

Reflection of Religious Values and Family Bonding in Dilip Chitre's *The Felling of the Banyan Tree*

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ABSTRACT

In social work, empowerment forms a practical approach of resource-oriented intervention. In the field of citizenship education and democratic education, empowerment is seen as a tool to increase the responsibility of the citizen. Empowerment is a key concept in the discourse on promoting civic engagement. Women's political participation has been considered a major measure of women's empowerment. Globally, through histories of the world we have records of very few regents, sovereigns, and active agents in nobility who were women. Champions of liberalism like John Stuart Mill had advocated women's participation in governance by the struggle for women suffrage in the self avowed liberal west very well illustrates the entrenched nature of Patriarchical resistance to women's empowerment. Present paper refracts situation of political empowerment of women in India.

INTRODUCTION

Dilip Chitre (1938-2009) was one of the famous leading Indian poets and critics, emerged in the post Independence India. Apart from being a very important bilingual writer, writing in Marathi and English, he was also a painter and filmmaker. He had a lifelong passionate engagement with native literary traditions and the western ones. He may be the only writer to have received two awards from the Sahitya Akademi, one for his writing and the other for his translations. After a long bout with cancer, Dilip Chitre died at his residence in Pune on 10 December, 2009. The autobiographical and religious elements are the keynotes features of his literary works. *The Felling of the Banyan Tree* deals with autobiographical and religious elements. From the first line to the last line of the poem, Chitre is very much autobiographical by every inch. His knowledge of Hindu religion his reflected in his poem.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Review of the related literature helps the researcher to find out the research gap in the present area of research. The important past researches have been taken in to consideration to design the present paper.

Sargar, S.D. has published an article entitled as *Author or the Character? Dilip Chitre and Mumbai* in EIIRJ Journal in April 2012. In this paper, the researcher has discussed how Dilip Chitre has painted the picture of the mega city; Bombay in his poems. The researcher argues that Mumbai becomes a living character in his poems. The life style of Mumbai has affected the personal and poetic life of Dilip Chitre.

Celin, Roshni has thrown lights on "Portrayal of estrangement and loneliness in Dilip Chitre's poetry *Father*

returning Home". In the present paper, the author discusses how Chitre has delineated the theme of loneliness in this poem. He selects his father as the central character of his poems and nothing is left by his observation. He talks about his father's routine and machine like life in the poem.

Roy, Animesh has published a paper entitled as "Green Poems: An Ecocritical Reading of Select Indian Poems in English". In this paper, the researcher has focused on many Indian English poets like Dilip Chitre, Gieve Patel Keki N. Daruwalla etc. He talks about the ecocriticism as portrayed by the select poets in their poems. Among the selected poets, the researcher talks about Chitre's poem, *The Felling of the Bunyan Tree*. He argues that the poet has fully delineated the pen picture of his father in the poem. Thus, the researcher argues that autobiographical element is the centre theme of Dilip Chitre's poem.

Thus, the selected literature review leads to the gap in the research area Dilip Chitre's poems. Through above mentioned and various other research works, the researcher finds that many scholars still have not focused much lights on Dilip Chitre's knowledge of Hindi religion as it reflects in his poems.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

It is said that, without any aim, even a fool does not perform any act. The leading objective of the present paper has been listed below;

1. To discuss the autobiographical element as delineated by Dilip Chitre in *The Felling of the Bunyan Tree*.
2. To study the element of Hindu religion as portrayed by Chitre in the mentioned poem.

3. Critically appreciate the theme of selected poem of Chitre.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research is entirely based on analyzing Dilip Chitre's *The Felling of the Banyan Tree*. Here I am going to use the original mentioned poem of Chitre as a Primary Source and various articles, research papers, thesis and books as a Secondary Source. Reading, analysis and comparison are used as the research methodology in the present paper.

RELIGIOUS VALUES AND FAMILY BONDING IN *THE FELLING OF THE BUNYAN TREE*

The Felling of the Banyan Tree is a free verse poem of 3 stanzas, with 25 lines in total. There is no set rhyme scheme and the metre varies somewhat, bringing different rhythms to each line. *The Felling of the Banyan Tree* is an autobiographical poem of Chitre in which he portrays the characters of his father and his grandmother. The character of father is leading character whereas grandmother's character is secondary one. From the beginning to the end of the poem, one can observe that the entire poem is subjective and the poet only expresses his feelings towards the chopping trees and also talks about his father and grandmother. Through the character of his grandmother, Chitre imparts his knowledge of Hindu religion with his readers. In one of his articles Hindu, Chitre himself confesses that;

My own poetry is rather private and spiritually engaged with issues in the secular life surrounding me. I regard my poetry as essentially autobiographical and historical. It describes my engagement with persons and places, the progression of time, death and loss, memory and perhaps a hope of liberation to which I cling (4, Jan 2009).

The central theme of the poem is uprootedness, the idea of leaving a family home. The secondary theme is that of ecosystems and their destruction, specifically that of felling trees for profit, in the name of progress. In the poem the two themes are inextricably linked - the speaker moving home coincides with the tree being cut down. The two are fused together.

The poem opens with the character father;
My father told the tenants to leave
Who lived on the houses surrounding our house on the hill
One by one the structures were demolished
Only our own house remained and the trees
Trees are sacred my grandmother used to say
Felling them is a crime but he massacred them all
The sheoga, the oudumber, the neem were all cut down

But the huge banyan tree stood like a problem
Whose roots lay deeper than all our lives
My father ordered it to be removed (*As Is, Where Is, 90*)

Chitre's father orders all the tenants to leave and to chop down all the tress. The labours cut all the surrounding tress like sheoga, oufumber, the neem etc but it is difficult to chop the huge banyan tree because it is very tall and huge in size. As Chitre paints the picture of the tree:

The banyan tree was three times as tall as our house
Its trunk had a circumference of fifty feet
Its scraggy aerial roots fell to the ground
From thirty feet or more so first they cut the branches
Sawing them off for seven days and the heap was huge
Insects and birds began to leave the tree (*As Is, Where Is, 90*)

In the second stanza of the poem, Chitre confesses that the tree was so huge it took seven days to chop and fifty men were at work to demolish it. At the same time, the poet expresses his grief for the insects and birds who had lost their shelter with the demolition of the huge tree. Humanity towards the living beings is seen in this stanza. In the last stanza of the poem, Chitre goes on to describe how this tree was chopped and what he had felt when it was chopped;

And then they came to its massive trunk
Fifty men with axes chopped and chopped
The great tree revealed its rings of two hundred years
We watched in terror and fascination this slaughter
As a raw mythology revealed to us its age
Soon afterwards we left Baroda, for Bombay
Where there are no trees except the one
Which grows and seethes in one's dreams, its aerial roots
Looking for the ground to strike (*As Is, Where Is, 90*).

In the last stanza, the poet reveals that the tree was two hundred years old. The poet also expresses his fear, pity and wonder when it was demolished. In the closing lines of the poem, the poet says that they had left Baroda for Bombay but it is unknown to the readers why his father had ordered to chop the tree and why they had left left Baroda.

The elements of religious values and family bonding are very conspicuous in the entire poem. He acquires religious knowledge and beliefs from his grandmother. In the first stanza of the poem, the poet says that to chop the banyan tree is a sin as his grandmother used to say. In the Fifteenth Adhyay of the Shreemad Bhagvad Gita Lord Krishna himself says that:

ऊर्ध्वमूलमधःशाखमश्वत्थं प्राहुरव्ययम् ।

छन्दांसि यस्य पर्णानि यस्तं वेद स वेदवित् ॥१५- १॥

(They (wise people) speak of the indestructible Peepul tree as having roots above and branches below, whose leaves are the Vedas; he who knows it is alone the Veda-knower.)

In the Tenth Adhyay of the Shreemad Bhagvad Gita Lord Krishna himself says that:

अश्वत्थः सर्ववृक्षाणां देवर्षीणां च नारदः ।

गन्धर्वाणां चित्ररथः सिद्धानां कपिलो मुनिः ॥१० - २६॥

(Of all trees (I am) the Asvattha and Narada of divine Rishis, Chitraratha of Gandharvas, the sage Kapila of the saints.)

Thus, through the character of the grandmother, Dilip Chitre reflects the knowledge of Hindu religion. In the holy scriptures of Hinduism it is believed that the almighty is a part of nature. In the Gita, Lord Krishna says that He Himself is a scared tree of Asvattha. On the auspicious days, Hindu worships the trees, pants, rivers and seas. So, it is a sin to chop the sacred trees and plants. From the beginning to the end of the poem, we find the family bonding of Dilip Chitre.

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LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

Every research study has the boundary of limitation so as this research has also its own limitations which are listed below;

- 1) The present paper studies only the autobiographical elements and reflection of religious values.
- 2) The paper does not the study the language aspects such as figure of the speech, sentence formation and the tense of the poem.
- 3) Only a single mentioned poem of Dilip Chitre is taken in to consideration for the study. No other poems have been studies in the present paper.
- 4) Dilip Chitre is not compared with any either Indian English poet or foreign English writers.

CONCLUSION

Thus, The poet has two emotions - terror and fascination for the huge tree. The former based on sadness and fear for the future, the latter on the awesome sight of a massive tree come crashing to the ground, revealing its rings and ancient history. It is an autobiographical poem. It indicates Dilip Chitre's exploration of a time when he was uprooted from Baroda to the city of what was then called Bombay, modern day Mumbai. Therefore, the banyan tree is a metaphor for his life, for the family's upheaval.

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