

Analyzing Geeta Hariharan's the Ghost of Vasu Master

Paper Submission: 10/12/2021, Date of Acceptance: 21/12/2021, Date of Publication: 23/12/2021

Abstract



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The novelist uses various methods or techniques to narrate a story which can approach the depth of reader's mind. Narrative technique is such a tool or device which is used to provide a deeper meaning and a sense of reality through imagination. It helps the writer to reach his goal by using structure, plot and characterization and other narrative devices as tools. It works as a bridge between the author and the protagonist to give the shape to the story. Simple and straight forward narration helps the readers to get the impression of the characters thought and feeling through the words. Social realism has always been a conspicuous concern in novels. Such realism gained prominence in the eighteenth century and the torch-bearers novelists like Geeta Hariharan eloquently and effectively reflected the various discourses of the society she lived in. As the novelist uses various methods as narrative tools to explore the reader's state of mind Geeta has used the different and a unique narrative strategy in "The Ghost of Vasu Master" to give expression to her thoughts that is the jigsaw puzzle she has practically used the essence of this strategy rarely practiced by any novelists. A character of a retired school master has been delineated in this novel. After the retirement how a person have to face the boredom, emptiness, identity crisis to make his own existence, is beautifully pointed out through the character of Vasu master in this novel. It is different novel in view of its theme and writing style to create something new to begin a story. As usual any story begins with the starting of the life journey, the starting of his career or the important events of someone's life but this story begins from the end of the carrier of a professor at PG Boys school Ellipetti, a small town. He has spent all his career to treat all types of students in same way for the period of forty years but now he realizes that every student has different quality so he need education according to his mental level. Some students like Mani required psychological treatment also. This novel also tries to pay attention to the children with special needs and special education for them according to their mental level. Vasu master also proves the fact that a teacher is the best creator of the future of a child. A dedicated teacher can change the life of any child if he is honest to his profession. He also brings out the drawbacks of education system in which students are victimized of social inequality and caste difference in school.

The Ghost of Vasu Master is a complex novel or experimental novel because the focus of the author is not much on action but on what character makes of an action. It is complex in structure but not difficult to get the meaning of the chapter. As an experimental novel the characters emerges from reaction to action so as the character of Vasu master who is the protagonist of the story is not only presented, but his identity is revealed through his own thoughts and thoughts of others and also his thoughts about others. Instead of reading about the character the reader gets to know the changing psychology or the development of his personality from time to time through experiences.

Keywords: Embracing, Figurative, Equipment, Grimmer, Hypocritical, Civilization, Affliction, Deteriorating, Dissemination, Ethos, Influence, Harmonic development, Surroundings, Generations, perspective, Attitudes, Unobtrusively, conspicuous, prominence, Eloquently, Experimental, Cohesiveness, Enlightened, Ambitious, Reminiscences, Impervious, Insecurity.

Introduction

Of many other forms of art, literature is a special type of art as it takes human life as its theme. Broadly, from creative writing to more technical or scientific works, all writings fall under the head of the term 'literature' but most commonly it is used to refer to works of the creative imagination, embracing works of poetry, drama, fiction and nonfiction. In its various forms, figurative or critical, literature has become a way in life for all human beings to gather other forms of information. But now it is considered as powerful equipment in the hands of creative writers to reflect the reality, even the grimmer side of life and by that means fight against the established social norms and hypocritical reactions, outmoded customs, traditions, and the

political system. In fact the growth of literature and the growth of human civilization are interrelated. Thus human society and culture are naturally related to literature.

The idea that literature reflects society is at least as old as Plato's theory of imitation. "As a form of art; literature is taken as reflecting norms and values, as revealing the ethos of culture, the process of class struggles, and certain types of social facts and harsh realities of life. While we, as individuals and as a society, can turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the social evils deteriorating our world, literature should and it does hold a mirror up to the society and its culture. As a strong and relatively explicit tool for the dissemination of facts and ideas, it exists as a reality check as to what is going on behind closed doors, or right before our eyes, that we willy-nilly refuse to see. In fact, literature illuminates past; presents social reality, and anticipates future of society."

In any literary work, the artist reflects his relationship with the society he lives in and the culture he lives by. It is said that God made man and man made the society. And with the passage of time, that society started to influence the mind of man. The relations and inter-relations between men and between man and society are obvious. An artist of literature is also a member of this society. Either he picks from the society or the society picks from his creation. After all society is this bond of fellowship between man and man through communication that the writers seek. They write from the perspective of their culture and society and readers read it from the perspectives of their own culture and society. Thus in a single work of literature there can be multiple social and cultural points. artist to which he belongs.

For centuries, social issues have been at the core of innumerable works of art which take up several prevailing worries of gender, race, caste or class prejudice and many more. In fact as a part of a larger cultural body, literature has properties of both instruction and entertainment. Great works of literature influence readers, the most important components of society, not only because of well-developed plot and characters but also because of the social and cultural themes that they reflect and the realities that they depict. Through literature they have either pronounced their points of view in order to describe a certain social group or specific situation that affects people's way of life or have directly protested against what they believe unfair for a harmonic development of people's life.

"Great literature provides its readers with a window into various aspects of the human condition and a guide to the way we, as a species, relate to one another and to our surroundings. Literature gives us a mirror in which to examine our collective reflection as a people. It does not gloss over the pimples and blemishes of humanity, but exposes them quite openly. No concealer, no cover up, only the truth. Literature is the reflecting pool into which every person that ever existed can look and see both his own face and the faces of all his fellow people. It enables each human to not only find the humanity within his own heart, but also to connect him to the generations of other people who have been doing so since the beginning of time."

As an imitation of human action, literature, with different perspectives, often reflects what people think, say and do in the society in different contexts. As the creative writer is an integral part of the society, and is continuously exposed to the world around him, his work provides a detailed preview of human experiences. Thus literature encompasses attitudes, morale and values of the society. It indeed reflects the society with its good as well as ill values. Literature projects good values in the society for the people to imbibe, emulate and follow. In its corrective mode, literature mirrors the wrongs and ill values of the society with a purpose to make the society amend itself by realising its mistakes and shortcomings. As stated by the great German playwright Bertolt Brecht, "Art is not a mirror to reflect reality, but a hammer with which to shape it."

"The best moments in reading are when you come across something—a thought, a feeling, a way of looking at things—which you had thought special and particular to you. Now here it is, set down by someone else, a person you have never met, someone even who is long dead. And it is as if a hand has come out and taken yours."

Good works of literature by presenting various social perspectives and harsh realities of life settle, though quietly and unobtrusively, course of action that men may follow. Novels in particular, with their broad canvass are known to have greatly changed the direction of human mind and attitude and set in motion the movements that have altered our ways of life and influenced the society directly or indirectly.

This novel is divided into forty eight chapters, but the unique characteristic of this novel is that there is no harmonious cohesiveness among all these chapters. Though the writer has written it boldly yet each chapter has its own importance and gives complete sense in itself. Certain examples had been quoted from epic *Mahabharat* and some other from folk tales. It is because of the narrative strategy that is used in this novel. The single chapter looks independent and appears like a monologue.

The story depicts the psychological trauma of a retired school master, the protagonist of this novel, and his life expedition from a broken self to a self confident, hopeful and ingenious person. The main journey to the enlightenment of his inner soul starts in the second phase of his life that is after the retirement. The real journey of Vasu Master towards the enlightenment starts with the arrival of a mentally retarded child Mani who has special physical appearance with no brain to learn anything. His father brought him to Vasu master to teach him. It was a challenging task for him to teach a student like Mani with whom all the method of teaching in school and teachers had been failed.

Vasu master utters:-“So I began the second half of my teaching career on quieter but far more ambitious scale than the first.” TGVM

Mani is a child of twelve years but he had a brain of six or seven years. In the first meeting with Mani his physical appearance shows that he was a special child. In the words of Vasu master:-“To educate a mentally retarded child like Mani is really a great challenge for a teacher but Vasu master accept this for his self realization and satisfaction. He said, I accept the challenge, said the voice in my head. Though I was not sure whether it addresses Mani’s father, Veera Naidu or my silent pupil-----It was, Mani who came to me, twelve years old, with, it seemed, the brain of a six or seven years old.” TGVM.

So Vasu Master took the charge of teaching Mani immediately because Mani looks different from other boys. Vasu Master doesn’t want to miss this opportunity and accept this challenging task to find out his true identity as a teacher.

In the beginning Vasu Master applied all the methods or techniques he experienced in his school but all the efforts were useless for Mani. He shows no response to them. He shows no reaction or interest in books too. At last Vasu Master arrives at the conclusion that Mani was not like other normal children so he should be treated by any unique or uncommon method. He recalls his father’s healing treatment by which he used to cure his patients physically as well as psychologically.

Vasu Master remembers his father’s reminiscences. He was an ayurvedic doctor and he believes in natural remedy. His method of treatment was that first he tried to read the psychology of any patient then he used to give medicines along with the psychological treatment to his patients. He used to do so to root out the disease not only from his body but from his deep rooted mind.

Vasu misses his father very much. He still seeks his father’s pieces of advice on complex matters of his life. Even when he tries to teach Mani and find himself a failure to teach him. He remembers his father and finally his imaginary meeting with his father he finds a solution that he had to be a healer of Mani not as a teacher but he tries another method to heal his mind by applying another method.

In the beginning Vasu master seems disappointed with his efforts he tries to teach the child but after same time he saw some possibility in his life.

“To date I had thought of Mani as a mask, a log of wood, a hounded animal; an impervious bricks wall, a frozen puddle of drainwater, a freakish victim, a cunning beast of prey. I now had to learn to think of him, understand him, in human terms. Till I learnt to do this, Mani would fight me off. He may not have understand what I was saying, but he knew it was an assault, and that he had to defend himself.” (TGVM)

These lines reveal the fact that initially Vasu Master feels that he would never succeed to change Mani’s behavior towards study. But after the success of his story method he became hopeful and he tried again to proceed further in his mission. In the first step he develops friendly relation to Mani to remove his insecurity and to know the psychological state of his behaviour.

To bring him out of his nostalgia he took him out of his room, because he and Mani both of them wanted a new environment and came out of his past memories. Mani has also faced ignorance of the teachers, doctors or his siblings. So Vasu master wanted to take him to the library, on his weekly visits, his holy shrine for a long walk, in the rain, showing him birds nest on tree tops but both of them thought it impossible. because the barrier of ignorance or insecurity stop them to do so.

By narrating the story of Maskot, Vasu master encourage Mani to find out his own identity. He waits to make him realize that physical difference has no matters to be successful but the capability of doing something different makes you different from others. The important thing in our life is to have an identity of self. It is an experimental novel the focus is not much on the action but what on character makes of an action. The characterization and series of events present the past experiences and the present life of the protagonist. It contains the real life incidents and also the past happenings which have an impact on the present life of Vasumaster. He recalls all his past experiences. He doesn't want to repeat those mistakes which make obstacles in his teaching career to find his real identity. The difference of management always stop him to improve the education system but now he is free to achieve to being an ideal teacher ,no bondage of rule and regulations is present to stop him now.

Aims of the study

It is an experimental novel the focus is not much on the action but what on character makes of an action. The characterization and series of events present the past experiences and the present life of the protagonist. It contains the real life incidents and also the past happenings which have an impact on the present life of Vasumaster. He recalls all his past experiences. He doesn't want to repeat those mistakes which make obstacles in his teaching career to find his real identity. The difference of management always stop him from improving the education system but now he is free to achieve to being an ideal teacher ,no bondage of rule and regulations is present to stop him now.

Conclusion

Thus the story reveals the fact that a friendly relationship plays a significant role in a student's life. So Vasu Master deals about a bondage or relationship between him and Mani.He applies the Story telling method , the most ancient in the art of narration along with his new teaching strategy.Stories are told to highlighted a particular person or event so that future generations can remember them. At last we find that after all VasuMaster's attempt become successful in his aim.

Literature is written for refreshing, inspiring and enlightening the mind, which it does in two ways -- through its matter and through its manner. It is the story of human race, human existence and thus of the society. Society is the world we live in. The artist through this special type of art paints the ease and sorrow, smiles and tears, joy and affliction, craving and praying of humankind on the canvas of his literary creation. Githa Hariharan is one of them she presents the different perceptive of a society with her unique narrative style.Thus the fact about this book and Githa Hariharan's distinct style of writing seems quite reasonable:-

"A marvelously written book with wit as corrosive as dry ice and a sharpness which can pin down vague niceties like a needle through a butterfly, and the ability to anthropomorphise animate and inanimate life, Hariharan has really given us a bunch of essays, or even musings, on la condition humaine disguised as a novel."INDIA TODAY.

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