

IDENTITY CRUNCH IN RAVINDER SINGH'S OEUVRE

Dr B. Rathika

Assistant Professor, Department of English, MEPCO SCHLENK Engineering College,
Sivakasi

rathikaanjac@gmail.com

9952107552

ABSTRACT

Identity is inevitable for all individuals. Our name itself is an identity. When that identity is questioned by our own people, either it aggravates or curbs the spirit of an individual and leads to controversy. Lavanya in Ravinder Singh's *Will You Still Love Me?* is an Indian. However she is not accepted as one by Indians themselves. Her feature attracts everyone's second look outside her home town, Meghalaya. She is identified as a Chinese. Her struggle to improve the plight of the downtrodden through education becomes a visa for her to cross the boundary and overcome her identity crisis. Her confident confidant, Rajveer aids her a lot during her difficult times. This paper is going to investigate the dilemma and distress an individual faces in order to overcome the hurdles to create an identity to stay with her community.

Keywords: Identity – cultural clash – ethnicity – dilemma – youths – postmodern attitude – revolutionary – work done mentality.

Introduction

Ravinder Singh an Indian writer in English has enthralled the attention of youths through his heart throbbing writings. He started his writing career with his sequel autobiographical novels – *Can Love Happen Twice?* and *I Too Had a Love Story*. Most of his novels are love centric. However his *Your Dreams are Mine Now* and *Will You Still Love Me?* convey strong social messages on women's safety and road safety respectively. The stories are linked with love background but emphasises the necessity to be a human having humanitarian concern respecting traffic rules and regulation not for an individual alone but for the people who ride and travel with us on roads. The life of the protagonist in this novel is the proven example for all women who are always marginalised and especially for those women who are from minority community when they feel that they are doubly marginalised. Obstacles serve as a launching pad for those determined hearts. And the protagonist Lavanya is the standing testimony for that. Nothing dissipates her enthusiasm to trim her endeavour in achieving her goal which is directed mainly to serve the downtrodden.

Roots of Crisis

Identity crisis can be discussed with reference to psychology terms pertaining to Freud's psychological theory, Lewin's field and Cattell and Eysenck's the factor theory. The psychological perspectives on the nature of man is analysed by these theorists. These theories portray the metamorphosis of human from childhood to old age. They also elucidate how man becomes a potent creature to achieve what he wants. In other words the necessity or the desire of humans prods him to overcome obstacles to expand his boundary personally and

socially to prove his efficiency. Erikson's theories outline the eight stages of the growth from infancy via adulthood to old age. From ages hence all the philosophers had their own concept of identity. Indian writers like Salman Rusdie, Rohinton Mistry, Amit Chudhary, Upmanyu Chatterjee, Vikram Seth, V.S Naipaul, Arundhati Roy, Sobha De, Anita Nair, Jumpa Lahiri, Kiran Desai, Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapur etc. chiefly discuss identity crisis in any one of their oeuvres. All the prominent Indian writers since post colonisation deal with this key issue. The writings of R.K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao focus on the subjugation of the lower strata by the caste Hindus. The situation that prevailed before Indian independence does not change during post-independence period. It is tough time for the marginalised ever to create an identity on par with other community. Ravinder's protagonist Lavanya has proved that women are already marginalised and women who are born like her in the marginalised community or in northern parts (especially Nepal and Meghalaya) of India. The latter suffers on the ground that their features is a huge hindrance for them to mingle with fellow Indians. Lavanya does not spend her time in vain to quench her quest for identity. She tries to equip herself to create an identity. Ravinder Singh gives a new dimension by knitting around the complex idea of identity crisis with a female character on the focus. It is clear that post 1980 Indian English Literature narrated quite well on the broader theme regarding crisis or quest of identity focusing on varied circumstances.

The novel *Will You Still Love Me?* is highly suggestive in its title. It sounds romantic but the question is asked by the female protagonist (Lavanya) in the beginning and in the end in two different contexts to the male protagonist (Rajveer). She asks whether the male protagonist loves her when she becomes old and whether he will love her even after her legs are amputated because of an accident, in the end. In fact love props up at any time for an individual without knowing the origin and background of would be love. Ravinder Singh's characters especially the protagonists Rajveer and Lavanya have asserted that love is not for physical pleasure. Besides, loving the partner's deeds and aim by supporting their endeavour has to be encouraged when they involve themselves for a social cause.

Research Questions

1. How far identity is essential in Indian context?
2. Is it easy to overcome identity crisis in the postmodern India?
3. Are Indian youths revolutionaries?

Discussion

Love marriage is not welcomed by elders in Indian context even in the current scenario. Parents are unable to come out of their modern views, they stick to their own beliefs and constrained by their own culture and practices. Postmodern youths do not have any boundaries. They do not abide by any Meta narratives. Postmodern youths do not want to do any post-mortem to their parents' dreams. They prefer their parents' support. They seem to aggravate their elders through their silent protest. Rajveer is one such character. When his family members oppose his views regarding his marriage with Lavanya, a girl from Meghalaya, Rajveer is very determinate to marry her. Ethnicity of the girl is questioned by Rajveer's parents and relatives. Lavanya's features create a tremor amidst Rajveer's parents. His father yells at him saying:

Is there anything that the girls from Punjab and Delhi lack, that he needs a Chinese girl? (Pg 149)

Rajveer replies:

Dad, Lavanya is an Assamese from Shillong. Shillong is in India. (Pg 150)

Rajveer's father does not get convinced. He substantiates his refusal on the ground saying:

...my child, people are not going to get into the details of geography. For them these almond eyes are Chinese. (Pg 150)

Not only Rajveer's family but also the society in which Lavanya moves in looks at her strangely. She knows well that she is looked like an alien by everyone.

Lavanya noticed that a lot of eyes were on her....she looked pretty different from the rest of them. (Pg 69)

Though Lavanya is an Indian she struggles a lot to be identified as an Indian. Unity in diversity, is a common saying. But in practice it is not easy for an individual to stay one with his community across states. It is evident that birds of same feather alone can flock together.

Postmodern Indians especially youths are well versed in technology. They are very frank and open minded. They do not have any discrimination like their parents regarding caste and creed. But their parents remain conservative in their principles. Rajveer stays silent and diverts his attention towards his business. Modern parents and relatives try to convince Rajveer. But he does not heed to anyone's words. His father gives his consent to Rajveer when she is recognised by the entire nation for her selfless deed in helping the kids who live in slums.

Lavanya's mission in her life is laudable. She becomes an orphan when she was a child. She completes her graduation successfully and placed in Google. Her humanitarian concern towards children of government school in the slum area impresses Rajveer. She does not have any grudges in her life. She accepts all disastrous moments silently. She neither boasts on her success nor moans on her failure. She is very composed in all moments. Rajveer's parents' denial too does not disturb her. She firmly believes that situation will change and that happens in the end. She enjoys even simple things in life.

Youths are a marginalized but significant section of Indian society. They are an asset to India in demographic terms. They are perceived as the symbol of India's hopes and aspirations. Nothing can be achieved without addressing their issues and without considering their views on all cultural and national matters. The young adult writers like Ravinder and Chetan deal with youth-centric themes. Their writing has awakened the conscience of both adults and young adults as far as their aspirations, potentials, and responsibilities are concerned.

The twenty first century people live in a postmodern world. The term 'postmodern' is used to describe changes in ways people think and view truth and reality. The postmodern era was preceded by the modern era and pre-modern era respectively. The pre-modern era was characterized by dominance of religion that was accepted as the primary source for perceiving truth and reality. People accepted God's existence and His revelation. In the modern era, science became the predominant source for truth and reality and therefore religion and its derivative morality were arbitrarily demoted to subjective realm. It stressed

the principles of unity and authority with a deep faith in depth. It valued clarity and simplicity.

In postmodernity, truth and reality are considered relative and individualism and subjectivity are upheld. Relativism and individualism are applied to all spheres of knowledge including science. Truth and reality are individually shaped by personal history, social class, community, caste, gender, culture, and religion. According to postmodern thinking, these factors combine to shape the narratives and meanings of people's lives as culturally embedded and localized social constructions. They do not have any universal application. In fact, postmodernity questions all totalizing grand narratives.

Postmoderns are, therefore, those who suspect and question those who make universal truth claims. They strongly believe that all claims of universal meaning are a kind of imperialistic attempts to marginalize and oppress the rights of others. Hence, they do not admit any attempt to totalize ways of viewing. It may be religion, love, friendship, text, author, God, or self, truth, reality, or any dimension of life.

Postmoderns are not classified on the basis of age. Instead, they are identified through their world view which emphasizes the value of difference, plurality, diversity, and forms of tolerance. Postmodern thinking is also paradoxically full of absurdities and inconsistencies. For instance, it is a worldview that says no worldview exists. It demands an imposed uniformity to resist uniformity. Its concern for plurality and diversity does not lead to a more stable and secure society. The postmodern thinking appears to be a pessimistic mood of scepticism and uncertainty as opposed to an optimistic mood of scientific certainty and technological progress of the modernist era. According to Johnston "Postmodernity returns value to faith and affirms the nurturing of our spiritual being as vital to humankind. Unfortunately, with the loss of truth, people will now seek faith without boundaries, categories, or definition. The old parameters of belief do not exist. As a result, people will be increasingly open to knowing God, but on their own terms" (31). Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida argue that truth is not an objective idea. Instead, it is an individual's construct. Truth therefore is not neutral.

Lavanya and Rajveer are typical postmodern youths who accept fragmentation. They accept their parents' refusal silently and patiently does the spade work to change the attitude of their elders. They want to fulfil what their heart desires. They do not look at the society whereas they keep themselves as their role models and pursue their dreams. Rajveer's parents mind the family and relatives to the extent that they are ready to slaughter the dream of their son. Once Lavanya proves herself and when she is acknowledged by the leaders of our nation besides being a popular person on social media Rajveer's father reconsiders his son's request and finally gives his consent. Modern thinkers like Rajveer's parents expect their kids to pass the floor test. However Rajveer's parents' questioning the root of ethnicity and culture background vanishes after Lavanya's achievement. So it has to be ruminated again whether moderns have their own grammar. And it is evident that they do not stick to the rules fervently. They are quite pliable in adhering to the grand narrative. It has to be revisited and investigated that whether they are selfish and prefer high banner in the off stage.

Rajveer and Lavanya's success in their union against their parents' wish proves their consistency and determination in love. They are revolutionaries but protest silently creating seismic ripples. Their revolution does not cost any life. They are very constructive in their

protest. Lavanya has lost her legs because of Rajveer's sheer folly. She expects Rajveer's confession in the end more than that she does not find fault with him and even does not complain about his lack of responsibility while following traffic rules. Lavanya is a responsible citizen but that makes her lose her legs. She is very considerate and humane but her identity is probed. The postmodern youths do not propagate and list out their laurels. They work silently for their self and for society at large.

Conclusion

Jean Francois Leotard asks if postmodernity is "the pastime of an old man who scrounges in the garbage-heap of finality looking for leftovers." Our present becomes past for our children. There is nothing significant in the past for it becomes a mere record in due course. Moderns moan over the loss of their past. On the other hand postmoderns accept whatever comes across their way. If it suits them they accept when it does not they retreat and deny silently. They never dig on past and lose their present. Identity crisis is a serious issue that prevails in the competitive postmodern era. Even a child needs an identity. The loss of identity leads to personal psychological conflict that involves confusion about one's social role and often a sense of loss of continuity to one's personality. Lavanya is an exception to the aforesaid definition. She is a postmodern individual who faces all oddities in a lighter vein and thus proves that nothing is a struggle for those who accept all challenges with all hearts.

Works Cited

Primary Source

Singh, Ravinder *Will You Still Love Me?* New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2018. Print

Secondary Sources

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/postmodern_literature

<https://www.iep.utm.edu/lyotard/>

Johnston, Graham M. *Preaching to a Postmodern World: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-first Century Listeners*. Michigan: Baker Books, 2001.

Rathika, B. *Indian Icon*. Shanlax Publication, 2018.

Sardar, Ziauddin and Van Loon, Borin. *Introducing Cultural Studies*. New York: Totem Books,

1994.

[www.shmoop.com>postmodern_literature](http://www.shmoop.com/postmodern_literature)