



A PICTURE OF DISTURBED FAMILIES PORTRAYED IN RAMANATHAN'S PLAY 'COLLABORATORS'

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Abstract:-The present paper deals with the changing scenario of typical Indian families. Since India has accepted the global economic policy, the families in high class and middle class are segregating like an explosion of nuclear bomb. Moreover, neither man nor woman is happy with his/her present partner. They always prefer to live in illusion and embrace the past. Shivani, Kranti, Himanshu and Arundhati are the characters portrayed in the play Collaborators. They see the ideal dreams of life removing their present partner. None of them is happy with their current partners, so everybody wants to take divorce and start a new life with their bygone partners. Nobody wants to lead the barren and monotonous life. They want change; either that be a productive or destructive. They deny the stable life and, the major thing I put up in this paper is, every modern character wants to break the convention of marriage and establish new relationship which would not be based on any social or cultural values. They would be free and everybody would have freedom to live according to his/her whim. If we look at them by wearing a spectacle of social and cultural values, we seem these characters as the disordered personalities or caricatures. On the contrary, if we look at them without any social or cultural prejudice, it seems that what they perform is nothing but their search for inner voice and outer freedom that neither damages anyone nor overpowers anybody.

Keywords: family, disorder, social and cultural death, love, hate, break etc.

INTRODUCTION

Collaborators a play written by Ramu Ramanathan, is concerned with the nature of self-destruction, emerging through various forms of power, corruption, repression and abuse. The strength of the play lies in the ability to fluctuate between the fragility of the past and its place in an equally elusive present. According to Kristeva, the past oscillates between visibility and invisibility in the sense that characters' names or place in the world carry a whole range of cultural and social significance and are historically contextualized; invisibility in the sense that the characters find the notion of loss a force to contend with a loss which stems from the past and of which they are fully aware but can't seem to process. The theme of abjection, as attributed in Julia Kristeva's Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection is the throughline that links each scene of the play. The play is divided into scenes; the playwright violated the traditional technique of dividing play into Acts and Acts into scenes because he thinks easy to portray typical Indian situation into scenes instead of acts, after 1990s.

Like Maursalt from Albert Camus' The Outsider, the protagonist of the play, Kranti rejects his identity and such a rejection is nothing but a sign of family disturbance. The rejection of self that occurs during the process of objection is the act that establishes identity through absence. The loss of unity as a result of separation is for the abject being, the incentive to drawn back to this stage, confusing the boundaries between the self and mother's body. The process of sublimation is the individual way of structuring their sense of self out of the loss accrued by separation in order to restore a degree of value and purpose.

The play lies particularly in playwright's ability to shape characteristics of traditional Indian theatric at form, and content demonstrates the position of marginalization in the relationship between the individual and the

greater world. It demonstrates the complexities involved in gender hierarchies, sexual inequalities within familial and social dynamics and the repression involved in the painful processes of personal, familial and cultural identity. The play could be defined as a piece of post-modern sensibility in the sense that it exposes the dislocation of the individual from a received and shared sense of community, society and culture in terms of value systems, together with the resonance of a post-colonial consciousness that carries elements of insecurity and mistrust. Ramanathan's complex blend of the post colonial and post-modern presents a volatile and self-annihilating subjectivity demonstrated within the interior world of the characters. Representations and aspects of identity in the play whether that of the middle-class woman Arundhati, corrupt industrialist Arundhati's father, traitor or displaced mother Shivani, present the subject occupying a peripheral position. This is a condition of Kranti where he experiences an analogous culpability and exclusion. The play depicts the confluence of contradictory forces, with characters seeking to belong and yet to be bereft of the spiritual and emotional capacity to do so. The characters are astutely aware of their isolation, but it is their journey towards self-destruction that carries with it a peculiar self-confidence. Shivani knows that her husband is engaged with Gayatri, henceforth she travels to self destruction by marrying Himanshu.

The new Indian climate of self-confidence, cosmopolitanism and economic wealth, which typically marked the rhetoric of the 1990s intrusion of liberalization, privatization and globalization, sought to promote mind sets that served the needs of a market. Such a focus defined way to serve the present from the past, failing to acknowledge the forces of the past that had shaped India's coming of age. India's contemporary social system is seen as an eloquent expression of new found confidence where the liberalization of internal markets is matched by the celebration of individual rights and liberties, with muted attention given to disturbed families. The speed at which India has changed suggests a cultural ambivalence over how to process some of these changes and bears the implication that camouflages have been placed over the cracks that must accompany such rapid social and cultural development. Ramu Ramanathan suggests through this play that India's tendency to leave its old culture behind and to embrace the new should be viewed cautiously.

The play depicts many of the problems that lie beneath the camouflages of the liberalization, privatization and globalization, locating them in the contexts of repressed identities and cultural disillusionment and placing them centre stage. The influences of genealogy, memory, history, and the absence loss all coverage in worlds of short term hope undercut by despair. For Ramunathan, processes of identity are ingrained in the past, but their impact is always present and significantly powerful. The cyclical nature of the play depicts how issues and concerns are literally and metaphorically, repeatedly drawn from history and memory. The play commands a consideration of difficult issues such as suicide, murder, incest and rape. While tradition and history are explored in Collaborators, it demonstrates that we are not merely passive prisoners of our past, but rather that the past is the fruit of power and self knowledge and its analysis is always necessary. The play employs to varying degrees notion of family and home, which provide both literal and metaphorical borders and boundaries that define the space between self and other.

Collaborators examines the repressed family atmosphere propelling the protagonists mapped by a conflictual continuum of personal and social paranoia and phobia. This living reflects not only journey of the protagonist's individual disposition, his personal anxieties, concerns and fears, but also his relationship to the familial and social world, which tries to protect its boundaries through mechanisms of exclusion. The central self destructive protagonist of this play is not a member of a family and a home in the conservative Indian sense; he is challenging and subversive familial figure trapped in a partly self-constructed and socially constructed labyrinth, where all movement is prohibitive and self defeating.

The play articulates the experience of self-displacement abjection from the contemporary Indian viewpoint, expressive also of a peripheral female subjectivity. It depicts the condition of Kranti's subjectivity which takes place during the early stages of individual identity, where borders and boundaries of identities are formed. These borders constitute how the characters see themselves in the world which comes to reveal a disruption to the margins of their identity, a disruption that places subjectivity continually on the verge of collapse.

The beginning of neo-liberalism concerning Indian economics and sociology saw tradition, spirituality and the connection to the land compromised in exchange for a fractured society, whose belief system pulls away from rather than unites people. In Collaborators, a society is shown at the stage where economic improvement has come at the price of social dislocation. The play is not formed in the narrative of the past but by the predicament of the 'here and now' and its consequences for the future. Thus individual action taken by Ramanathan's characters in this context is of and for itself still working with concerns of absence and loss, Ramanathan is now without the demands of sacrifice and the realm of the mythic is tentatively drawn upon as the impending sense of doom, which pervades the play. Thus, Collaborators does not carry intimations of the inevitable set down in classical proportions. The play contends that subjectivity in post liberalization India, shaped by an individual and social malaise, can recover or at least be acted upon, whatever the consequences of that recovery or action may be.

Collaborators is deeply concerned with the inadequacy of day to day leaving and the inability to articulate experience. The most powerful single dimension of the play's world for its spectators is its continual reference to the nature and significance of human society. When Shivani though married and have a baby named Purushottam decides to leave her husband, family and a home and to confront her dream, abandonment and the individual is also a

kind of victory, in refusing to submit to the demands and interdicts set down by society.

Ramanathan's imagination is oriented towards presenting family system as a fragile web of ties that influence characterization, action, language and theme. Even the stage setting outlined by Ramanathan prevents characters from having a presence of their own, which ironically works to demonstrate their lack of a shared experience. Issues of overcrowding and of personal privacy emerged during the explosion of the homogeneous, tight living spaces that populated India's urban landscape after 1990s. Ramanathan sets up from the beginning, the Freudian postulate of a two tiered world, one in which Kranti and Arundhati get on with their living practices under the pressures of daily existence, and the other an inner psychic world which refers back to the repressions and frustrated desires of their past. Typically of the former but in *Collaborators* Ramanathan dramatises this possibility. It is the movement between the real and hyper-real backgrounds and conflations. That Ramanathan dilates this family story into a story of the society in all times and places.

As individuals, the characters show the diversification of struggles within themselves, to exhibit a range of human potentiality that tends towards destruction. Arundhati resists living by strategic measurements of daily ritual and repetition. Her conditions of drudgery are carefully observed to counter act her suicidal tendencies. The social world in *Collaborators* in terms of boundary crossing is representative of the forbidden and is related to identity, exile and displacement. The portrayal of melancholy in this play manifests through interior spaces that disrupt subjectivity. The repetitive monologues and symptomatic of melancholy portray mechanisms such as identification, loss and incorporation. The content of the asides displays the tension between the characters governing self-image and their performance in the world. The characters in *Collaborators* display a composite sense of emptiness, depicted by the dissolution of subjectivity, and the play dramatises how this emptiness becomes more manageable. The drama played out within the melancholic ego sees itself critically judging the lost object reinvesting that loss back into the self. Ramanathan, once again, portrays resistant subjects created out of loss, the process of subjectivity in which the ego becomes aware of itself through its consuming desire for a lost object, place or ideal.

The pattern of the melancholic sensibility, repeated throughout the play, traces the characters' attempts to deal with their individual lack of fulfillment and also suggests a picture of disturbed families at large. Ramanathan's depiction of wealth as success in the play in the conversations surrounding work and in the details of the contemporary home, works to contradict the myth of success associated with money and its relationship to the individual. In this context, the characters constant and repetitive playing bridge reveals their attempts to negotiate subjectivity within the boundaries of a society defined by the prior loss of a preferred past.

Collaborators in this context, explores the possibility of agency for the subject who comes into being through the melancholic sensibility in terms of the relationship between subject and object, between the melancholic and the idealised object of loss. For most of the play, characters engage in self-abnegating ways, their actions and articulations framed as their attempts to deal with the limitations set upon them by themselves, their family and their society. The characters unstable subjectivity is shaped by the material effects of social commitment and is reflexively related to the psychic ambivalence that marks their melancholic outlook. The material conditions that shape Arundhati, Shivani, Himanshu and Kranti's consciousness as subjects point up an internalized loss; they lack any reliable external arrangement which might alleviate the sense of loss.

The first scene of the play exposes the mentality of the protagonist, the secret behind his name Kranti. Even he introduces his wife along with how he has changed since he has returned from the prison in Faizabad. In the second scene, the protagonist is calm; only a man named Himanshu and Kranti's wife Arundhati are sharing communication. Himanshu had sent three letters from Switzerland, Amsterdam and Brussels respectively, but she didn't give any response on his question; she is just taking on different issues at a time in pieces. While coming to Arundhati's home, Himanshu finds "things have changed since the last time. The slums have proliferated. The yuck-and-muck. The number of people." (74) But Arundhati's speech touches to the kinds of tea and his divine tie and her father's greatness. "I wish all men were made like Daddy" (74) shows her nervousness to be in connection with other men. She admits that her family has a history of diabetes and even she is not option for it so she cycles at 33 km per hour for fifteen minutes minimum.

When Srikanth, their colleague was recalled by both of them, they stuck the subject and exposed how he was living just on Betacard, Combiflam, Alprax, Digene, black coffee and particularly cigarettes since he had divorced Tanya. On the behalf of his death the office organized a condolence meeting, the other day. "Everyone paid their tributes. Everyone wept bucket of tears," (76). Their communication jumps from Shrikanth to their usual habit of having wine and Arundhati suggests him to peep through the windowpane and see the baobab and the days gone by still she brings a chateau petrus. Their overall communication is tied together with mysterious bond and complex attraction of each other. They are dissatisfied on their forceful imprisonment into the social system. Both of them wish to break this prison and meet physically and spiritually, but they neither do either of the things nor break their causal relationship. The idea of Arundhati's touching of many subjects at a time and Himanshu's incapacity to catch any of these shows how they have lost their mental balance. Whatever they talk or perform shows the disordered picture of their mind. They think excessively on their past on one hand and observe the changes being held in the society that is around them. On the death of Shrikath, the method of condolence is a kind of celebration and it shows how society is disordered. It is a fine example of the psychology of group disorder.

The third scene doesn't deal with direct communication among the characters; there is two sided communication at one level Himanshu is talking to Kranti and at the same time, Kranti is sharing what Himanshu said with the audience. He knows that Kranti was arrested so Himanshu asks him if he is ok. Then he continues that their company wanted to set up a plant in Malabo meanwhile he jumps from the plant to the disappearance of the people who had participated in the morcha. The government of Malabo doesn't allow anybody to protest or oppose, and if anybody tries, he is buried without his testicle and brain. It is capitalist view of Himanshu which doesn't suit to the country like India where democracy is worshiped and everybody has a right to raise a voice against the government or capitalist; yet he prefers to live in the country like India and set a plant to the country like Malabo where there is no democracy at all.

The three characters are there on the stage in a silent position sitting in idleness, and everyone is sighing loudly and the sigh of each one exposes how dangerous the situation is around them. Even it highlights on their complex and unexposed relationship, which again carries to a kind of break or disorder.

In the fourth scene, Ramanathan highlights on academic failure of the current age. Shantanu has attended a seminar related to the Indian economy which comments on the emptiness of the great personalities. Even Ramanathan doesn't miss to expose the hollowness of industrialists. The idea of compressing has been displayed through the play that the hall of seminar includes only 275 people while 367 participants have been allowed to sit in such a clumsy place. Even there is corruption in booking the hall because Mr. Surana gets 10% commission on the hall booking. The characters in the play even don't sure about the national song. Shivani adores 'Vande Mataram' as lovely tune; it seems so catchy, so hummable for her. There was a nonsense question-answer session which carried the theme of a seminar to nothingness. Himanshu admits that it became so much troublesome to listen to the experts for seven and half hour as he thinks; it is not his pea-sized brains capacity to understand all this. So he came to the conclusion that, "probable, the maternity ward is the only manufacturing unit which has been speared from the clutches of excise duty. Which is why, producing babies is duty-free." (84)

The education system is so faulty. The problem, I think lies with the students. They don't value the thing. Its all this subsidy. Look at the IIMs and IITs. (85)

Next week Aditya and me plan to get Purushottam admitted into a pre-school. Its very good. There's such a huge waiting list. We intend to pay seven lakhs as donation. The office is soon... supportive. One has to plan these things right away, no. Got to give the child a proper education. And Purshattam is so clever. He can even say 'Paapaa'.... you know. Good no? (89).

Scene nine is most striking and dissolving. It deals with the death of Mr. Mahalnobis but Arundhati doesn't know his floor number. She prohibits other characters for not making any loud voice or increase the voice of music. It is a condition of her mind like the hero in the novel, *The Outsider* by Albert Camus who is not sure when his mother exactly died. She shows the ignorance of the people of who don't feel necessity know who their neighbours are. "You know there are people who live in the same building for god-knows how many years and do not know who their neighbours are. It's such a shame. I am different in a nice sort of way. In fact of late, things are becoming important to me (97). As a responsibility of neighbour, she feels the necessity to send condolences and commiserations. "I need to show people that I care when they are alive. Often my behaviour borders on indifference even though I think I am what can be called an affectionate person" (98).

Shivani shares her experience of her grandfather's death and how she successfully managed everything. As though the death of Mr. Mahalnobir influenced so much on them and all of them are under the depression, Arundhati presents a new CD of Baazi which her daddy has brought from Toronto and even she shows some of the furnishings in the bathroom. She has a beautiful stained glass, cast-iron wash-basin. She could place an order of some food.

She diverts the attention of the fellows and tells them to look at the full moon. She thinks that the moon is a poor thing, 'alone and isolated' trying to create a space for himself.' The frail nature of Arundhati and supportive nature to her frailty by Himanshu and Shivani shows how the modern generation in losing the human values and just giving the value to formalities. Their internal complicated relationship made them mentally and socially hollow and empty.

Next scene comments on the failure of electricity and Himanshu, "Hey, its an overload on the grid. Plus there's pilfering and theft. Something must be done quickly or else Mumbai will become like a Bihar" (100) discloses the reality of almost all metrocities in India. Shivani is searching a torch given by her husband, Aditya. The failure of electricity discloses various angles of every character. Arundhati thinks that the city is going to the dogs, which shows how her surrounding is passively changing. On the other hand, Himanshu just feels fear of becoming his city like Bihar. Arundhati has been asked about candle, but she is not aware where she kept it. As candle is a symbol of sex, her ignorance of missing candle shows her negligence about her sex partner; in darkness she is very difficult to find out her biological husband. Kranti experiences the mental situation of Humayun, who was sandwiched between a mighty father Baber and a mightier son Akbar. In the same sense, Kranti is sandwiched between the dominance of Arundhati's father and excessive expectations of his wife, Arundhati. He finds a nice way to get rid of such a prisonlike condition through the songs of Bade Ghulam Ali. It seems that how everybody uses the darkness to resettle an order because it is impossible for each one to be normal in the light.

In scene eleven Kranti shares his father's experience when he had been called to give a key note on the

occasion of Birth anniversary of Lala Lajpatrai. After a key note, the organizers had arranged Lunch. His father couldn't bear their custom to serve women after men. So he decided to break down such a disgusting custom by arranging another new custom. He was not called for such a programme, but he succeeded to establish a new order to allow women to have lunch along with men. He didn't bear the discrimination between man and woman so he broke down the custom of serving women after men and established new order where women have been served before men. The orthodox people thought that breaking previous convention is disorder, but the father thought that he established new order breaking old disorder.

Ramanathan's characters strongly react against the family systems in which they live. The play is concerned with the infiltration of the past upon the present and it explores the self sabotaging nature of the characters, the fluid forms of identity, the struggle for communication, the politics of gender and the incapability of the sexes. As the play includes two male and two female characters, the idea of a woman as paired with its concomitant femininity is a dominant concern, but considerations of masculinity also feature in this play. The play moves from the absurd style to a more naturalistic mode of expression, yet still retains elements of the absurd and the playwright shows how the assimilation process would appear to have occurred quite extensively and indeed has led to the success. However, the mainstream elements of the play are usually framed by other worlds of myth, dreams and fantasy and they typically deal with incest, rape, patricide, matricide, filicide and suicide in multiple and dynamic ways.

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