

EXPRESSIONS OF SYMBOLISM IN JOHN OSBORNE'S LOOK BACK IN ANGER

MAMTA PAITHANKAR, DR. USHA JAIN

Abstract: Literature is an artistic piece of creativity in which a writing mechanism is applied to articulate individual's ideas or feelings in a particular genre. Literary devices are used by the dramatists to provide richness and unique shade to make a sense of the work deeper. Symbolism in literature is an approach used as an object, person, condition or actions which have a profound essence in its framework.

The present paper deals with symbolism used by John Osborne in his well known play *Look Back in Anger*. Through the use of a literary device, the dramatist desires to enhance his writing and offer deep insight to his readers. Osborne uses various symbols to form specific emotions or sentiments in his piece of literature. On the whole, he tries to entwine signs into his writing to point out that certain essentials are proposed to be taken as symbolic.

Keywords: Literature, Symbolism, Sentiments, Essence, Mechanism.

Introduction: Literature is an assortment of millennial threads by which the beautiful piece of art can be woven. Each thread is equally indispensable in the creative work. There are miscellaneous narrative methods to describe literature. Realism in literature is a pathway that attempts to depict life without idealistic subjectivity.

Every great trance starts with a dreamer. Everyone has the strength, the endurance, and the ardour to reach for the stars and to transform the world. It is very arduous to do a correct appraisal of any artist who has manufactured an exclusive works of art. John Osborne is, undeniably, one of the most distinguishable playwrights of England and is famed as the pirate of the New English Drama. His literary career triggered in the second half of the 1950s which epitomizes a transitional period in the history of English drama.

John Osborne uses to explicit his views through the circumstances and words of a skilfully drawn dominant characters which was more a matter of technique than any gigantic transmission of personal self to that character. There is a close connection between an artist and his work. The passionate involvement of the admirers in his plays is observed. The themes originated by John Osborne are of perpetual human concern. He creates his own identity through his unique style of writing. Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* pronounced a pivotal moment and brought a turning point in the history of British drama.

The language followed by the author is very practical. It is brought into line with realism. The conversation and rhythms of the characters mirror their class and background. Helena seems very well suited and conventional in her articulation. Cliff is modest and his accent is easily interpreted from his conversation. Alison's father colonel Redfern is calm and cogitative; Alison is legitimate, neutral and non-judgmental. Jimmy's diction is full of anger breaking the tradition. He roars and affirms most of the time he starts to

speak.

Osborne's aspiration to opt everyday language in the play also includes his desire to surprise the spectators with its honesty. It appears that *Look Back in Anger* is witnessed as a response to the afflicted drawing-room comedies of such dramatists as Noel Coward, Terence Rattigan and others, which govern the West End stage in the early 50s.

Osborne's words are blunt but fastened together. They acquire an overstated melodramatic strength which is dreadfully real. His writing is provocatively candid. He is a master of wordiness, utilizing this to go on about his points. This is not essentially feebleness, for real communication is undoubtedly repetitive. There are exceptional patterns of replication and contradiction to be found in any examination analysis of real discussion. For decoding these half-phrases and sudden transformations, he went for regular reappearance and forms of ordinary speech, into rhetorical influence. Jimmy Porter works intense vitality into his sarcasm for Alison's mother and says:

That old bitch should be dead. Well? Aren't I right? I said she's an old bitch, and should be dead! What's the matter with you? Why don't you leap to her defence? If someone said something like that about me, she'd react soon enough—she'd spring into her well known lethargy, and say nothing! I say she ought to be dead. (Osborne, *LBA* 53)

Use of symbolism is one of the substantial techniques of John Osborne to vocalize the hardships and torment of his principal characters. The bear-and-squirrel game in *Look Back in Anger*, holds an extraordinary position. It is a symbolic tool which serves up a significant dramatic objective. It is intimately connected with theme of wedding in the play. The aim of this game is exhibited in the stage directions at the very beginning of the play when a large toy teddy bear and a soft wooly squirrel were observed in their house but no attention was paid. Its significance is revealed by Alison showing the bear that represents Jimmy and the squirrel that represents

Alison. She says, the game we play; of bears and squirrels. Yes, it is foolish, I know. Quite foolish. (Picking up the two toys) That is Jimmy.... and that is I.... (LBA 86)

Alison informs Helena, Imagining ourselves bears and squirrels is one way of escaping from the sordid realities of life. We became little animals with animal brains which did not understand anything of this unkind world. We were simple animals devoted to each other in our home, the zoo for animals (Jimmy and I). The realities of life were too cruel to be borne and even that recourse has been taken away. They had no understanding of any kind. (LBA 87)

She further elucidates that in the roles of a bear and a squirrel, they could sense 'a dumb uncomplicated affection' for each other and they could spend time like frisky, slapdash living beings in their own cosy zoo for two." As stated by Alison, the game is like a stupid masterpiece for people who couldn't bear the soreness of being human beings. But now even those poor little animals are dead. In conclusion Alison says that these animals were 'all love, and no brain'.

According to some critics, the bear and squirrel game is simply a device to get rid of the harsh realities and misunderstandings of their married life. The game has been considered as heroic attempt by Jimmy and Alison to compensate themselves for the failure of their marriage. Hence, it has been taken as an extended metaphor. It is undeniably distinguished as a form of conventionalized sexual play. The aggravation of Jimmy Porter is exposed through this game. The bear and squirrel game gives happiness to Jimmy and Alison for a short time and also supports for their reconciliation at the end of the play.

Their bear and squirrel game can be measured as Jimmy's oedipal requirement for Alison in addition to a getaway from the brutal reality as Jimmy tells Alison: "We'll be together in our bear's cave, and our squirrel's drey, and...we'll sing songs about ourselves - about warm trees and caves, and lying in the sun" (LBA 96). According to Yerebakan, the images of 'caves' and 'lying in the sun' are "clear indications of the return to the womb-world of mother once again." (LBA 43)

Another symbol used by Osborne is, Alison's endless ironing. It exhibits a kind of daily routine of Alison with which Jimmy is fed up. Alison is always found ironing the clothes in the play which irritates Jimmy. The ironing thus becomes a symbol of Jimmy's boredom. He complains in one of his early speeches in the play: "Always the same ritual. Reading newspapers, drinking tea and ironing" (LBA 68). Jimmy's impatience is shown subsequently with the ironing. He wishes some changes in his life and same is expected from his wife Alison but fails to change her. Osborne tries to depict the boredom and monotonous life of his protagonist who gets irritated due to his wife's ironing board as he wants some moral support

and cooperation from her which he doesn't receive as a result he gets annoyed and frustrated on Alison and his friend Cliff too.

Then there is a sound of Church Bells. Jimmy gets irritated when he hears its sound. Thus the church bells are a symbol of religious practices and rituals to which Jimmy is opposed. He declares about the noise that women make when listens to the ringing of the church bells and says, "Oh, hell! Now the bloody bells have started" (LBA 56). The church-bells irritate him as he feels that this sound will make him crazy. He gets irritated with its sound because the church-bells suggest in a vague manner the existence of a world other than the one with which Jimmy is familiar, and the other is the spiritual world. As a symbol Osborne has beautifully depicted the importance of church bells.

Next symbol used by the dramatist in the play is Jimmy's trumpet. Although playing on the trumpet is merely a hobby for him, but it also gives out a symbolic goal in the play. Jimmy is deeply attached with his trumpet. It suggests a breakout from the irritating world of routine, and is therefore a source of some comfort for him. He thinks that the trumpet music has a beneficial quality. He at one place thinks that who do not enjoy and admire jazz-trumpet, cannot have any feeling either for music or for people. To Jimmy, trumpet provides pleasure and peace from the bitterness of the world of realities. But at the same time it is also a weapon in Jimmy's hand to break the nerves of others, more particularly Alison and Helena. For example, when Alison and Helena hear the sound of the trumpet, they become upset. Alison tells: "God I wish he'd lost that damned trumpet" (LBA 76).

Alison is afraid that their landlady will ask them to leave her flat due to noise of his trumpet. Similarly, Helena also feels irritated by its jarring notes. At such occasions Jimmy must be feeling greatly elated and delighted because he derived satisfaction out of the misery of others. Jimmy's friend Cliff also shouts afterward to Jimmy, saying: "Hey, you horrible man! Stop that bloody noise, and come and take your tea!" Thus, the trumpet adds to the tension in the play. (LBA 82) His trumpet provides his happiness out of his angry and frustrated feelings towards the society.

Then next symbolic device used in the play is, its people - Alison's people- mother, father, brother and friends. They serve to Jimmy as symbols of the wealthy and respectable upper middle class. Therefore Jimmy treats them with so much sourness and venom. He used to hate them because of their status of being upper class which was the main cause of his frustration. He emphasized calling them people rather than father and mother-in-laws due to his hatred towards the upper class society. John Osborne has used all his symbolic devices with great proficiency in *Look Back in Anger* to make his dialogues effective and

to give his readers a lesson in feelings to think afterwards.

References:

1. Carter, Allen. John Osborne, London: Faber & Faber, 1959. Print.
2. Dr.M.Uma Rao, Dichotomous Dilemmas And Resolutions In Indian English And South Indian Women Poets (Full Paper) ; English Studies International Research Journal : Volume 3 Issue 2 (2015) Issn 2347-3479, Pg 180-183
3. Osborne, John. Look Back in Anger, London: Faber & Faber, 1957. Print.
4. V.V.Subba Rao, Dr.G.Mohana Charyulu, Translation Methodologies: Re-Creative Dynamics In Poetic Translation; English Studies International Research Journal : Volume 3 Issue 2 (2015) Issn 2347-3479, Pg 184-187
5. Sagarika Prabhakar, Literature and Identity the Concept of His 'Self'and 'Identity', Lyrically Expressed by Rabindranath Tagore In Gitanjali; English Studies International Research Journal : Volume 3 Issue 2 (2015) Issn 2347-3479, Pg 188-191

Mamta Paithankar,
Assit. Prof. & HOD,(Humanities Deptt.), SVCE, Indore (MP)
Dr. Usha Jain
Asst. Professor, (Eng. Deptt.), GACC, Indore (MP)