the media and the ministers take photographs with him. His photographs commonly appear both in newspapers like, The Hindu, and other magazines. He has become the Modern Social Reformer and adopts 150 villages within 28 years after the initiation of Eeram. He is even invited to address on water management in the United Nations. According to the author,

The seeds of his murderous instinct were sown in exceptionally good deeds in a remote village outside Coimbatore, beautifully named Kuyili. (Prabhat, 78)

He is even granted five grounds of land, in which he builds a house at the end of a cul-de-sac, isolating from neighbouring houses and near the crashing ocean in Chennai. He remains as an adviser to Eeram even after his retirement at 60, as per the rules of Eeram.

After his retirement, Raghu does not make friendship with many, but one, the Colonel, who teaches him how to shoot with his gun, the Silencer. He presents Raghu his favourite Walther PPK pistol, which was used in the World War Two and gifted to him by his European friend, knowing his passion for James Bond. Though Raghu does not find any use of the gun to him, he accepts it as a token of friendship between them and puts it in his suitcase to forget forever, infact.

Though Raghu continues his services to the Eeram and moves here and there, gains identity as a saviour of the villages, he suffers from the tinge of anonymity. In the slow movement of time, he has to reintroduce himself always and sometimes he himself has to engage a vehicle on his own, wearing a suit and carrying a bouquet in the hand. He finds none recognises him, although they have his picture on the cover page of 'The Week', which they carry in their hands.

He cursed his dichotomous existence: well known in media and hoity-toity circles, unrecognised in general life...

The tantalising glory of public recognition touched him like the brush of a crow's wing as it flew low. The dalliance with fame was fleeting: the abrupt banishment to namelessness was barbarously cruel (88, Prabhat)

At such mental agony, he discovers, in one of his journeys, the co-passengers' commotion to meet Kamal Hassan, not identifying him, who is also travelling in the same train, and their excitement for the movie actor than this bringer of water, sows the seed for the theme and increases the yearning for the celebration of his identity also, in him. He is shocked over Man's priorities, but unable to get his identity diminished. He discovers that his identity is brought out by lights on the stage and forgotten with lights off. According to Raghu, Modern Man is both myopic and indifferent in many aspects. The gestures and behaviour of the public have been customary. Their reaction to a celebrity is different from a service-oriented man. Either a cricketer or a movie star is more responded than a Man of true spirits. People are more inquisitive over adventures than wit. Hence, he, the Nobel contender for two times, decides to achieve continuous recognition in this simulated society and commences his silent struggle in a more radical way, with the Silencer.

Raghu finds that the moniker 'The Silencer', which is also earned after his third murder only, has close intimacy with his activity. As this is different from all the other killings, it is featured in all the newspapers and there are as many as 60,000 hits in google to "The Silencer Chennai" post overnight, when compared with Ernakulam Raghu, which has only 503 hits for the last couple of years, after his fourth murder.

When he featured as The Silencer in every newspaper, when every television channel put out public alerts and ticker tapes started providing frequent but absurdly inaccurate updated on his crimes: when sections of the gossiping Tamil public of Chennai who knew not a word of English referred glibly to The Silencer he started identifying with his new name. (75, Prabhat)

All this increases the motive of Raghu to commit murder after murder silently, making the people keep his new identity in their minds always. Here, he can be compared with Eliza of George

Bernard Shaw's 'The Pygmalion', whose 'goal is to be more popular and beautiful in the eyes of her followers on Instagram' (Kumar 551).

Simultaneously, Raghu could see a reporter's effective presentation about his efforts in Indian villages to be recognised after his fourth murder, but for him, 'He was already a footnote in the history of goodness that would blur...' (Prabhat, 76), because, now, he is a murderer and moves among pimps. The once benefactor turns into a wimp yearning for fame, by being a killer, now. He could not convince with his professor during his college days, but now he is playing different roles himself as the received wisdom ascertains. He himself starts questioning his roles.

Sami, a drunkard, is an unexpected visitor in the life of Raghu, just like the Colonel. The latter provokes his brutal instinct in his later life through his gift, whereas the prior erases Raghu's demonic act sprouted out of this instinct. He demands money from Raghu every night and is habituated for easy amounts and gets irritated to be satisfied himself with just 50 rupees one night and happens to kill the Nobel contender accidentally in the brawl. Sarcastically, he kills the protagonist with the same Silencer gun and leaves Raghu's identity forever as the great Nobel Contender, which remains hidden hereafter, forever, silently in the history, making him a permanent footnote, just as he thinks.

The Chief Minister also wonders that 'a potential Nobel Prize winner was holed up in Chennai' (96, Prabhat). He even cannot recollect that he himself gave him land a few years back. The most agonizing thing is, even the thumb prints available on the gun cannot be traced ever to make this world know that it is Raghu, the Saviour of villages cum the Nobel Contender cum the Silencer did all these out of unsatiety of his identity, because un-fortunately, the credit of The Silencer passed on Sami, who can never reveal who the real killer is as he does not know anything about his instinct. Thus the yearning of Raghu for celebrated identity is made impossible in this world for it is a vacuum of emotions.

Through out the short story, one finds the conflict between the protagonist's recognition he has gained in the world as a bringer of water and the anonymity accompanied with it. He struggles to get



identity like the celebrities of movies and sports, but he fails in the end. It would be better to say that the author has taken appropriate decision on his part by making Sami play the negative role of 'The Silencer', the murderer, in the idea of the police department and keeping Raghu as a positive, towering personality in the view of the public, ever as a reformer of the Modern days. Thus, a Nobel contender like Raghu is proved justful, inspite of his erroneous deeds in his old age and his selfless services made his spirit pious in the end, as Hindu scriptures say,

"Dharma Rakshathi Rakshithaha".

Still, one may express a doubt whether killing a Man is justified act. Again, here, one has to take support of Raghu's philosophy i.e.'He hadn't killed his victims. He had saved them from their cursed anonymity'. (Prabhat, 93)

This may look like escapism or self-convincing on part of Raghu, but once again one has to take help of the saying, *'No ant bites without the order of God'* for better understanding of his statement, along with the theoretical argument on one's self, quoted here.

Nietzsche deflates the idea of a unified, independent subject behind appearances, essences and actions by calling that subject an effect and a product of interpretation. Once an act has been performed, it's our erroneous way of looking at it that makes us see a self/subject separate from the act, which, in fact, is nothing but an approximation and a metaphor for the totality of the processes behind the act. (Kumar 547)

What one has to comprehend here is that no man turns into cruel, but it is the system that provokes the demonic instinct in one self with its unconcerned behaviour. Raghu is no excuse for this system.

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