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The smell and echo of death in the stories of Madhavkkutty

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Abstract---Madhavkkutty was a Malayalam story writer who had caused to extended and expand the frontiers of vision of the readers through diverse experiences. She searched for only those things which made life worth living. Her creations were the reflections of such inquiry. The motivating force which led her life forward was love. The writings of Madhavkkutty were bound by love to an extent that such a condition was revealed. Several writers have presented death in poetry romantically, symbolically, and mystically. But, only very few writers have portrayed death invoking it as a character and developing it properly. Madhavkkutty is one such writer. In her stories, Madhavkkutty portrayed Death concerning the sensual experiences of colour, smell, and sound. (N.B-Kamala Das was known in the Malayalam Literary world as Madhavikkutty, so in this Essay, I used her name Madhavkkutty)

Keywords---sensual experiences, affinity, post-death condition.

Introduction

Madhavikkutty was an iconoclast. Her honest and poetic sentences broke through the hypnotical shell of man-woman relationships in traditional Indian society, allowing her to express her identity. She inherited her literary qualities from her grand-uncle Narayan Menon and Balmari Amma, her mother, as an Indian English poet, short story writer, novelist, playwright, essayist, non-fictional writer, children's writer, and autobiographer. She proudly states, "My Grand uncle" Narayan Menon is a famous poet and philosopher. My mother was vague and in different spent her time laying on her belly on a lunge four-post bed composing poems in Malayalam . . . I was six and very sentimental. I write sad poems about dolls that lost their heads and hands and had to remain headless for eternity. (*My Story* 23)

She was born into a traditional Nair Hindu family in Malabar. Madhavikkutty was her maiden name. Tutored primarily at home by two female tutors, one Anglo-

Indian and the other Malayali. She then applied to European School in Calcutta, Punnayurkulam Elementary School, and a Roman Catholic-run residential school. She has to drop out of school due to illness. Madhavkkutty creative output includes three books of rhymes, "Summer in Calcutta (1905), "The Decedents (1967), and "The Old Play House" and other poems (1973). "My Story" (1978), "Alphabet of Zust (Novel) (1972), "An Anthology of Common Wealth Verse, Young Common Wealth Poets (1965), "The Penguin Anthology of Women Poets A Doll for the Child Prostitute and Other Stories" (1978), "An Anthology of Common Wealth Verse, Young Common Wealth Poets" (1965), "A Doll for the Child Prostitute and Other Stories" (1977). Before publishing these two collections of short stories in the form of books, published in magazines like 'Reader's Opinion', Quest, debonair and Beautiful. Some of the mare published in dailies like Sunday Standard, The Hindu, Deccan Herald, Business Standard, Assam Tribune, Times of India, The Tribune National Herald, and World Literature Today.

Short stories selected for study

The stories which are selected for the present paper are Madhavikutty's 'Malancherivukalil' and 'Pakshiyude Manam'

Statements of the problem

The following are the objectives of the study.

- Though may be said generally that death is the ultimate change of condition, for Madhavikutty death was a special imaginative experience.
- In her several stories, the expressions as though the odourless presence of death was identified are revealed.

Several writers have presented death in poetry romantically, symbolically, and mystically. But, only very few writers have portrayed death invoking it as a character, and developing it properly. Madhavikutty is one such writer.

Research Methodology

The original textbooks of Madhavkkutty are taken up for close reading to reassess critically textually and contextually. How she has transformed herself would be assessed to have a relook and rereading of her literary works. All the major secondary sources would be taken up for discussion including printed books, journals, magazines, dictionaries, encyclopedias, yearbooks, online sources, audio and video sources available on the web, and dissertations done on her works.

Portrayal of death

Madhavikutty is different from others in the awareness and portrayal of death. Her uniqueness lies in the style of portrayal which is sincere and detached. When death is presented as the spiritual and mystical mindset of the heroin without distancing the least from the story, the sincerity shown by the writer to that experience is quite obvious. Where the inevitability of death, its indomitable nature its naturalness is revealed, a detached and disinterested style of portrayal

also is seen. Those who pass through the stories malancherivukalil and Pakshiyude Maranam detect the fantasy of Madhavikutty moving through her affinity for death.

The awareness of 'Malancherivukalil'

In the story, 'Malancherivukalil' see the description of the arrival of death near the heroine who is hospitalized. "She never expected he would arrive at that time in the room drenched in electric lights. Yet, without any noise became all of a sudden" (356). The diction, and structure of words in this section are highly suited for the presentation of death. The peculiarity of Death, the Clown is the lack of propriety. He does not bother whether it is a well-lighted room or it is dusk. He arrives when she least expects him. 'But', 'did come'.... through these two expressions, the writer hints at the firmness and surely of the arrival of death. Through the word 'but' the unexpectedness of death is mentioned. The expression.... 'did come' suggests that the arrival of death is undeniable. To write 'he did come' is different from writing 'he came' It is more emphatic and the feeling of inevitability is more intense when it is written 'he did come', this sentence clearly expresses the ability of Madhavikutty to bring before the reader what she had in her mind through the right and apt use of word structure and diction. See how the writer tries to personality death in the story 'Malancherivu'.

Pale face, burning eyes, glass-like body, sweating forehead, a thick band of cloth around the waist. (357) The background which marks death also is special. The hospital room with white walls, and a huge clock hanging on the wall. Its pendulum is stationary. air-smelling chloroform... it is in this background that death enters to meet the heroine. On the white walls, and the clock with a stationary pendulum, the semi-echoes of death are heard. The white wall is the ground of death. Their truth remains stagnant without the borders of past, present, and future. The huge clock through its silence reveals the devices to measure time. The lack of movement of the pendulum reminds the stillness of death. The specializes of that background are so beautiful as though a better narrative ground does not exist to portray death. Though death appears in the patient's mental world of fantasy in the hospital room, the narrative style adds a tinge of experience to it. Death has a pale form that walks on the blue-tinged slops walking from conscious state to conscious state. Death is the blue river flowing amidst the blue hills. The blue colour presented consciously in many stories is changed to the inner colour of the heroine and death by the writer.

The awareness of death in the story Malancherivukal is experienced as though it rises from the depths of the unconscious. It is the face of death that fills in the mind of the heroine who returns from the hospital. Her efforts to suppress it fail. That is why in the piercing headlight of a lorry, its driver appears to be an impersonation of death for her. Longinus has said that one of the features of sublime writing is the diction, the arrangement of words to create an internal symmetry by using suitable words attractively. He has stated also that the excellence of writing lies in the specialty aptness and symmetry of the words in sentences.

The smell of death 'pakshiyude manam'

'Pakshiyude Manam' is a story of Madhavikutty which was subjected to many discussions and analyses. It changes to the smell of death. Death is portrayed in this story about the sensual experiences of colour death. The writer who gave blue colour to death in the story 'Malancherivukal' has given yellow colour to death in this story. Pakshiyude Manam thus is a mixture of yellow colour such as yellow sari, yellowbird, yellow Neriumflowers, and manjakamila. The yellow colour appears as the outward specialty of death. 'Small' appears as the inner special feature. In pakshiyude Manam, four images of smell are perceptible namely

- The smell of rotten wounds
- The sweet smell of fruit orchards
- The smell of incense sticks
- The Smell of features.

The specialties of these smells give a well-ordered meaning. It is a route of smell that moves to spirituality step by step from the sickening smell of materialism. According to the Hindu belief even if a person lies the relationship of his soul with the material world will not be broken easily. It will be uprooted only gradually. Though with the last breath the material life ends, the smell of material life similar to that of the rotten wounds might be chasing him. Gradually rising above the dirt of material life the journey to spirituality begins. The start smell of fruit orchards and the divine smell of incense sticks enfolds the soul on its way to the world of death. The soul experiences the indescribable smell of feathers only in the bliss of the merger of death. Through the use of epithets and blending of special usages 'Pakshiyude Manam' imparts a smell-induced experience to the reader.

Madhavikutty has said in 'My Story' that what provoked her thoughts, in childhood was the thoughts of death. The heroine remembers the death which approached her in childhood in the story 'Pakshiyude Manam'. I was standing amidst those flowers which would be seen only by your eyes. To lead you to the destination by holding your hands. But you did not come on that day. You did not know about my love. You had not I am the guide of yourself and everybody. Only I can show you the perfection of love. You will offer to me one by one.... ruddy lips... the moving eyes... body with beautiful organs... all... you will surrender even the pores of hair. Nothing will be yours then. You will be present even in the murmur of the sea. You will be moving in the old trees on which buds sprout in the rainy season. When the seeds which experience the pain of delivery sob under the soil, your cries also will rise along with that... you will become the wind... you will turn into raindrops... buds... you will become yourself... the beauty of this world. (465)

In this long quotation, death and the post-death condition predicted can be seen. Inside our skeleton, it is the small flames of Parabrahman that glow... when that flame dies out it returns to the Parabrahman itself. In the wind, rain, seed, and pain what exists is the spirit of Brahman. The writer presents this spiritual philosophy through the words of death. Death is love also. In death what happens is the total dedication toward love. What is gained through it is the absolute

freedom which can evolve as the beauty of the world. Even while passing through the dimensions of the meaning of spirituality, the writer exhibits in those lines the craving to liberate through death the slavery she experiences.

Conclusion

Madhavikutty is a writer who could raise her stories to the level of lyrics through her vigorous, sweet, and pleasing style. She was persuaded to portray death as a consequence of solitude, by the desire of her spirit to fly to the musical free world of death from the experiences of frozen loneliness. It must have been for this that she made death to say in 'Pakshiyude Manam' you will be the beauty of this world, as a means to the declaration of freedom of a woman's life. As a writer who has revealed through her writings, such excellence of creative wrings. The 'narration of death' in Malancherivukal alone is sufficient to reveal the greatness of her diction.

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