

Vocabulary of Loss Relating To Politics of Exclusion: A Critique of Odia Short Stories in Indian English Translation

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I. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

ODIA short story is fated to be in double jeopardy, once marginalized because of its genre and again marginalized because of its “ethnicity”. So it is praxis of vocabulary of loss. Doubly excluded, it totalizes being in-loss. In various ways, the writers of ODIA short story (available to the Anglophonic reading public in Indian English Translations) have verbalized the rituals of loss in their respective worlds. Among their chosen instruments of articulation of loss, use of the vocabulary of loss is no less conspicuous. Hence the principal aim of this paper is to critique ODIA short stories from the perspective of uses of vocabulary of loss.

To do justice to the above mentioned critical agenda, illustrative material is drawn from “Bauli”, “Oh Calcutta !”, “AntuPraharaaj, the Master Exorcist”, “Parallel Lines” and “The Stigma”. The story mentioned above is written by Rajkishore Roy, SuvenduMohanty, MohapatraNilamaniSahoo, Santanu Kumar Acharya, and Pratibha Roy respectively. For the sake of referential expediency, the illustrative material is drawn from “The Harper Collins Boole of Oriya short stories”, the master source used to defend the thesis beyond any cavil.

1.1 Critical Agenda

While articulating rituals of loss of assorted kinds and magnitudes, the story writers named above have (re)interpreted politics of exclusion in terms of the hierarchization of “power” and “othering” (Ray,58). In the process, they have critiqued the stigma and reality of segregation, subjugation, commodification, sexual harassment, erasure of name(s), and subalternity. Hence while attempting a stylistic analysis of the vocabulary of loss in the above short stories; a componential analysis in terms of the above mentioned indicators of exclusion is undertaken.

1.2 Vocabulary of loss used to bring out the bane of hierarchization of power

In the story “Bouli”, the duffadar (68), “the minister”(71), and Abu Hassan, “a prominent businessman in the city” (71) represent the people who enjoy absolute power and, therefore, control people like Bhajani, Panchu, Kantha and Sara(si) and even animals like Bouli, kalia and the ewe. So in the webs of “words, words and more words” (71), used by these hegemonists, one does find their support for “exclusionary politics” (Radhakrishna, 62). In contrast, in the words used by the entrapped and marginalized, the vocabulary of loss is very pronounced. When Bouli, Kantha’s ewe and Kalia are excluded for no just reasons from the list of the prize winners like their masters, also disadvantaged and dis-empowered like the Mahant of Cuttack, Deputy Magistrate Bhattacharya and Abu Hassan, the vocabulary of loss gets still more pronounced. By using the sound [i] frequently in the related expressions like “it’s all over for the little one” (72), “the trickle of blood” (72), “Priest how will I face Sara?” (72) and the fair is over. She did not matter. Neither did we(73), in other words “sound symbolism”, the story teller has suggested the smallness thrust upon them. (Matthews, 347)

1.3 Vocabulary of loss and the articulation of “othership”

In the story “Oh Calcutta”, “other ship” has been articulated in terms of the vocabulary of loss used in it. In the story woven around “class enemies”(87) and “dogs of establishment”(90), all those who fret like “caged animals” (91) express their “jerk up despair, defeats and humiliations” (94) in terms of their responses to the “cruel world outside” (90), the holes of their poor existence. That is why, in the expressions used by the excluded, one finds more frequent use of the sound [u:]. Some of such examples of [u:] sounds, indicating sorrow and deprivation, in the story under study are “wolf whistle”, “revolution” (90), “spooky” (91) and “footholds”(92).

1.4 Vocabulary of loss verbalizing exclusion in the shape of subjugation and commodification of women.

In the story “AntuPraharaaj, the Master Exorcist”, ladies like Kausalya and Parbati (wife of Raghu) have been othered and smothered by patriarchs and androcentrists like MarkandSatpathy and BanaMohanty. While rewinding the tape of Parbati’s subjugation and sex-ploitation, Kausalya says, “ Oh sir, these two bastards...they took me against my will. Fifty-times each.Night after night. I could not stand it any longer and

tightened a rope around my neck” (121). In this statement of accusation, not a single [i:] sound has been used. So in terms of sound symbolism, it is proved that the vocabulary used by Kausalya/ Parbati is not of happiness but of sorrow. Thus Kausalya, for that matter Parbati, “a poor unclean soul wracked with torment” (122) finds herself positioned in one of the “parallel lines” which separate the powerful from the powerless. (Acharya, 147). In the story “Parallel Lines”, Mrs.Khosla and the wife of the peon of Khosla Sahib are two parallel lines which are always separated from each other. Yet there is a point of contact between the two and that is their status as “sulking women” (156) because of their perceived notion about their husband’s coldness towards them. Khosla, the madcap, the madhatter, the nut, has been neglecting his wife. Though the wife of Khosla’s peon has not been marginalized by her husband, she smarts under the pain that her husband is more concerned for Mrs.Khosla than for herself. So she curses Mrs.Khosla. Thus because of the looney Sahib and his peon, both the women suffer. That is why, vocabulary of loss characterizes this story of loss, real and imaginary.

1.5 Stigma and its verbal vehicle used to articulate loss.

Sarami forced to wed Raghu Tadia, the old, frail and gaunt scarecrow, remains insatiated. Though coaxed and cajoled by Sudam, the nephew of Tiadi and Dibakar, brother of Tiadi, she spurns their advances because of the laws of the landlords of the society. Dowry lures Sudam to marry thrice; hunger for an heir forces Tiadi, the widower, to marry thrice. None of them keeps their wives happy. Sarami does not flirt and fornicate. Yet she fails to “dam the surging tides of desire and passion in her heart” (219). That is why, she goes berserk, hysteric. So the society concludes that “ Sarami has a filthy mind; all she ever thinks of is sex; she can’t be too far from the path of adultery and infidelity”(221). In reality, however, she is “as virtuous as Sita or Savitri” (225). Yet without understanding her trauma, she has been excluded by all those “virtuous whores” (226) who flaunt their chastity to warm the beds of the male studs, other than their respective husbands. It’s only Sarami who comes to the rescue of a smothered and othered women like Manu, Rath’s wife. So in the vocabulary used by these articulate women, the semantic field of loss is well spread out.

1.6 Conclusion

With reference to the foregoing, it is concluded that is ODIA short stories, politics of exclusion has been articulated through vocabulary of loss. That is why, in them, uses of [i] and [u:] sounds are very frequent. Hence they are amenable to analyses in terms of sound symbolism.

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