
AN INDEFINABLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ALMASY- KATHARIAN AND HANA-KIRPALSINGH IN ONDAATJE'S *THE ENGLISH PATIENT*

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Abstract:

The English Patient by Michael Ondaatje is a bildungsroman novel in which each character narrating his/her story from their genesis. Geographical borders on map divided territory as well as mankind. Here, we found that each character has having his/her story which is totally paradoxical to one another. Even though, they are living under the same roof but there is no linearity/harmony/union/tuning/correlation. Each character believes that life means, a huge amount of sufferings, pains and predicaments and there is no scope to survive into. One has to keep on moving by creating an illusion that one is alive in him/her who wants to reach somewhere but ultimately it has no foundation to its zenith.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Genesis, Paradoxical, Illusion, Zenith

The English patient by Michael Ondaatje is award winning novel. This novel won him Booker Prize award in 1992 and the first film version of it by Anthony Minghella won nine Oscar awards. Linguistic and literatures' scholarly people are of the opinion that Canadian literature enhance from France and England's cultures. It is purely shaped by these two forces of traditions. The word 'Canada' is derived from the two Spanish words 'aca' and 'nada' means 'nothing here.' The idea of nothingness is reflected in the name of the country itself. That means Canada follows dual pattern of cultures and civilizations and equally having no unique identity even after independence.

The novel starts with Hana, a young nurse lives in a villa in Italy during 1945. This novel interwoven several threads of writing like, history, imaginary world, passion and the most striking element is that each character passing through tragic experiences. Through having these elements, this novel covers almost 1930s to 1945 and more period. Element of memory and its explanation also matters a lot. Because our mind is not having that sharp memory to store everything in as it is formation. Due to that here characters tell the story in a flash-back mode which has no chronological order of life as well as narration pattern.

One can evaluate *The English Patient* from different literary approaches. Here, I would like to add some meaning to the very crucial aspect of a relationship that we come across but the things are too much complex that it seems difficult to observe it without a microscopic analyses. Being a reader, I found identity crisis as one of the most striking elements and it also blending several questions that are very much essential in relationships. Ondaatje has pointed out several key

aspects of human being with a very few characters. Each character living his/her own life in the desert without having any vision and will. Here, 'desert' stands as a land of having no observable region/ territory so that none can define. While having ownership as a colonial/ traditional notion which is insignificant. The desert refuses every artificial demarcations/ borders or names as a landscape which is changed continuously by sand storms. Desert is having only vacuum that can absorb whosoever may be passing through it and will ultimately transforms him/her into that wholeness. So, only the desert is having that striking quality to provide soul peace to each character who are craving for 'bondages' in spite of freedom. Only Almsy would like to be at par with the desert. As we know, man is known by the company he keeps.

So, earth which is considered as a galaxy of intellectuals in which all men are craving for to prove themselves rather than to improve. Man rushes towards numerous objectives like to have a name, fame, credit, money, materialism, health, luxurious life and also desire to have permanent relationships with the surroundings. But unfortunately God has poured thirst in such a huge amount that man has to die without the completion of these objectives. The most tragic aspect is that, man considers himself as the most intellectual creature on the surface of the earth but still man fails in his assumptions that God behaves accordingly his wishes. At one juncture, Ernestine said, I just want to know the mechanism of God, then everything will be meaningless. Means, our existence is carrying too much association with God's creation. Almsy, being the protagonist of the novel is having a very few dialogues with other characters. He reveals his name and identity in Chapter IX and pronouncing himself as an "international bastard" who born in Hungarian society and has spent much of his adult life in desert wandering. He finds meaning of his life in map-making and searching for undefined territories. He would like to measure the desert, no man's land part/rotten part and even that space which is already been left-out by the people in maps too. His prime objective is to improve himself in accordance with Herodotus.

Almsy at one juncture deeply falls in love with Katharine Clifton, Oxford educated woman and the better half of Geoffrey Clifton. It is difficult to understand and explain clearly the ideologies of Katharine. She never takes what she wants, assertively approaching Almsy and telling him that she wants him to 'ravish her.' Even she never seems remorseful about her extramarital affair. At one juncture Freud has said "Even after spending 35 years of a long research work on women's ideology, I simply wash out my hands. I do not know anything about." Means women are bound to be complex, unpredictable and puzzle some in each respect. None can dare to find out the essence form that she has maintained from distinct past. Her vein is totally beyond the conventional notions even though you claim to have it, then it will be equally raise a voice against the law of gravitation. While Almsy, not sure about the development and ultimately loses Katharine in plane crash.

Hana, a nurse, cannot separate herself from her father, though he is no more. While Kirpalsingh, a young Sikh bomb-diffuser in the British army and follows him as an oscillating figure between two opposite poles of Indian culture and English culture. He is willing to transform himself as an

English man but the culture does not permit him to be cultivated. He appreciates and follows the English culture but his colleagues are not ready to accept him. Because in English culture they have one universal ideology for Indians that “dogs and Indians are not allowed” means whosoever may be coming from India, will be at par with animal and an object only in spite of following the decorum of mankind. At one juncture they said we love humanity but at the same time they hate humans. So, this duality/ contrast behavior pattern is beyond our reach to classify. As per the narration we found Kip's upbringing;

“It was a mutual affection. If Kip had been asked whom he loved most he would have named his ayah before his mother. Her comforting love greater than any blood love or sexual love for him. All though his life, he would realize later, he was drawn outside the family to find such love. The platonic intimacy, or at times the sexual intimacy, of a stranger. He would be quite old before he recognized that about himself, before he could ask even himself that question of whom he loved most.”

Through this above mentioned narration we can say that platonic love lies at the zenith of love pyramid. It is highly impossible to explain where rain comes from to a gold fish. We just don't have the right perspective to understand it entirely. Love, relation, attachment, intimacy, intensity and affection are totally abstract and having no evidences to trace it properly. Only one can feel it and never express what he felt ultimately because it is natural phenomena while language is science and if it is science then one has to follow universal truths and logic only. While love follows irrational approach that is beyond of conventional/traditional/comprehensible approach.

As per the psychologists only silence can give voice to this inner most feelings because language is nothing but merely an imitation. As Voltaire said, the mouth obeys poorly when the heart murmurs. As we know, when we play with a kid, that kid never response to your talk and simply stair at you and after your massive efforts if that kid may smile, then you take it for granted that your meaning is conveyed. But actually that kid tries to receive your language and actions. In the same way love does not have any language to be conveyed. It transforms in a very casual way but due to our 'nomenclature attitude' we provide layers after layers of language and giving names to this unobservable energy. As we know, none can define and trace electricity even though it is very much there. In the same way, the stream of love always floats at hidden level. Kip being a neglected, he just wants a company in whom he can find himself. Previously the meaning of 'platonic love' is restricted only to have no sexual relation while in the modern context, it means a friendly relation in which there is no restriction but have a thin demarcation. At one juncture Kip said, “The trouble with all of us is we are where we shouldn't be.” Here, we can trace the dissatisfaction of Kip that he feels misfit in his surroundings. In tragedy it is said 'to be unwanted is the greatest tragedy' means when one fails to associate the world, something will be dying from within. Physically one may exist but the energy is totally evaporated and just performing a robotic tasks in spite of glorifying human tasks. Even Caravagion is having the

same ideology and he said, “We would have to keep driving with no vision.” Means we have to move here and there without any intention. We are still living a life of a tribal man because previously they were wondering for the sake of food and shelter while today man is not sure about what he wants ultimately. Even though he has everything, he wants more and more in each respect and at last he dies with a pure vacuum. That’s why it is said in English “Call no man happy till his death” means death is the last refuge place from this havoc. As long as we are alive, we simply add troubles and will never be peaceful. God has given us the rest of the things but not the rest. So we have to walk on this dark street for all the time.

Almasi is ready for to put a full stop to this journey by simply avoiding to go outside the villa because as long as he is in that villa there is no internal disturbance but once he comes out, he has to face disturbance which kills him from within. Only a lover can stop the function of time because he can easily drag himself as well as stick to that for a longer period of time while ordinary man simply takes time as his master. Love has that unique power to transplant one own self in accordance with memory. None can dispatch us from the past and as long as it is alive in soul, you can receive the same vibrations that you had in once upon a time. Even today, Almasi recalling his past which is the most glorious one while time believes in postpone in spite of living thoroughly. Lovers are free to create their own planet or heaven in this most disturbed territory. They just throw themselves in the leap of the creation in spite of imitation. They believe let’s enjoy each other’s company who has seen tomorrow, tomorrow may not be there. So, they just want to derive the essence form of love without thinking too much about conventional mode.

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