



RESEARCH PAPER

Naturalistic Approach in Daniyal Mueenuddin's 'Saleema' and 'In Other Rooms, Other Wonders'

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, researchers intend to analyze naturalistic approach in Daniyal Mueenuddin's short stories. He is a contemporary short story writer of Pakistan who unveils the realities of Pakistani society. His stories contain the salient features of literary naturalism. The present study qualitatively examines the naturalistic tendencies in the selected short stories, i.e., Saleema, and In Other Rooms, Other wonder. He seeks to show the conditions where characters fail to improve their social status. In present paper, Researchers explore how their survival remains difficult in their respective social and materialistic environments. Relying on the textual analysis, study has been done to determine the role of fate in the efforts of characters for their existence in society. Their dreams remain unfulfilled and ultimately they face tragic end.

KEYWORDS Fatalism, Naturalism, Naturalistic Symbols, Survival of the Fittest

Introduction

The word Naturalism is derived from nature; it clearly suggests that art and literature should follow science in the presentation of world and the people (High, 1986). In literature naturalism developed out of realism. Those in favor of a naturalistic approach and interpretation of life concentrated on depicting the social and dwelt particularly on its deficiencies and on the shortcomings of human beings (Cuddon 2012). Naturalism is an outcome of science of evolution. It conceived man as a necessary product of purely material forces, denying to him the possibility of free will, of choice in his actions, rejecting his moral responsibility, and therefore the possibility of guilt (Schütze 1903). Naturalistic works mostly talks about criminals, slums, laborers, strikers and prostitute; they attacked capitalism, these works analyze society in Darwinist terms in which elements of heredity and environment determine man's position in the world (Grellet 1993).

Mueenuddin's short stories reflect the gloomy outlook of social reality of Pakistan where every character particularly female is leading a miserable life in the hope for better future. He gave his characters little control over their lives. They are born in poverty-stricken areas and consequently they remain uneducated in their lives. Mueenuddin, like naturalists, shows that characters are not free in their actions and perceptions because heredity and environment are vital forces in the determination of their decisions. As Cunliffe (1954) states "Naturalists portrayed their characters with little control over their lives whose fates were determined by heredity, environment and chance". Their will to survive in society remains the most difficult task for them. These inter-connected stories remind us that all characters, which belong to lower class, have a same set of circumstances to survive. These stories allow us to analyze pessimistic condition of Pakistani social realities where people work hard to sustain and in desperation, they adopt corrupt practices in order to

live. Nevertheless, they fail to earn respect and honor in society. At last, they find themselves where they have come to make difference in their lives. Their lives conclude in despair and hopelessness.

Literature Review

Mueenuddin (2009) examines the different aspects of Pakistani contemporary society in his short stories. He encapsulates the sources of exploitation and alienation in the different sections of society.

Ray (2010), in his review, asserts that characters in the short stories represent all sections of society. These characters witness the transformation of society from feudalistic lifestyle to capitalist global economy. In this social transition, the need of human beings' connection with each other becomes indispensable. Ray calls it a human tragedy that females have to pay for human connections through their bodies.

Trachtenberg (2009) in his review says the distinctive feature of Mueenuddin's short stories is his focus on class struggle in Pakistan. Trachtenberg argues that he "unveils a nuanced world where social status and expectations are understood without being stated, and where poverty and the desire to advance frame each critical choice.

In her article *Daniyal Mueenuddyin's Dying Men*, Sadaf (2017) maintains that Pakistani masculinity is caught between postcolonial rise in corruption and confusion in identity. Mueenuddin through the metaphor of death indicates the decline of masculinity. The stories highlight the slow degeneration of masculinity in the complex relationship between men and women. Mueenuddin's men struggle to fit in conflicting roles. They are "pious yet virile; loving yet dominant; married yet unfettered; modern yet traditional".

Research Methodology

Researchers have applied the methodology of textual analysis in their critical analysis of Mueenuddin's short stories. . Krippendorff (2004) maintains that content or textual analysis is a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use. In textual analysis, we make reasonable and reliable interpretations from texts. Reasonable and reliable in a sense that whenever a researcher applies the same technique to the same data (text) under a different point in time and circumstances he should get the same results.

Textual Analysis of the Selected Stories

Our first story is about a girl named 'Saleema' who is born in the clan of criminals and culprits. Her father is a heroin addict and her mother a prostitute. Her parents give her a life 'one can expect in this deplorable condition' full of shame and desperation. From early childhood, she follows the profession of her mother. After some time, she gets a suitor who brings her to Lahore. His suitor becomes a drug addict and collects money from Saleema for his drugs. She has to work in different houses as a maidservant and finally ends up in 'Lahore mansion' of Harouni.

Harouni keeps a brigade of servants mostly consisting of degraded male servants in his bungalow. They have a world of their own. Some of them have been serving for fifty years. Therefore, Saleema cannot make herself count. She needs some shelter in order to keep her position intact. Hassan 'the cook' becomes her first companion. She maintains sexual relationship with him.

With the passage of time, Saleema realizes that she has degraded herself by choosing Hassan who treats her without reverence. Consequently, she falls to general mockery. After

leaving Hassan, she needs a man who can give her what she wants. She finds her final hope in the shape of Rafiq, the valet of K.K.Harouni, a sixty-year-old man.

Saleema is aware of Rafiq's past life as he has a wife and two sons living in his native village. They start to live together and both share love, respect and trust. She enjoys her maiden experience of being loved and taken care of. She conceives from him and decides to give birth to the child. After some resentment, Rafiq accepts the child and names him 'Allah Baksh' God-gifted one. She lives happily with her new family but suddenly she learns that Rafiq's wife is coming to Lahore to live with him. Her life starts to shatter and ultimately she ends up living with the man (the suitor) who brought her this shame and solitude. With the demise of K.K. Harouni, life of Saleema starts to fall apart. Lahore mansion is closed; older servants get a place in Islamabad house. Saleema remains alone as Rafiq went to Islamabad with his family. She desperately attempts to reestablish her older relationship with Hassan but she fails to do it. Saleema, in the end, becomes a drug addict like her father and suitor and begins begging, meets her tragic end and leaves her son 'Allah Baksh' begging in the streets of Lahore.

In 'In Other Rooms, Other Wonders' we come across the character of Husna who, like Saleema, belongs to lower class with some distinctions. She is persistently pursuing her dream of getting rich, as she knows that her ancestors used to be affluent and own thirty or forty shops in the Lahore Old City. All the assets they sold off before prices get inflated in the city. Husna fails to compromise with her poor condition, as she fears that one day she would end up in poverty like her mother. Fortunately, she gets the job of attendant of estranged wife of K.K.Harouni in Gulberg, where she attends weddings of upper class and absorbs glamour of richness. The hopelessness for Husna lies in the fact that she is neither talented nor beautiful. Her hope to attract or marry a rich boy has no feathers.

Husna, having a recommendation letter from Begum Harouni, goes to her husband K.K.Harouni for a job and resultantly gets typing lessons from Shah Sahib 'the secretary of Harouni' in order to 'develop her skills.' Husna has inherent traits of ambition and cunning. She advertently takes her steps to achieve closeness to Harouni. On the other hand, Harouni seems intently inclined to dance to her tunes.

Begum Harouni, having failed in her wild efforts for getting attention from her husband, decides to perform Umra and consequently Husna gets a chance to win over a room in Harouni's residence. She has already earned a soft corner in the heart of Harouni by her appearance and seductive behavior.

One night Harouni feels pain in his chest and that pain is going to stay in Husna's life forever. She tries to accompany Harouni to hospital to make herself count as a family member but medical officer an old friend of Harouni suggests Husna to stay at home. She has come to realize that her ship is going to sink now and she has to salvage what she can. Harouni dies and leaves Husna in lurch. Daughters of Harouni treat her disrespectfully and reveal truth to Husna that she can no longer stay there and she has to go where she has come from. Husna has to go back to her home with shattered hopes.

Mueenuddin adopts naturalistic attitude in his short stories where characters are striving to sustain in their social environments. They remain in constant struggle against different situations with their single aim to survive. Hope is merely an illusion for them because every momentary success leads them to major catastrophe. In naturalism, characters' original sin is their ancestry as they are born in miserable conditions. Their material and social environment make their lives full of miseries. In 'Saleema' (Mueenuddin, 2010, pp.17-49) and 'In Other Rooms, Other Wonders' (Mueenuddin 2009) we observe that protagonists of the stories are the product of their social and material environment. Saleema is born in 'jhulan clan, of 'blackmailers and a bootleggers' (p.17). Her parents are involved in criminal and immoral activity. Her father is 'heroin addict' (p.17) and her mother a

prostitute. Husna hails from the place 'the Old City' where women from low class have less respect as 'they were kept by merchants' (p.110) and her mother bears the same repute. Saleema and Husna both have inherited these dirty social circumstances.

Poverty is a driving force in the lives of Husna and Saleema. They are strained by their material conditions to choose this way of life. They are denied the choice in her actions. They take every step towards progress and prosperity solely in accordance with social and material circumstances. In naturalistic view of life, characters have no inherent capacity to rebel against the existing state of affairs. Their attitude towards life is determined by their social milieu. Their free will ceases to exist. Life does not seem to allow them any comfort and their conditions remain the same. As Schütze is of the opinion that, 'The heroes in the naturalistic ...are never extraordinary persons. They are not aggressive, but suffering, acted upon, vainly trying to resist the Onslaught of fate that is as subtle and unconquerable as the ceaseless dropping of Water on a stone.' (Schütze 1903).

Mueenuddin, being a naturalist does not allow his characters to steer the affairs of their lives freely but he grants them some opportunities to move on. Saleema avails the chance to make her life better. Saleema joins her suitor to move to Lahore to get rid of her unhealthy condition. Saleema gets Hasan in order to give herself shelter and Hassan being a cook allows her 'delicacies' at his disposal 'pistachio ice cream and slices of sweet pies, baked tomatoes stuffed with cheese, potato cutlets' and 'carrot halva'(p.18). Husna gets the job to attend Begum Harouni. In the stories, characters are trying hard to exploit the chances they get in their respective situations. They are hoping to survive under the crucial circumstances and believe that things will improve with the passage of time.

In the setting of naturalism, characters do not have any free will to exercise because their all actions are determined by the surroundings they are born in. Therefore, the hope is the only chance of survival they have. Saleema has hope that she will get someone who can be her companion after she is left alone by her husband and she says to Rafiq 'I know what you all think ...You think I'm a slut, you think I poison my husband. Because of him, I'm alone, and you all do with me as you like. I'm trying to live here too, you know' (p.22) (sic). Her words find soft space in Rafiq's heart and finally fate favors her. In the other story, Husna is trying hard to fulfill her dreams 'whenever she [sees] a girl her age stepping from a large new car in Market, among the expensive shops, or glittering in a pair of diamond drops at a wedding, Husna's mind would hang on these symbols of wealth, not letting go for hours' (p.110). She desperately wants to 'escape the gloominess of her parents' house' (p.107). She wants to 'escape the bare concrete steps, layered with dust, leading up into rooms without windows, the walls painted bright glossy colors, as if to make up for the gloom'(p.107).

Mueenuddin, in his stories, draws a dark picture of social realities of Pakistani society where hope in characters' lives does not have any meaning and they don't see any light at the end of the tunnel. Hasan in 'Saleema' declares to Saleema that 'there never was any hope' (p.48). In 'In other Rooms, other Wonders' Sarwat discloses to Husna that 'there was and is nothing for you' (p.128). Things will remain, as they are whether we hope to change them or not Mueenuddin unveils. Little improvements give some hope to characters to sustain temporarily but in the end, every effort seems to fell flat. As we see in Naturalism that hope does not last longer and Grellet confirms that 'it is ... pessimistic trend.'

Sexual relationship is one of the important aspects of naturalistic approach in literature. Female characters find their bodies' essential resource to keep them alive. Saleema and Husna both have attractive bodies. Saleema's physical features make her pursuit of life easier her 'oval face, taller than broad, with deep-set eyes She retains 'some of the girl's gravity (p.18). Husna is comparatively more cunning than Saleema, Husna knows the tactics to expose her body in accordance with the opportunity she gets , she [wears] a fitted kurta, showing the cleft of her breasts, which jutted out from her muscular

youthful torso' (p.111). Saleema gets some delicacies of life while having sexual relationship with Hasan and relationship with Rafiq gives her shelter. Husna does not bother in becoming Harouni's mistress and in return, she receives new position in household. Attitudes of servants changes towards her. They become 'either servile or friendly to the point of taking liberties, thinking thereby to win her favor' (p.121). Time has come for Husna to live as she does in her dreams 'She [has] the use of a car, clothes and 'small bits of gold jewelry.' She fills her steel trunks from 'raw silk' to 'electric sandwich makers' (p.122). Sexual bond between characters reveal the truths of stories in naturalism as Loomis R.S states that for women naturalistic literature has done the enormous service of telling the truth and the whole truth about sex.

In naturalistic perspective, characters find themselves in a situation where they strive to survive at every level. They feel cursed to be born and their only purpose in life is to live. Their survival has the prime importance for them. Conventional moral codes of society have no room in their lives. Saleema and Husna have to compromise with the situation and they are compelled to offer what they have their most expensive possessions 'their bodies' in order to get necessities of life. In this mutual exchange they always find themselves at the receiving end and this unequal Bargain leaves them restless Husna feels pity for herself and says, 'it hurt her that it was so little; she [imagines] that her body, her virtue, meant almost nothing' (p.115).

The problem with the characters is that they seek dignity and honor in this unequal bargain. Saleema asserts to Hasan when he treats her with disrespect and she says, 'Don't talk that way; I come from a respectable family' (p.19). Saleema also decides to leave Hasan because 'Hasan [has] degraded her. She refuses to be a plaything for everyone because she wants some reward in terms of honor but when she realizes that no one is there to be her true companion she declares 'I'm done with you fuckingheads'(p.21). Saleema also expects reverence from Rafiq because she loves him and She performs her household duties for him as 'she [brings] him a warm woolen hat and carefully [washes] and [mends] his clothes she [wants] everyone to see how well she [cares] for him' (p.38). (Sic) Rafiq loves and admires Saleema and becomes her companion for the time being but in the end, he leaves her as a punishment because she is not capable to protect his honor. Rafiq tells Saleema about his wife that 'she [keeps] my house; my honor has always been perfectly safe in her hands.' Husna is also facing humiliation at the hands of Sarwat and servants of Harouni and she complaints to Harouni that 'she [makes] me feel like dirt' (p.120). Even the servants here treat me as if I am nothing' (p.120). In literary naturalism, characters belong to lower class they are not supposed to expect any dignity and honor from society. Morgan clarifies that, those who contend that their worth and dignity is intrinsic, whatever may be their extrinsic origin, cheat themselves in vain delusion.'

Accordingly, the naturalists discard as obsolete three supernaturalistic concepts-providence, absolute morality, and freedom of the will (Loomis R.S 1919). Mueenuddin also refuses these forces to play any role in his short stories. Material and social forces are the main forces to determine their course of action. Saleema and Husna are slave to their circumstances. They never find themselves in a situation where they can have freedom of will. Their decisions are not theirs but of situations, they are born in. Characters have life to live and nothing else. Fate seems to decide the consequences of their actions because whatever efforts they are trying to make in order to have better life, they fail desperately. Fate plays vital role in the lives of character as when Harouni's daughter questions the status of Husna. Harouni pleads her case that it is not her fault to be poor, as he knows her history and asserts that, 'she comes from a good family... 'Her great grandfather [owns] more land than yours. But for a few twists of fate she might be in your place, and we might be living in the Old City' (p.118). Saleema and Husna are born in a social environment where their struggle does not seem to bear any fruit. Their all efforts end in smoke. Hopelessness and helplessness are two major factors in naturalism that we find in these stories. Both the stories end on pessimistic note as in 'Saleema' Hasan declares to the Saleema that 'there

never was any hope' (p.48). 'In other Rooms, other Wonders' Sarwat discloses to Husna that 'there was and is nothing for you' (p.128). We feel sympathy and commiseration for them on their misfortunes. Humanity suffers at the hands of social circumstances as Schutze claims, 'our sympathy for the hero is that of infinite sympathy and pity. He represents to us the helplessness of humanity face to face with the encroachment of circumstances.'

Symbolism is one of the important elements in naturalism. Mueenuddin's stories contain naturalistic symbols. Saleema spent her childhood in 'slums'. She spends her time with Hasan in his 'hot filthy kitchen' (p.19). She has no choice but to use same toilet as the men which is 'the dark room [stinks] and there were cockroaches in the corners' (p.20). Saleema's child 'Allah Baksh' comes in this world by the 'filthy hands of old midwife' (p.41). In Begum Harouni's house, Husna also has to go through filthy kitchen. Naturalistic symbols in Mueenuddin's stories symbolize that characters' lives are enveloped by filth and dust. They are struggling to get out of their corrupt social reality.

Researchers have completed their textual analysis of Mueenuddin's short stories and found that elements of naturalism are present in the short stories. The results show that human struggle can sometime be futile in the face of fate as we consistently observe this fact in the short stories of Mueenuddin.

Conclusion

After our textual analysis, we have come to realize that Mueenuddin adopts naturalistic approach in his short stories. His content of the stories is naturalistic. All features of naturalism, i.e., struggle for survival, absence of free will, element of fate are present in the text of the stories. We can easily find symbols of naturalism in the setting of his stories.

Recommendations

This research study suggests that education and financial independence of women can play a critical role for the betterment of women in Pakistani society. Economic empowerment is necessary for improving the overall position of women.

This study also suggests that state must take necessary steps to eliminate domestic violence against women.

This research study concludes that loss of empathy has made society miserable and Mueenuddin suggests in his short stories that decency and sense of modesty can make society a livable place.

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