



SUPERSTITIOUS AND TRADITIONAL ELEMENTS IN MUMTAZ MUFTI'S STORIES

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Abstract- Mumtaz Mufti, being one of the prominent writers of short stories, depicts the society as it is. The major focus of his attention is the role of women and how they are treated in the society. The role of men is also discussed as it has an inseparable connection with womenfolk. He addresses unconscious of the society and explores it like an expert psychoanalyst. Through his exceptional technique, he uncovers the hidden layers of superstitions which are rooted in the minds of the people. Using qualitative method, the present study explores the art of Mufti in uncovering the very basis of superstitions and man-made customs. The study mainly uses primary sources for analysis.

Keywords: superstitions, stories, traditional elements

I. INTRODUCTION

Mumtaz Mufti is one of the prominent short story writer. His stories deal with the sensitive issues of the society and tries to identify the ills especially related to womenfolk of the society. The style of writing stories have been under discussion for many decades and this discussion will continue with the research in future. However, the narrative of storytelling by Mumtaz Mufti has his own ideology according to which there should not be any formality but that informal narrative must contain simplicity, fluency and truth. Contrary to the ideas of E. M. Forster and Shams-ur-Rehman Farooqi, Mumtaz Mufti believes not in writing story but telling story. Besides, he also believes in the element of interest in the stories. He writes: "I believe that a story may change its colors but only that story stands apart which is read by the reader and the reader always thinks what has happened and what will happen next." (Mufti 1984:08).

Mumtaz Mufti's real topic is sex and psychology. His concept of sex and woman does not match with what Manto has for these two things, nor does it have complexities being discussed by Ismat Chughtai. It, in fact, takes into consideration that woman who is vying to express her inner self but she does not have words for that. Nusrat Munir sheikh says about the woman of Mufti:

"The woman who is depicted in the whole story telling technique of Mumtaz Mufti, is the one who is always with us, like us and we have seen her always walking around us silently. However, her silence expresses protest of suffocation of centuries." (Sheikh, 1968:122).

While depicting woman, Mumtaz Mufti uses the words to express the beauty of woman in such a way which clearly shows element of psychological self-pleasure. In his narrative woman is shown as a source of intoxication and a part of nature like a bright color in the cosmos. Mumtaz Mufti has expressed this phenomenon in his unique style which makes him different from other writers. Mufti's expertise in expressing woman characters, is matchless. Shahid Hamid writes:

"Not only women writer take pleasure in writing about women but also some men writer write about women for pleasure sake. I think Mumtaz Mufti is one of them. The way Mumtaz Mufti describes the features of women characters; nobody else has ever been successful." (Shahid, 2006:97).

Mumtaz Mufti decorated his style of writing with colorful words and spontaneous sentences. He used these spontaneous sentences in the beginning of his stories. However, these sentences bring conscious possibility to the reader's mind at the end. Nusrat Munir Sheikh writes about his style:

"Mufti has never tried to bring the snake out of its den in his story writing technique, however, he used music of snake catching to attract the people. People came in crowds, listened to the music but the snake didn't come out. Same is the case with Mufti's stories. He entertains his audience through the process of story not the end of story" (Sheikh, 1968:120).

The style of Mufti's stories has been designed with great simplicity and in it the social facts have been depicted in colorful layers. Mufti has presented new customs, traditions and superstitions in such a way that the reader not only understands it but also learns lesson from it. Mumtaz Mufti has divided his stories in a way that elements of superstitions, traditions and reformation are discussed right at the point where they are needed. His stories, though have reformative elements, yet they cannot be called reformative stories. His stories express the facts of the society in powerful sentences. Mumtaz Mufti has expressed rituals in social angle and showed new ways of thinking and emotions attached with rituals. He does not intend to express rituals only but he wants to narrate the creation of new creation of society and the subsequent creation of indifference. We find his desire to be in connection with our fundamentals and our ancient culture. He has expressed the feelings of the ritual of courtship following the demands of the modern era in his story 'Bush ore Bushra':

"There were no restrictions in the worlds of Bush and Zoolf, there were no obstacles. Both these houses had status and opportunities for career. Therefore, Bush started negotiation through his mother. Message was sent to the house of Zoolf and it was accepted. They became one. After this ceremony, their life didn't see any difference. They did not have the feelings of something gained or loss. Excitement could be possible if there were some obstacles in gaining something" (Mufti 1984:34).

There are two ceremonies of Departure. One such ceremony is marriage where two people become one and on the other hand departure separates two persons. This ceremony of departure is observed by wailing and for union of two partners tears of excitement are shed. And these tears represent extreme happiness. Another kind of ceremony is the departure of partner where the ration is reverse instead of straight. This ceremony also invokes tears. In his story 'Bush ore Bushra' the same type of ceremony is depicted where a modern girl Bush falls in love with a boy and they are bound to marry in a ceremony. But unfortunately, the boy 'Zoolf' loses both his legs in an accident. He becomes a kind of dead body which can hardly move and his intention to marry remains a dream. Bush is advised by her friends and parents that life with a disable person cannot be lived. She listens to everyone and comes to the hospital to see Zoolf on the pretext of meeting him for the last time. Her feelings in that meeting is described in the following way:

" She become silent, got a heavy heart, then she consoled herself and decided to go. Howwever, he said, " you have to go, how long will you be in bond with a disable person.' Bush felt dizzy, but she restored her senses and said Good bye to him. On her way, she kept on thinking and endorese the words of Zoolf that it is not possible to live with a disable person. She thought that her father was also right that it was highly necessary to escape from this marsh. " My friends, Noam, Baida, Poppo and all others make fun of me, so it is good, I have said goodbye to him" when she reached home, she was very happy" (Mufti 1984:39).

Mumtaz Mufti depicts his society's fictional characters with all their modern intricacies. Most of his characters include elite people whose moral norms are different from other laymen. His characters' influence in society is generated from their superiority complex and this superiority complex basically is seen emerging from inferiority complex. This inferiority complex makes the characters lose their standard. In the same vein, in his story 'Picnic' he presents brother and sister relationship embellished with hypermodernity in a remarkable way. Here we find the morally shattered element of superiorty complex where a brother intends to make his sister a model girl:

" Brother says, "Injina, this is life pattern, where you can walk with high heels, wearing tight dresses, a mixture of male and female dresses, keeping a bag with shoulders, talking nonsense, speaking fluent English, looking straight into eyes, one does not have to work, no matter working or non working, pattern should be the same, watch may not be working but it should be on the wrist." (Mufti 1984:64).

Like Intizar Hussain, Mumtaz Mufti is seen incarnating the language of the ancient times and its characters. Every writer wishes every scene, every emotion, way of thinking of his time should contine without any interruption. When time moves on, changes are inevitable. However, the traditionalists do not want to see ancient culture and rituals go away. Therefore, Mumtaz Mufti wants these anecdotes, stories or written pieces to be saved and preserved. One such scene is that of 'Huqqa' which symbolize the color of culture. This attitude has been changing with the change of time. Once preparing Huqqa for elderly people was considred a part of respect for the elderly people. Now this does not show the same feelings. This change of attitude is shown by Mufti in his story " Bajwoo ki Dhund" in a few words:

“ I love Huqqa, believe it or not, this is my only friend. It stays with me and talks to me till late at night. It tells its stories and listens to mine. No one in the house likes my Huqqa, even the cook does not like to touch it. I have to make it ready for myself” (Mufti 1984:76).

Expressing rituals, Mufti has mentioned both old and new eras alike. He has done justice in depicting the old rituals as well as the new ones. To him, if it is necessary to point out the weaknesses of the society, it is also important to preserve and present the customs and traditions as historical documents. On the land of sub continent, where there are so many festivals, the festival of ‘baisakh’ has its own importance. Baisakh has its own importance for the farmers of Punjab, however, its special religious Hindi color is expressed in his famous story ‘Khul Bandnan’ where its significance is made obvious. In it we find an amalgamation of rituals and religion:

“ Every year on the occasion of full moon in baisakhi, women come to bow down before the goddess. Some want to open the heart of their husbands, some want to remove the love feelings from the heart of their sons, some want to get rid of the foul behavior of their sister in laws, some want to get offspring” (Mufti 1984:90).

Some rituals fade away with the passage of time while some others live a long life. These rituals have in store many emotions and many happy feelings. Some rituals preserve the history of pangs and sufferings. Often, these rituals are born out of the needs of the people. During the time of kings, there was a ritual of making the king happy in which the poor used to prepare their daughters for the kings right from their childhood. In this way, they could afford to live if they are successful in making the king happy. The detail of this abnoxious ritual is narrated by a girl in his story Khul Bandna in these words:

“Parents brought up their daughter by applying sweet pudding on his belly and cheeks in order to make them soft. They applied sea foam on his breast to make it bulged out. They sprinkled milk on her face to make it juicy, massaged her thighs to make them flexible, fixed soft pillow to her back enabling her to jump up and down like a rubber ball.” (Mufti, 1984:93).

There was a culture in the near past identified as tolerance and sacrifice. It was culture which has in store the feelings of selflessness. This emotion was seen with respect and it was covered with deep religious and moral teachings. However with the change of time things changed. Even today, the tradition of giving utmost respect to the guests is still prevalent and consider their service as their religious and moral duty. Mumtaz Mufti explains this in these words:

“In 1973 when I first came to Safaidabad, I was surprised to see him, especially when he said, “ Yes, yes , I am guide, but no no no bakhshish, nothing. I was confused at his behavior. To be frank, I was doubtful about him. In this present era, we are used to see our own interest and objective in every issue. If we don’t see any purpose we become suspicious. I thought what type of guide he is. He does not take fee nor any tip.” (Mufti 1984:146).

With the change of time human mind has also been transformed. In this connection the humanity has seen the concept of old age home. In this human society, there are some people who believe that their parents are not their responsibility. Then this attitude turned into a ritual but during this transition, there was a time when parents were separated from the family. They were not given food or medicine on any pretext. This attitude is shown by mufti in his story “Aliens” where he narrates that the only son for whom she destroyed all her life, is considered by him as lunatic. He is shown living with his family in high status while he waits for her early death. When she dies, the ritual is explained in this way:

“I feel as if Saim’s mother has not died rather she has come to my house and has adopted the shape of my mother. It looks it is not the story of Saim’s mother rather its mine, yours or the mother of all of us. It appears to me as if she is staying in every house surrounded by aliens just like the beasts dance around the cat before its sacrifice.” (Mufti 1984:187).

Rituals take birth either from religion or superstition. Sometimes, religion is created by superstitions or in the case otherwise religion gives birth to superstitions. Sometimes they become one. Here we see an abnoxious ritual where a widow cannot remarry. Before that time, widow didn’t have the right to live. After sometime, her death was converted to life imprisonment. She lives and dies daily, she can be a prostitute but not wife. These attitudes perhaps are the cause of prostitutions. In these bazars women who could not be of any use to the society, came together and decided to be of any use to it. Then the elite class would visit these bazars and entertain themselves. This idea is depicted in his story “ Unporni” in these words:

“Unporni! He said, “ If I want to propose youSir, I am a widow. “Widow” he got shocked. -----She said, “ My lord, ritual of marriage was performed, there was gunfire, a bullet hit her husband. Fate did what I was fated and I remained a widow” oh---Kumar got injured” (Mufti 1984:56).

II. CONCLUSION

It becomes quite clear from the analysis that Mumtaz Mufti with his subtle technique addresses the issues related to our society in terms of superstitions and social norms which are man-made but they have passed through centuries in a process of evolution. He touches upon the gender issues and analyses the situations as a psychoanalyst. In this way, he finds out the reality behind the customs and traditions which have turned into superstitions with the passage of time. His art shapes the experience and his stories depict the same reality.

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