



DEPICTION OF IRONY IN SUNIL GANGOPADHYA'S SHORT STORY, TAJMAHALE EK CUP CHA

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ABSTRACT :

Irony in stories involves contrary of our understood reality, and it normally occurs when a described plot contradicts to what the audience or the reader expects from the character. The term originated from the French word 'ironie' and was introduced in English language in sixteenth century. Sunil Gangopadhyay's (Ganguly) story "TajMahaleEk Cup cha" written in Bengali, can be best suited of using irony as a literary device, where the reader finds a disparity of expectation and reality. The writer deploys irony with skill, that had added depth and substance to the literary context. Born in a family of a town school teacher, Sunil Ganguly's family settled in North Calcutta and the writer was the eldest of four siblings. His father KalipadaGangopadhyay, being the sole earner of the family faced hard times to make both ends meet. He often looked forward to opportunities to extend his income, resulting in having very few acquaintances of himself and his son, the young writer.

The objective and purpose of this paper is to study emotions dealt with in the story and an attempt to analyse irony in the context of human lives. The paper is a review of literature discussed from secondary sources like internet, and different reference books of contemporary period and the author himself.

The findings shows that the writer's reading habits were largely encouraged by his mother Meeradevi. Sunil engaged himself in writing poetry from his early years, especially during his holidays and later took after the task of translating the renowned poet, Alfred, Lord Tennyson. His father was unable to do the corrections for his son's translations facing shortage of time and checked only the poems written by him. Coming from the remote areas, the writer was lost in the busy Kolkata streets and was unknown to any literary figure or association then, and postal medium was the only solace to his writing.

Keywords: *Irony, experience, expectation, women empowerment, realization.*



I. Introduction:

The short story TAJ MAHALE EK CUP CHA largely deals with manifold human emotions and sufferings, resulting from social differences and age-old religious taboos and beliefs. The story discusses humanity in general and the humour of the character's narrative style described, rank the writer as one of the greatest writers of the present age. The story portrays a double standard of modern society, and the noticeable shift in acts of representation and modes of self-expression.

Here we find the protagonist Ustadji trying to project the feminine wishes that ever remain invisible, suppressed and unspoken of. Phulsaria one of the village women, unravels the ways, in which female realization has been restricted and analysed through social norms.

II. Objective and Hypothesis of the Study:

The objective and purpose of this paper is to study emotions dealt with in the story and an attempt to analyse irony in the context of human lives.

III. Methodology:

The paper is a review of literature discussed from secondary sources like internet, and different reference books of contemporary period and the author himself.

IV. Discussion:

The backdrop of the story is a village with description of the habitant's settlement and their livelihood. Here in the story, the writer tries to describe a handful of characters with elaborate details.

At the very outset of the story, we are introduced to a middle-aged man Ustadji who has been portrayed as a wanderer and a frequent visitor to the



village, comprising of a population belonging to the working class, with a hand to mouth existence. The people here in general are far from the mainland culture and habits and enjoyed their adapted traditions. Having no interest in present societal changes, they were still stuck to old beliefs and norms.

Ustadji has been represented as a liberator for the common village people, leading a life of monotony. Whenever he came he brought laughter and love to these simple, candid people, discussing political matters and engaging the poor people in various talks. Being far from his family and home he would try to recognize himself one among them. He narrated stories and entertained them singing songs at times. Ram Khelaon the village head, would sit beside him to exchange ideas regarding the various political issues and would sarcastically say that newspaper never talks of poor and lowly people. Dhania, Phulsaria's husband who paid no interest to present arising issues, would suddenly comment of their endless waiting for monsoon enabling them to irrigate their fields.

On one such visit, Ustadji after a brief talk demanded for a cup of tea and owing to the villager's poor condition, had to be refused of his wish, and the former agreed to compensate with a glass of water then. Usually when Ustadji sat in the village khatia (coir bed) there was a crowd of villagers surrounding him and the particular day was not an exception to it. Being unable to provide a cup of tea, one volunteered to fetch the drink from the main concrete road nearby. Bearing in mind the distance and cold weather condition, the drink (tea) might get cold, Ustadji comes up with a proposal of going to the said place and enjoy a CUP OF TEA. With this the gathered crowd readily agreed and near about forty people joined the group and women and children too were not left out.



After much hesitation and thought of proper dress and protocol among the villagers, the journey begins with much excitement and awe. It was of utmost curiosity to many about their destination, and on reaching the main city, it was one of great surprise. The evening lights and crowded streets made them awe struck and Ustadji finally points out from a little distance a tea stall, named TajMahal chosen to have a tasty cup of evening tea.

Once on foot and then by a vehicle, the crowd finally reach their destination, With the name TajMahal, Simple minded villager thought of being guided to the original monument and knew of it quite well, TajMahal, a far off historical place, often seen its picture on calendars. Out of curiosity, one asked of their intention of going there. TajMahal was far out of reach for them and made no sense of being there.

After much debate they enter the restaurant and the owners and staff were quite alert on seeing the large village crowd. It was instantly ordered for removal of expensive crockeries and flower vases fearing to be broken by the unlettered, uncouth mass. But all were stopped with Ustadji's exchange of words and the hotel bearers were immediately ordered to serve tea and snacks in original cup and saucers. Phulsoria the village woman, was engaged to serve tea and when asked for the reason Ustadji explains her of being representing, Mumtaji, the fortunate begum of TajMahal, the beautiful wife of Shah Jahan who remained ever loving in her tomb and her husband's heart.

To this Phulsoria laughed and cried too. it was out of her domain of thought to think her equal and identical to a great historical figure MumtajiMahal. For an instant she was over joyed to place her in that platform and believe her to be queen and a mark of love and affection of great TAJ MAHAL. It was beyond



her expectation to get respect and honour that remained an irony throughout her life. Her attire and upbringing did not stop her from imagining herself placed in a world of dreams. Thus, Ustadji, though false but was able to give and extend some moment of happiness to these illiterate people, for whom dreams of luxury was far flung.

Here in the context of the story irony is used to bring twist in the narrative structure, create suspense, difference in knowledge and ignorance, hope and the reality. Here Phulsaria's momentary thought of thinking her of being Mumtaj is a sharp irony to her expectations with which she started her journey for a cup of tea.

V. Conclusion:

The plot and narrative of the story is simple and concise, and the main take away are the ideas that the story offers and proposes. Here in this story we find readers are let free to explore and discover the underlying emotions on their own. It is very simple in statement but quite complicated in thought. At times we find the story engages our imagination, gives a short hint in a short sentence or a dialogue and expects readers to understand the whole equation. Thus, the story with its rich narrative and vocabulary never tried to confine one within the average class mentality, rather made always active and kept one aware of his surrounding environment and happenings. The main achievement of the writer remains in the manner in which he integrates the small local histories into grand narratives of the nation. Thus, the unknown, unseen wish of the poor are focussed with great effort. The writer maintains that history in the conventional sense is not central to his work, though there is careful and admirable reconstruction of the past with a view to cultural nuances.



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