



THE SPIRITUAL AND PSYCHIC ELEMENTS IN THE STORIES OF MANOJ DAS

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ABSTRACT

To muse over an immortal genius like Manoj Das is to commune with the Divine. And to peep into his creation is to be anointed with the blissful touch and grace of creativity. The immortal artist is perpetually designed to "Wash the feet to humanity, not to crucify it". Every time he speaks, he sounds new, refreshing and amazing, for he promises food for thought and delight for feeling through his art. Realm of gold becomes a veritable wonderland for those who commit themselves to the angelic beauty of art and the vibrant message of the genius. "A work of art, to be of enduring value, must teach man humility, tolerance, wisdom and magnanimity", said Somerset Maugham. A creative artist of sublime order won't allow his art, aesthetic taste and appreciative values to degrade at any point of time. He is a surrendered soul, meant to lift the readers of all age-groups and of all walks of life to a lofty height of consciousness, help them grow in spirit and enable them to explore the mysterious forces that come into play with existence. A true artist is first and last, a blissful soul who is more humane, more sensitive, more cohesive, more soulful than the average humanity or else he will fail to project life in its totality. It is in this sense that Camus said, "Art is the activity that exalts. Great style has never had a formal value it is invisible stylization or rather stylization incarnate." This is a tribute to the great works of inspiration and spontaneity in which theme determines style and not reversely. Manoj Das, the superb yarn-spinner of the contemporary times, has scaled the heights of perfections in many genres of literature and in many aspects of life, making of genius.

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INTRODUCTION

Born in 1934 in remote coastal village of Orissa, Manoj Das is familiar to the readers of Oriya and Indo-Anglian literature. He is one among few gifted writers of India who can wield pen both in his mother tongue and in English with equal ease. Manoj Das published twenty books in Oriya and nearly the same number of books in English.

A fiery student leader in his college days, Manoj Das made his audience spellbound by his oratorical skill. He took keen part in the Afro-Asian student conference at Bundung in 1956. His first book in his mother-tongue Oriya, saw publication when he was

barely fourteen, when fifteen he launched 'Diganta' (a Journal of progressive revolutionary writings) which grew in course of years to be a leading magazine of culture and ideas in Oriya. After teaching in a college at Cuttack for four years, Manoj Das turned spiritualist. He went to Sri Aurobindo Ashram in 1963. He serves there as a professor of English literature.

The characters presented by Manoj Das are the real characters. These characters are so real that such kind of character can be seen everywhere in our society. There is nothing artificial in the depiction of characters. The heroes of his stories and novels do

not belong to the high society, they are the common people of rural India. Sandip, the hero of the novel "Cyclone" has nothing artificial in himself. He is presented as the common people of rural India. Dick Batstone, the editor and publisher of Manoj Das's "The Submerge Valley" and other stories comments that – "Manoj Das has been compared, as a short story writer to Hardy, Saki, and O. Henry. This is misleading; he is like no one but Manoj Das. Indeed it would be a serious defect if he work like an Englishman or an American." Manoj Das has given an authentic portrayal of the Indian Spirituality and has presented his characters in an entirely credible frame.

The Spiritual and Psychic Elements in the Stories of Manoj Das

The journey of man in this world is outwardly towards more knowledge, more technological advancements, comforts and material progress, but inwardly a human being's journey is from ignorance of the self to the knowledge of the self; from an imperfect state of being to a more perfect and harmonized state of being ; from a half – conscious living to a living in total awareness and moreover man's journey is towards a luminous and glorious future with the complete realization of the true meaning of life.

In the Story "*A Night in the Life of a Mayor*", the mayor falls into a helpless situation. Divyasimha, the mayor of Madhuban was quite jubilant with his newly-own victory in the mayoral elections when his old professor Sudarsdhan Roy, the person defeated by Divyasimha, attracted his attention to the hazards created by a notorious and omnivorous cow who had chewed up the psychology notes of his granddaughter. Prof. Roy shed tears of helplessness and disappointment. For Divyasimha, this was a sheer amusing thing. He laughed at it; laughed at Prof. Roy's unnecessary fear and thought. The matter in fact, was very trivial for a person like him who had 'mind, men and money'.

Divyasimha had a burning sensation of humiliation. He came to the lonely side of the river and longed for a plunge in the cool water. The time was evening and no one was there. The Mayor took off all his cloths except the underwear and jumped into the river to have a cool bath. He had to take off the

underwear too when a tiny fish entered into it causing a tickling sensation. The mayor was still confident of his own secured state when suddenly he could see something devouring his shirt and the banian. Divyasimha was possessed by a terrible apprehension that it could be the dangerous cow who featured so prominently in the corporation meeting. In fact it was the same cow who stomached all his clothes. Stunned, bewildered Divyasimha stood on the river bank when the headlights of a jeep focused him but the Mayor descended again to the river due to shame and fear. Divyasimha could not present himself with his bare body before the people who assembled on the river bank; particularly before the professor, Divyasimha has laughed at, just four hour ago. Divyasimha let himself be pushed by the currents of the river. Divyasimha, the mighty mayor of Madhuban had no chance of rescue from such a plight. The river seemed a mother to him and the blue sky above, the father. Nature's benediction made his inner turbulence calm. He wept like a baby in the lap of his mother. His 'ego' was swept away with his tears which turned him into spirituality and in the world of reality. Manoj Das amazingly chose befitting characters to narrate the story. Manoj Das made the mayor a relaxed and calm man. Now he was no more his former self. This experience illumines the dark corners of his mind.

In addition to this, he found help from some poor people who were living in a hamlet near the bank of the river. A little girl fetched for him his father's towel. In that girl's affectionate concern, he saw the grace of the Divine Mother. He narrated his condition to the poor fisherman, the little girl's father without hesitation. He was enriched by the understanding and sympathy shown to him.

The story, *Mystery of Missing Cap*, the author has used many comical characters. Shri Moharana, a man unambitious and honest by nature finds himself carried away by the waves of patriotism when India gained Independence. "In almost every village, besides the Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras a couple of patriots came into being." (Mystery, 1).

Maharana was caught in this vortex of political ambition to become an M.L.A. His well wishers

planned to launch him to politics through a reception given to the Hon'ble Minister of Fishery and Fine Arts. A grand reception was duly arranged for the Minister Babu Virkishore with Shri Maharana as the chairman of the Preparatory Committee. Later the Minister's white cap was missing. It happened when the minister was taking rest after being served a sumptuous lunch at Shri Maharana's house. A crisis overtook the village. Shri Maharana was in a critical condition. The Public Relationships officer took it as a 'deep-rooted conspiracy'. The bare fact was so humiliating that Shri Maharana did not intend to expose it and found some good explanation for the mystery which he convincingly put in a public meeting gathered there to hear the minister's speech. The crude truth exploded in an anti-climax just before the departure of the minister. That the cap was neither stolen nor a certain nobleman did take it to preserve it as a sacred memento, it was the mischief of a half-tamed monkey. This truth was so unexpected that Maharana and the Minister became utterly stupefied and speechless; "Shri Maharana was in no condition to say anything more. He broke into tears. Next moment I saw the Hon'ble Minister of Fisheries and Fine Arts weeping too" (Mystery, 8). Maharana and the minister soon vanished from the politics. The narrator concludes, "I strongly feel that it was the episode of the cap that changed the course of their lives". To evaluate the story Manoj Das says in an interview:

"A story like "Mystery of the Missing Cap" portrays, on one hand, a funny, farcical situation that can arise when a good man forgets his Swadharma and takes recourse to a lie. In his tears and the tears of the minister (Whose ego had been temporarily inflated) and in the fact that both the characters were soon forgotten politically, we see the signs of their redemption" (Interview Sun Times 3).

Conclusion

No wonder man has many weaknesses but simultaneously he has the inner potential to transcend such weaknesses and be illumined by his own consciousness. This will happen in two ways-

with his conscious quest will lead him to it or nature do it by hitting hard his ignorant self by giving him a sudden realization of truth. Being a keen observer of the changes happening in the society and the workings of human mind Manoj Das has become an experimenter of all that leads to perfecting and illuminating human consciousness.

Manoj Das is a versatile genius. In the beginning of his career as a writer he was a poet. He has remained a poet at heart always. His creativity urged him to express himself from a very early age; when he was a school boy he wrote poetry at first in his mother tongue--Oriya as he believed that poetry could be best expressed in one's mother tongue, which is the language of one's sub-conscious.

REFERENCES

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