

Psychoanalytical Study of Habib Tanvir's *Bahadur the Wine-Seller* and Girish Karnad's *Broken Images*

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Abstract

In the paper entitled 'Psychoanalytical Study of Habib Tanvir's Bahadur the Wine-Seller and Girish Karnad's Broken Images' I have tried to explore deep interconnection between literature and psychology. In both the plays that is Bahadur the Wine-Seller by Habib Tanvir and Broken Images by Girish Karnad, one can find the repercussions of disturbed childhood and mental trauma which leads to drastic after effects in later life. Repression in Chhachhaan's personality as well as in the personality of Manjula was evident. Chhachhaan was brought up by a single mother, in the absence of a father, this created inferiority complex in him. On the other hand, Manjula had to live with her grandparents, away from her parents because of her ailing sister; this made her bitter, aloof, isolated and frustrated. Girish Karnad and Habib Tanvir are innovative playwrights who have tried to unravel human psyche through the deep analysis of human nature.

Keywords: Unconscious, isolation, inferiority complex, aggression, psyche

Girish Karnad and Habib Tanvir are considered innovative playwrights who have changed the outlook of Indian English drama. Both, Girish Karnad and Habib Tanvir never forgot their roots and delve deep to exhibit human psychology. Karnad used myths and folklore to resolve contemporary problems however *Broken Images* by Karnad is exceptional because it deals with modern technology rather than folklore whereas Tanvir used folklore of Chhattisgarh region to expose the reality and *Bahadur the Wine-Seller* is no exception. Some of the exceptional works of Tanvir include *Charandas Chor*, *Agra Bazar*, *Bahadur the Wine-Seller*, *The living tale of Hirma* etc whereas some of the memorable works by Karnad include *Yayati*, *Hayavadana*, *Nagamandala*, *The Fire and the Rain* and many more. Literature and Psychology are interrelated as Psychology helps in analysing the psyche of the characters represented in a work of literature. It helps in exploring the innermost thoughts, feelings, emotions, fears, anxiety, trauma and other such problems.

Habib Tanvir beautifully portrayed the psyche of his characters in accordance with the folk traditions. Literature and Psychology are closely interconnected and the playwright brought out the true essence of the characters by unfolding the layers of psyche. Similarly, Girish Karnad also peels the layers of the human psyche through *The Broken Images*. He revealed that disturbed childhood creates deep-seated prejudices in the mind of a child that would lead to drastic after-effects as an adult. It is believed "In different or detached parents or rejecting parents also foster anxiety in their children. The child may not feel adequately supported in mastering essential competencies and in gaining a positive self-concept...a child feels intensely anxious and devalued when they perceive themselves as failing to do well enough to earn their parents' love and respect." (Butcher, Mineka, Hooley & Dwivedi, 2017, p. 488) This problem of mental isolation and anxiety caused by the separation of a parent is exhibited through both the plays that is *Bahadur the Wine-Seller* by Habib Tanvir and *Broken Images* by Girish Karnad.

Bahadur the Wine-Seller is an oral tale from Chhattisgarh that deals with the story of a mother and son having oedipal overtones. Bahadur Kalarin was an extremely famous and beautiful wine seller, people from far and near visited her shop to procure wine. Bahadur Kalarin has been represented as a strong and independent woman who managed the wine shop of her uncle. Once while hunting, a King stopped at the wine shop and fell in love with Kalarin, stayed there for three months and then left

with a promise to return within a month. However, this wait never ended for Kalarin. Later she revealed to her uncle that they got married in a temple. She uttered:

BAHADUR. I'm already married.

UNCLE. Married? How? What are you saying?

BAHADUR. We got married in the temple.

UNCLE. How come you didn't tell me about this?

BAHADUR. It's hardly a kind of thing one tells one's parents!

UNCLE. Never mind. But he will come back, won't he?

BAHADUR. Yes, he will (Tanvir, 2018, p.231).

In the meanwhile, Bahadur gave birth to Chhachhaan and nurtured him but she never revealed the identity of his father to him. She fulfilled all his needs but one finds a kind of repression in Chhachhaan's personality. Self-esteem is based on two sources, firstly an inner source i.e the effectiveness of one's aggression and secondly, opinion of others about oneself which is an external source. "Unhappy and insecure is the man who, lacking an adequate inner source for self-esteem must depend for this almost wholly upon external sources." (Silverberg, 1952, p. 29) Chhachhaan has low self-esteem because of the withdrawal of paternal love, he has no information about his father and even though his mother provided him with everything, she was equally busy in her business. Injury to self-esteem created a feeling of humiliation and anxiety which was evident in Chhachhaan's personality. He was deprived of a normal childhood and the absence of a father exposed him to society's taunts causing repression in his personality. He demanded to know the truth about his father:

CHHACHHAAN. That dau's always calling me a bastard... You tell me that he

is a good man, a big man, a king then why do you hide it? (Tanvir, 2018, p.238).

This pent-up anger against his father finally finds an outlet when Raja of Gangrel (Chhachhaan's father) unknowingly, returns to the village in the course of buying a land after many years. This meeting was a chance encounter of Chhachhaan and Chhadu with Raja of Gangrel. Chhachhaan was unaware about the reality of his father and accidentally killed him in this encounter. The Oedipal overtones between Bahadur and Chhachhaan become evident towards the end. The attraction of Chhachhaan towards Bahadur was apparent which reminisce the relationship between Hamlet and Gertrude in *Hamlet* by Shakespeare. However, there seems a difference, Hamlet's behaviour towards his mother was aggressive and full of hatred whereas Chhachhaan was deeply attached to his mother Bahadur and hated his father. Oedipus complex according to Freud is an attachment of the child towards the parent of the opposite sex who has a feeling of envy and aggression towards the parent of same sex.

When Chhachhaan got married, at night he came and slept beside his mother who consistently urged him to go and sleep in his room however he refused to go back to his room.

CHHACHHAAN. I won't. I am sweating too much. My hands and feet are cold....

BAHADUR. You've brought home a bride to cater to your needs and look after you. Don't keep running to your mother. If you feel uneasy, she will press your limbs. Please go. (Tanvir, 2018, p.259).

Chhachhaan was unhappy in his marriage, constantly brawls with his wife and ultimately disclosed the decision of remarriage to his mother. The same discontentment was expressed at the second marriage which turned out to be a failure from the first day. Several problems occurred in his marital life and every time he got angry with the bride, he wanted to marry another girl, considering the previous one as an unsuitable match for him. Chhachhaan married 126 girls and still remained unsatisfied. Habib used the chorus to show multiple marriages of Chhachhaan, in which ritual aarti was done and each girl was handed a pestle who joined the line of dancers. After Chhachhaan's last marriage, he finally divulged his true desires in front of his mother which startled and shocked her. He bent over her while she was asleep and said:

CHHACHHAAN. You don't love me anymore.

BAHADUR. Achha! Really!

CHHACHHAAN. You don't talk to me like you used to. When you see me, you turn your face away. If I enter a room, you leave it at once. You're fed up with me!

BAHADUR. You've wedded 126 brides and you still lack love in your life!

CHHACHHAAN. I told you, didn't I that I made a big mistake?! All these marriages were useless, they brought me no happiness, no relief at all. I'm very unhappy.

CHHACHHAAN. Don't call me son.

BAHADUR. Don't talk like that, Chhachhaan, my little one.

CHHACHHAAN (clings to Bahadur and weeps). My happy days are over. I can't find pleasure anywhere any longer. I've realized this now. My happiness vanished with my very first marriage. I remember my childhood, how when I was a child you would feed me with your own hands. I've never felt that joy again. I don't know what has happened to me. I can't even tell you how I feel.

CHHACHHAAN. I've been married to so many women, but I have never found a woman like you.

BAHADUR. Never found a woman like me!

CHHACHHAAN. I can't live away from you. There I've said it. (Tanvir, 2018, pp.274-275).

A sense of touch exhibits an important role in the expression of emotions like love and friendship. F. B. Dressla (1894) opined "the words 'attraction', 'affection', and the phrase 'attached to' illustrate this...these words have for their fundamental meaning the notion of being bound in contact with the loved one, and so indicate that there is a desire in us for actual dermal contact in the expression of love and friendship" (p. 322). Probably this is one of the reasons that Chhachhaan wants to be intimate with his mother that is to lie beside her or want her to feed him.

Finally, one-day Bahadur told Chhachhaan that she would cook delicacies, especially for him and will feed him like she used to do in childhood by making laddoos. Bahadur cooked delicious spicy food for her son and asked the villagers not to give him water when he asks for it. She pushed Chhachhaan into the well and later stabbed herself in the stomach. Adler has talked about different types of personalities and one such personality is the 'leaning type' whose traits include being sensitive, lacking energy and relying on others to fulfil the challenges of life. The person depends on the energy of others and is prone to phobias, anxiety, obsession, dissociation etc. (Alfred Adler's Personality Theory, 2022). Chhachhaan's personality is the leaning type as he was too dependent on his mother and even obsessed with marriage.

Broken Images encapsulates Karnad's opinion about writing which deals with the issue of conflict between regional and global language along with plagiarism. In order to expose these issues, he knits the story of a regional novelist Manjula Nayak (a Kannada writer) who recently got immense success and popularity after publishing a novel in English entitled *The River has no Memories*. She had been invited for an interview in a studio, where the announcer disappears and gets replaced by her doppelganger. Karnad not only reveals the conflicts and dilemma of Manjula as a writer but also unravels the layers of psyche of a human. Problems like repression, inferiority complex and identity crisis are explored. Freud believed that unconscious mind had a powerful impact on the personality and could lead to psychological distress. One is unaware of what lies in the unconscious, yet its contents can affect the behaviour in several ways.

The basic urge of the id is often repressed in the case of Manjula Nayak as from childhood she had to sacrifice many things because of her sister Malini who suffered from meningomyelocoele. She mentioned to the doppelganger that since childhood Malini was the apple of her parent's eyes whereas she was sent to her grandparent's home. They loved her immensely but nothing could substitute the love of her parents. Manjula revealed her feelings for her sister Malini which indicated jealousy. Manjula confessed that Malini was more attractive, intelligent and vivacious than her. She always had to content herself with the second-best position, which added frustration and a sense of loathing towards Malini. Dunn (2011) pointed out "there is more hostility and conflict between the siblings" (p. 9) whenever the relation between the parents and their children are conflicting in regards to affection or attention towards one sibling than to other. The relationship of the siblings is compromised when one child feels less worthy of the paternal love than the other child.

The hatred, complaints, feeling of being unwanted and the problem of inferiority complex arise because Malini and Manjula repressed it all. Further, Manjula asserted that she got a job in Bangalore and came to reside with her parents, which were the happiest days of her life. Later, she got married to Pramod and settled in Jayanagar. Most of the property was also owned by Malini with

which Manjula had a problem. The image on the screen was nothing else but her alter ego which exposed Manjula to her true self and made her aware of her realities, fears and insecurities from which she was running away. In a way, it's a face-to-face encounter with her true identity. Manjula also felt that the presence of Malini created an emotional distance between Pramod and herself. Sometimes she felt "I am an intruder here: someone external to the soul of this house-along with the cook, the maid and the nurse."(Karnad, 2015, p.281) She was jealous of her in various ways; for Manjula, though Malini's half body (lower portion of the body) was paralyzed;but she was beautiful, delicate and intelligent whereas Manjula had been a mediocre in studies and an average looking woman. This created an inferiority complex in her but she never thought from Malini's point of view that it would have been suffocating for her to be dependent on others. Manjula always took things to her ego, probably she cared for her but was not empathetic enough. Psychologists talk about attachment patterns that are set in childhood and prevail throughout the life. It could be a secure or insecure pattern. The secure pattern reflects a proper perspective i.e. a balanced experience of good and bad along with the presence of a reliable person in the formative years whereas patterns of insecurity could be of three types that is avoidant, ambivalent and disorganized. Avoidant people have a dismissive attitude. They "shun intimacy and have difficulties reaching for others in times of need. People with an ambivalent attachment pattern are often anxious and preoccupied" (Feurman, 2020). These people may be viewed as clingy or needy, often requiring much validation and reassurance. The disorganised pattern is often the product of trauma or extreme inconsistency in one's childhood.

The disorganised attachment is a mixture of the earlier two patterns and is more serious in nature. It could include erratic behaviour and sudden outbursts, depression, anxiety, trauma in a relationship, poor self-image and self-hatred. Their unpredictable behaviour and aggression toward their loved one is the outcome of deprivation of love and affection in their own childhood. One of the strongest reasons for Manjula's discontented behaviour towards her sister was her strong attachment towards the parents and their disassociation with her because of Malini. This created an imbalance in her life which disrupted and created a vacuum in her heart. A sense of isolation, discontentment and disconnection with her sister has been created. She became cold and insensitive towards Malini. Though Manjula took Malini's responsibility however the emotional content was missing. Manjula grumbles that she has lost so much in life because of Malini. Both ambivalent and disorganized insecurity patterns could be felt in Manjula's personality which made her commit a huge sin that she might not have committed under normal circumstances. A similar crisis could be felt in Chhachhaan's personality, he too felt isolated, left out and discontented. As a child, he never got the love of his father which caused emotional imbalance and became possessive of his mother.

Frustrating events block the individual's goal-oriented behaviour, threaten the self-esteem and deprive one of the opportunities to gratify the important motives and immediate goals. Frustration – Aggression hypothesis postulates that aggression which drives a person to harm or destroy that person who has caused them frustration(Nickerson, 2022). In the case of Manjula, there was an aggression drive which has frustrated her to a great extent. As a child she was separated from her parents because of Malini, therefore, Manjula felt a lack of love; later Malini turned out to be a better writer than Manjula (a mediocre writer), this added frustration to her personality. Manjula took vengeance on Malini and destroyed her personality by robbing the credit of writing a brilliant book. The image questioned Manjula that how she managed to bring out the turmoil of the life of a disabled person who was confined to bed and how she presented her sense of empathy? Manjula replied that she was childless and Malini became her child, the book is about Malini and she dedicated it to her. The image tried to probe deeper into her psyche and asked many questions and even instigated her to speak the truth about the hidden feelings of her heart. She even retaliated when the image tried to make her feel guilty that she used her sister. The image also questioned how she managed to send a typescript of 350 pages within two weeks of Malini's death?

IMAGE: ...Ten thousand words a day! It wasn't inspiration. It was a cataract-of words.
A deluge not matched since Noah's Ark!

MANJULA(explodes): All right! I didn't write the novel. She did. She wrote it. Every word of it.

IMAGE: Dear me!(Karnad, 2015, p.282).

Manjula explained that she was aware that Malini was writing something but had no idea about what she was writing? After her death she found the typescript in the drawer, she went through it and was decimated. The Image pointed out, Manjula was tempted as it was a masterpiece, a work of a genius and she “could never dream of such heights. The passion. The clarity. The insights. The total control” (Karnad, 2015, p.283). Manjula then found literary agents through British Council and mailed that script, to her surprise she got a positive reply from the literary agents. When she explained the scenario to Pramod, he did not approve of such behaviour and this was unacceptable to him. The image then questioned about stealing the book? Manjula replied:

I did not steal it. Malini liked to sign herself M. Nayak. My letter accompanying the manuscript was signed Manjula Nayak. The agent obviously thought we were the same person. His reply arrived at Pramod’s email address. We shared a computer, you see...” (Karnad, 2015, pp.283-284).

When Manjula was instigated to speak the truth by the doppelganger, she admitted towards the end that ‘I hated the cripple. I had always hated her. I was only waiting for her to die’ (Karnad, 2015, p.285). She accepted that although it was a mistake, it provided her with a chance to survive, Malini was dead but she was alive. The image, in the end, amazed her by saying that Malini has won as she proved “you were a fraud, she certainly succeeded” (Karnad, 2015, p.286). Manjula was an infertile woman and according to Mahlstedt (1985) “being infertile was an insult to woman’s self-esteem. For adults, self-esteem is enhanced by the accomplishment of basic personal, academic and professional tasks...” (p. 338). It also creates strain in a relationship either with the spouse or other family members which was evident in Manjula’s case. Her relationship got strained with Pramod and Malini, in a way she isolated herself. Manjula even said that she felt like an outsider in her own house. So apart from the attachment pattern, her infertility was another reason of her detachment from family members. According to Manjula, Malini has taken away everything from her and now it was her turn to take what was Malini’s and call it her own. She did this in order to console her aching heart.

Girish Karnad and Habib Tanvir are experimental dramatists who tried to incorporate various new techniques in their works. Habib Tanvir used folklores of Chhattisgarh whereas Karnad used myths and folklores in his plays. *Broken Images* is an exception for Karnad used modern technology of Plasma screen and interview technique. Habib Tanvir used the Chorus in *Bahadur the Wine-Seller* to present the consciousness of society whereas in *Broken Images* Karnad has used the technique of interior monologue innovatively in form of doppelganger to probe into the psyche of Manjula. Doppelganger is Manjula’s alter ego, which presented Manjula’s thoughts and emotions. According to Wadikar (2016), the playwright has employed a dramatic device through the character of the image which exposed “Manjula’s conscience and morality” (p.155). *Bahadur* resembled Greek tragedies where fate leads to the downfall of the hero and both Bahadur and her son died whereas in the *Broken Images* Manjula has been spotted both as a victim and victimizer who hardly was guilty of her deeds and was left all alone in the hands of fate.

Girish Karnad and Habib Tanvir through their plays have minutely examined the characters and portrayed their sufferings and plight by analysing the human mind.

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