



FUNCTION OF SATIRE ON MORAL CRITICISM: A STUDY OF KANAK UPATYAKARA KAHANI (STORY OF KANAK VALLEY)

BY MANOJ DAS

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Abstract:

Satire in literature aims to provoke thought without causing harm by emphasising on people, social order, societal institutions, and the absurdities that exist within them. It underlines ethics through the use of irony, exaggeration, sarcasm, laughter, and even mocking. Since satire often highlights social injustices and shortcomings, it is a crucial component of moral criticism. By underscoring contradictions and irrationality, sarcastic humour can encourage people to think about issues of the real world. Though it often struggles with moral boundaries, satire's brilliant use of wit finds a balance between respecting others and allowing people to express themselves. The prime pinnacle of this paper is to analyse an Odia novel, Kanak Upatyakara Kahani (Story of Kanak Valley) by Manoj Das especially to foreground his satirical approach in revealing different facets of human nature. The novel written in the aesthetic rendition of narration appears to be intended for children from the very outward, but a closer look reveals the author's adroit use of satire to portray humanity. By unfolding the society's duplicities and corruption through sarcastic and satirical approach, this study aims at the constructive social order.

Key words: Satire, Injustice, Moral Criticism, Human Nature, Duplicities, Constructive

Introduction:

Satire is a timeless method to observe and analyse human behaviour. By comprehending who we are and how we act as human beings and as a community, it aids in our growth and advancement. Satire is one of the most constructive literary genres because it skilfully mocks or critiques a person, circumstance, or social ideology. It uses hyperbole until it becomes absurd or humorous, rather than accurately portraying defects. Satire as a genre makes fun of a person or circumstance using a variety of humour techniques with the goal to expose damaging attitudes and behaviours and spurring modification. It has been applied in numerous cultures in a variety of artistic mediums throughout the history of human civilisation.

According to Evan Gottlieb, an Oregon State University professor of British literature, satire means, “the art of making someone or something look ridiculous, raising laughter in order to embarrass, humble, or discredit its targets.” Joseph Hall, an English writer, discusses satire:

The satire should be like the Porcupine,
That shoots sharpe quills out in each angry line,
And wounds the blushing cheek, and fiery eye,
Of him that hearers, and readeth guiltily.

In his introduction to *The Battle of the Books*, Swift wrote, “satire is a sort of glass wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own, which is the chief reason so few are offended by it.”

Satire was first used in English at the opening of the 16th century, and its definition hasn't changed much since then. Though initially it was used in reference to poetry, the term is presently used in a wider range of contexts. Satire as one of the oldest literary genres comes from the Latin word "satura," which means "full." An ancient rhetorician, Quintilian coined the word to refer to the works of Gaius Lucilius. Rome takes the pride of having Horace and Juvenal as the two most eminent satirists from ancient time. Generally blithe and friendly, Horatian satire aims to make people laugh in order to promote moral advancement. Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* is a well-known instance of Horatian satire. In spite of its sombre title, it was an effort to bring reconciliation between two real rival families by satirically emphasizing the seriousness of the reason for their separation. Juvenalian satire, which expresses passion and indignation at the situation of the world, is typically darker and more caustic. Jonathan Swift's *A Modest Proposal* as a prominent example is a furious critique of English landlords' greed and disregard for their Irish occupants. The original meaning of satire is similar to Menippean satire. These days, it is rather uncommon. One classic example is Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy*, which subtly parodies the absurdity of contemporary life and love through a series of events, people, and materials.

Satire relies on the addressees identifying it as such, not as shallow or conventional. Nevertheless, when used properly and successfully, it can be a very potent weapon, but it can also be dangerous, which is why both writers and readers find it so fascinating.

Analysis of the novel:

Manoj Das is a popular name not only in Odia but also in Indian literature. His novels, stories and poems delved into the rustic country life and the veracities of humanity with a touch of realism sometimes philosophy, mystery, mysticism and supernatural elements. Reflection of Philosophy is clearly visible in his writings. However, sometimes his writings mirror satirical reflections in a very modest way. His satire is never too harsh, but it hits straight to the heart. With a parodied touch, through the nuances of characterisation and narration, his writings explore various facets of Indian culture, tradition and history. The present novel is written in a fairy-story telling style where Raju, the protagonist travels from one mysterious place to another and survives in a crooked society using his wit. Manoj Das has satirised the sick mentality, narrow mindedness and disgraced practices of the society in an amusing way that pleases both young and the old. The narrative has been divided

into 12 parts. Part one talks about a kingdom, named Kanaka Upatyaka, its scenic beauty and a greedy despot king. In the second part Raju departs for a distant and grim place in order to discover the truth for transforming a golden statue into a princess. The next nine parts describe his escapade to various difficult lands and his wit and skill to face duplicities of the societies and in part twelve he is blessed with the answers of his quest by the divine power and enjoys a blissful life with the golden princess as his life partner. Basically, the novel has an inherent satirical tone in revealing new places and characters, thereby, creating a sane society with mutual respect and happiness.

Part-1 (Once Upon A Time)

The narrative unfolds with the description of the picturesque magnificence of the Kingdom of Kanak Valley. The people of this valley were scared and frightened as the king was suspicious, arrogant and accustomed to being flattered by his ministers. The writer begins by mocking the power holders who chased happiness like wild animals even though it was always in a safe distance from them. They formed an intelligentsia council and instead of thinking for the betterment of the kingdom, they approved a resolution declaring that the happiness of the king should be the prime pick of the people. Additionally, they decided to constantly come up with innovative ways to win over the king. In an earthquake when the palace got damaged, the irate king imprisoned the father of Raju, a wanderer. The king reasoned that since the sculptures were dead, their descendants would be responsible for paying the debt. After his death, Raju was ordered to be arrested using the same logic. Law and order, in fact, were at his mercy. However, Raju escaped and met the golden statue of a woman that was visible because of the earthquake. The narration proceeds as the statue gave her ring to Raju with a prophecy to travel a long distance to meet a goddess and be blessed with the secrecy to enliven her and marry her.

Part-2 (Golden Statue)

Before his departure, Raju went to the king as he was the only befitting guard to keep the statue safe. The king was sleeping like a log till late morning and was waiting for the sun to wake him up. Further, Raju was instructed to address the king using some of the titles that the king was offered. It shows the charlatan life of the king who was far from the concerns of the common populace. Ignoring all protocols, Raju shouted and the king got up in the middle of his dream. However, he came into the awe of his proposal and joined him followed by the members of the council of intelligentsia whom the king used to address as 'idiots' in anxiety. On their way, Raju suggested the king to take occasional walks in the forest to become a pro in walking, but the king boastfully denied his proposal as he was habituated of the happy and comfortable life of the palace. Roaming in the open air, walking on the soft green grass, bathing in spring water etc. were the feelings of freedom for Raju. On the contrary, the king was far away from the common people and was empowered to seize anyone's freedom. He was, in fact, relishing the authority without taking on the associated responsibilities. The writer, further, made fun of the king by comparing him to a battered dog who behaved similarly as he initially failed to see the statue. Instead of feeling the thrills of the adventure, he was more concerned of his shoes, messy hair and the hazards of the morning breeze. However, they got relieved when Raju, finally, made them see the golden statue.

Part-3 (Mysterious Waterfall)

A king should always face reality, but Raju's compliment that he looked miraculous after watching the statue made him impatient and he wanted to see his reflection on the mirror. Further, it unfolds the insecurity and idiocy of the king who was jealous of his ministers who looked equally handsome like him. He, in his tiny brain, thought of himself as the only worthy of marrying the woman if she gets back a life. When Raju became agitated of his arrogance, he was attempted to be seized. However, he escaped their grasp and strode in the direction of the cascade. The writer has described Raju as a little deity with holy aura in the beautiful scenery of the spring. Although Raju was a common guy compared to the exceptional king, his celestial aspect may have been due to the purity of his intentions. Raju marched across the stream addressing the king to keep the statue safe until his return. The king promised to protect the statue like a delicious sweet dish which was one of the most desirous things for him in the world. He further, instead of amplifying his standard, promised to enhance his beauty to be a perfect match to the beautiful statue. It proves that all trivial matters had gained prominence over significant ones in his life.

Raju's maiden discovery was the 'Gyan Bigyan' province which was barren of flowers instead of having trees and plants. He met a man of crooked body and beard who was the priest and frontier guard of the province and further was seized by him because of his disobedience.

Part-4 (Action of the Snake-demon)

In part four, Raju killed the snake demon to save the prince and was arrested by the priest while the king remained silent. The king privately thanked Raju for saving his son and acknowledged his powerlessness before the priest. The snake demon was the symbol of discipline who used to eat one person in a day and that day it had chosen the prince. As the leader of the nation, it was his first and foremost duty to maintain discipline and that's why with great pain he remained silent when the snake approached to swallow the prince. It could be analysed that he was performing his duty without enjoying any rights. Nonetheless, he believed that in order for people to stay disciplined, they must follow certain rules, and the more terrible the regulators, the more ordered the populace would be. It reflects their mechanical existence in which they live with danger rather than resisting it in order to remain disciplined. The king's chariot was pulled by two physically strong men that the horses would be ashamed of their speed. Explaining about this, the king boasted on their knowledge of science as they had altered some horses into men and vice versa. It satirises the values of men who are transformed into animals and live like them. Further their research of counting the sand and being empowered to destroy any constellation in the space was condemned by Raju. They were toiling hard to understand the danger of the future rather than appreciating the beauty of the present. The populace was terrified to remain together and silent. But what was the benefit of it? Was it unity, if people held each other in fear of robbers or thieves? Furthermore, people were ceaselessly working during the night as they had won over sleep by science and wailing sessions were there to overcome the effects of sleeplessness.

Part-5 (A Land Deprived of Laughter)

The priest in his address informed the people about obtaining another snake demon and their plan of celebrating the approaching death of Raju. When a man questioned about the need of another snake demon, he was put behind the bar. This shows that the people were treated as puppets and had no rights to raise a question.

Then they were allowed to cry which was the practice to drive away the effects of insomnia and to make them hassle-free. When Raju suggested the king to make the people smile instead all these nuisance things, the king expressed his ignorance about it. According to Raju, they were cursed in spite of all their scientific experiments and achievements. Raju would have staked all his wealth, power and achievements to attain the pleasure of smile. His researchers informed about the successful invention of the Mind Reflection Mirror which would reflect the true intention of a person if his name is uttered before it. The king uttered the name of the priest and decapitated him watching his malign purpose, while Raju's name mirrored his well intention for the king, his province and his journey to a distant land in which he need the king's help. Actually, the priest was a poisonous snake in the sleeve and it satires the ineffectiveness of the king who was guided by a man like him. On Raju's request, the king taught him the secret knowledge of making oneself vanished by turning into sound wave and then again coming back to one's physique.

Part-6 (Wonder Fruit)

Raju discovered himself in a cave before a hermit when he returned to his shape from the sound wave. Both of them came out only to find a vast and beautiful city on the foothill of the mountain instead of the dense forest filled with birds and animals of the earlier. It is an attack on the greed of man who interferes the tranquillity of nature to satisfy his unending desires. In fact, long ago the hermit had blessed a poor man including his family and relatives to have free food in terms of a magical watermelon. The hermit, further had instructed them to follow the path of meditation to find truth. After coming down, they noticed that some visitors were denied of free entry to the top of the mountain which circuitously shows the parochial attitude of man. Both of them got disappeared using the magical power of the hermit and walked into a big hall. To their dismay, instead of meditating, the people were competing with each other of how long and deep one could sleep. In fact, they used to sleep in the name of meditation. Sighing, the hermit lamented the misfortune of the people.

Part-7 (History of the Province)

The hermit and Raju entered into a hall architected like a temple and found people having an assembly on the governance of the province. They talked about sacrificing three vices, such as lust, anger and attachment to appease their goddess. They had, in fact, imprisoned three outsiders on the name of lust, anger and attachment and were about to hang them instead of consciously renouncing these desires to God. They were profiting greatly from their plentiful supply of free food without engaging in any physical labour. The hermit and Raju showed up as the clan leader went to the top of the mountain to place an order for food for twenty thousand people, and he was questioned the reason for placing such a large order. He initially offered the hermit a bribe, but later on revealed the truth that except fifteen thousand residents, five thousand tourists had to purchase food. Instead of desisting from his wrong doings, he again offered the hermit a lion share out of the profit and further suggested that they could even earn more from their mutual collaboration. The disappointed hermit cursed their province to be destroyed by the next day. As part of their plan to lift the hermit's curse, they all ate the enormous fruit rather than acknowledging their error and acting appropriately. However, over eating made the people sick and the bigger issue was how to make a living as they were unacquainted of any occupation. Some of the intellectuals realised the wider meaning of the curse of the hermit as they were about to perish without the magical blessing.

Part-8 (Emergence of the Magician)

Many days had been passed after Raju's departure from Kanak Valley. So, the anxious king appointed a few of his soldiers to watch the route of his way back. Giving much priority to his physical muscle he turned into an obese. Instead of refining the inner skills, he wore golden rings and necklaces of precious gems. In order to keep him inspired, the nobles also began to flatter him in creative ways. In the meantime, the king undertook many actions to bring back life to the statue, spent a lot of money, but nothing worked out. However, in this attempt he got trapped by a cunning magician. In order to marry the enliven statue, the king agreed with him to fast for a week and brought all of his ministers along not to suffer alone. He even forbade them to return home as they might eat something covertly. Subsequently, the king became a prey of his own foolishness and greed. He was thrown into a hidden tunnel and the crafty magician took was place as the new king.

Part-9 (Flash of the Dream- Land)

Raju reached on another magical land followed by the hermit. Despite their outward appearance, the people who lived here were not human. It was a land that reflected the dreams of the real world and the virtuous feelings and acts were so weak that those were not able to surpass the vices. It can be taken as an outbreak on the falsity of human life. They further moved to the land of happiness where no one was unhappy, even the desertion of the most helpful hermit did not disheartened Raju. He murmured a song of his childhood and discovered the beautiful princess of the province listening his song. Raju expressed his familiarity with her smile and she revealed her acquittance with his song. The princess was like the transformation of a beautiful song into a physical form, but was unable to sing as the land of happiness was devoid of the pleasure of singing. Raju thought of the human beings who were endowed with everything unlike the princess, yet did not use it properly. Here the writer's satirical tone is too obvious where he acknowledges the blessings of human being, especially of speaking, but instead of using it for the betterment, he acts like a snake in fury, teases other like an ape and barks like a dog.

Part-10 (Star Fruit of the Blue Mountain)

One of the best things about the place was that, in contrast to humans, the creatures and the princess were both quite helpful. They all assisted him to know about the star fruit that would allow him to arrive at his destination. Even if it was a land of happiness and Raju developed a tender feeling for the princess, he felt restless. The inhabitants were never eager to consider the unthinkable, venture beyond the horizon or being adventurous. They had neither apprehension nor dreams; they were even unaware of imaginings. Raju was of the opinion that the normal human beings were empowered to act miraculously unlike them, but the matter to regret was that they invested their power and freedom in adverse things. They loved their ignorance so much that they never wanted to come out of its grip. The princess handed him the star fruit and led him to his destination. Through a series of adventures, Raju reached at the Goddess he had travelled a great distance to meet.

Part-11 (Crossing over the Fire Wall)

Raju encountered another priest who guided him to the Goddess and asked him to make three requests to the goddess. His first wish was to enliven the golden statue of the Kanak Valley and was instructed to exchange his ring to the statue to see the desired change. His second wish was to enable the people of the Land of Gyan Bigyan with smile whereas the third was to empower the people of the Land of Happiness with singing. All his

wishes got materialised and finally, he found himself near the golden statue. Though he was worried of the statue's aftermath security, but could not help himself from exchanging the ring. To his utter dismay, the statue turned into a beautiful girl and confirmed their marriage as both of them exchanged rings to each other. Raju's unexpressed wish finally got cherished because of his selfless and benevolent actions.

Part-12 (Golden Girl)

In terms of appearance, smile and voice, the girl who had just taken on human form resembled the princess of the Land of Happiness. Making Raju a bit more surprised, the girl disclosed of having the soul of that princess. She even made him know that Raju was the rebirth of the sculpture king who had built the golden statue. When the forged king failed to locate the golden statue at its place, he doubted of the real king to have stolen it since he was the criminal who had stolen the crown from him. At his command, the soldiers brought the real king out of the tunnel who beheaded the forged one with his own sword. However, the king was unfazed by this covert confinement and ordered his soldiers to bring him delectable food and extract the liquid gold from the mountain that he had discovered during his underground stay. It is expected a person to change into a finer one after being punished, but the king remained the same avaricious and stupid. However, an eruption released thick streams of scorching liquid gold as evil karma retaliated, engulfing everyone, including the king. The Kanak Valley became deserted. Raju and his wife witnessed everything from the summit of the mountain and regretted for the unfortunate human being who turned abundance to curse. He suggested of living there as that place was quiet enough to engage in meditation. He believed that time would revitalize Kanak Valley once more and that would be their goal of the meditation. The divine blessing would elevate the human being to a heightened status, much like the way sun ray helps lovely lotuses to blossom from mud.

Conclusion:

This is a short narrative meant for the young, but at the same time it will never fail the elder ones too. In the guise of story-telling, taking kings and queens as characters, the writer has paved the way to transform human life into a beautiful, easy, lively and charming one. Through the use of satires, exaggeration, hyperbole, parody and childish arrogance he has exposed the jealousy, greed and ignorance that are the enemies of humanity and how perseverance and struggle make life worth living. Love, respect and sympathy for others, in fact, make life lively. This bigger message of a heightened life has been expressed beautifully through the narration and the use of satire has made it even more stimulating. The ability to portray opponents as despicable beings using a variety of humorous approaches keep readers interested from the beginning to the end. The narrative seems like a fantasy in a burlesque style where the protagonist roams from one place to another discovering the idiocies and follies of the people and the society. Though satirical expression is not the usual style of narration of the writer, this narrative may be taken as an exception and the inherent satirical tone has made the story more fascinating. The subtle attack on the pettiness of the people will definitely work to understand human psychology and the moral it exhibits will make life worth existing.

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