

Farishta (Angel) – Bi –Lingual Analysis In the Perspective of Homi K. Bhabha Postcolonial Theory of Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity

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Abstract:

Saadat Hassan Manto is one of the greatest Urdu short story writer of the twentieth century in the Indo Pakistan Sub-continent. Born in the colonial period, his literary pursuits reflect the culture, customs, language and traditions of the prevalent society. Manto has the singular honour of being renowned short story writer of colonial as well as postcolonial period. Homi K. Bhabha is a well-known postcolonial theorist and has extensively dilated his concepts of Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity etc. Manto's short story Farishta has been analyzed under the lens of theory of Bhabha s Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity thus exploring yet another dimension of Manto;s literary works. This is a new vista of critique from Bhabha theory and bi-lingual analysis which further enhances significance of this short story.

Keywords: Postcolonial Theory, Homi K. Bhabha, Mimicry and Hybridity, Saadat Hassan Manto, Urdu Short Story

Homi K. Bhabha is considered one of the most renowned theorists of the postcolonial studies. He has made valuable contributions in framing important concepts in his postcolonial theory like mimicry, hybridity, ambivalence, stereotype, and third space of enunciation etc. but analysis of this short story will be limited to his elements of mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence. Imitating the colonizers' socio-cultural habits, values, education, customs, language, ethics, morals, mannerism, dress and other things is called mimicry. Hybridity when used in relation to cultures, it refers to blending of cultures. Most common form of hybridity comes into practice because of interaction and conversation in different accents, slangs, words, pidgin and dialect. Cultural hybridity is the

most popular and easiest form of hybridity. Mimicry, to the extent of imitating the colonizers to the extent of almost the same but not quite, is nurturing, however, an ambivalence occurs when it enters threatening zone where authority of the colonizer is being challenged.

“Farishta”(Angel) is a short story in which Homi K. Bhabha’s concept of mimicry is reflected in many forms. Main character of the story, Atta Ullah, mimics like God and want to perform all the duties of God because he perceives that perhaps God has forgotten to do his duties. Manto’s short stories were mostly written in his usual technique barring few in allegorical style. The topics and the subjects of his creative works also remained focused throughout. He was not much interested to divulge into experimenting new techniques except for few stories like ‘Angel’, ‘Tassels’ and like ‘By the Roadside’. Manto considered society as his canvas of experiment and creation of characters like human beings was his obsession. Abid Hasan Manto while commenting on Manto, writes, “Society was the laboratory of saadat Hasan Manto. He selected human beings for his experiments.”(Manto, 1986, p.230). Manto focused on simplistic style and described narration of his characters in easy language. His stories unfold with the unfurling of events in a sequential manner. These above referred stories are, however, in contrast to his usual technique, style, plot and narration. Mohammad Asaduddin, while commenting on his technique writes:

The narratives of these stories subvert the conventional notions of plot and character, and the chronological development of events in the story. Conventional narrative and even linguistic structures have been distorted to represent the chaotic and dream-like aspect of reality that the stories seek to convey. (Memon, 2001, p. XXXVI)

Manto’s short story ‘Farishta’, created in the backdrop of postcolonial times, has specific significance. This short story also depicts socio-political and socio-economic environments prevailing after the independence. Manto strongly believed in projecting social and psychological themes including taboos in a realistic manner. His common themes and subjects were simple, interesting and straightforward being easy to comprehend. However, Angel, is an exception to Manto’s usual and conventional stories which remained solely his hallmark. Manto deviated from his typical style while creating this short story. Angel, is based on ambivalence of fantasy and reality, and, dream and existence. Invariably all the characters seem mimicking

other personalities which resemble mimicking of colonizers by the colonized. Similarly, some characters hybridize and transform themselves into dual or multiple characters. This appears to be reflecting all the key concepts of postcolonial studies of Homi K. Bhabha’s Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity. Written in the context of ambivalence of fantasy and reality, the short story ‘Angel’ carries deep meanings and impact. Dr. Anwaar Ahmad writes about ‘Angel’:

When the boundary between life and death is obscured, intention of action and thought become blur, dream is intermingled with realization, present and absent mix up, and when the whispers of doctor with the young wife of a hungry, poor and dreadful patient merge with the voice of angel of death, then emergence of a complicated and intense atmosphere created is the atmosphere of ‘Angel’. Despite the use of ‘abstract and the flow of

conscious' technique, social realities kept on wandering. A lot of short stories of Anwar Sajjad, Khalida Hussain, Rashid Amjad and Mirza Hamid Baig seem to have been generated from the lap of 'Angel. (Ahmad as cited in Zuhra, 2003, p. 283)

Manto has woven the plot of the 'Farishta' and created the entire atmosphere in the backdrop of reality and fantasy. This short story reflects mimicking and duality of roles wrapped up in socio-economic environments. The family characters in this story are described as, Atta Ullah being husband, Zainab as wife, Rahim and Karim as two sons and a doctor. The family depicted in the short story is highly marginalized, poor and backward. Under their poor economic conditions prevailing, it is extremely difficult for them to meet their bare essential necessities. The children are dying of hunger and their father is sick and admitted in the hospital. Manto does not hesitate to project real picture of the society. He exposes societal hypocrisy and false cultural mask. He knows actual hollow worth of the society. Criticizing society and culture, Manto writes, "If I take off the blouse of culture and society, then it is naked." (Manto, 1956, p.20). Here Atta Ullah mimics role of the God, the doctor is depicted mimicking roles of a savior and an angel of death simultaneously. The role of wife, Zainab, is a reflection of a woman, making an effort to save life of her husband with the help of doctor while flirting with him. She also goes out to beg food for the hungry children. "Manto has exposed the contradiction and illogical base in the hidden common and usual attitudes of the people." (Alamgir, 2005, p.185)

'Farishta' is a good example of Mimicry, Ambivalence and Hybridity. "Manto has a firm grip of revealing ambivalence of various social, emotional and psychological states." (Azeem, 2016, p.328) The characters of short stories of the colonial times usually represented colonizers culture and civilization. Their personality cult was never doubtful and were not alien in the contemporary social and political narratives. Knowing the personality characters like Kalim, Fauji, Madhu etc. we never face any confusion as we encounter the character of Atta Ullah, and other such ambiguous characters, in a state of chaos, performing in the state of fantasy and reality (Nayyar, 2016, p.263). The life being experienced by these characters are multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. Adoption of multiple dimensions and directions by the characters reveal end of unidirectional colonizer rule and reflects independence for the colonized.

In "Angel", the character of Atta Ullah is having multiple roles and faces. It is difficult to ascertain which Atta Ullah is real and which other is based on fantasy, leading to a state of ambivalence. Each role in this story is hybridized and opposite, and ambiguity prevails about reality and fantasy. Atta Ullah, in the same story, mimics God who decides about life and death of others. Mimicking, he tries to inculcate attributes of God in himself and decides to kill his children with his own hands.

Manto has crafted an environment of fantasy and reality from the beginning to the end of the short story. Real Atta Ullah mimicks a different person, impersonating him as Atta Ullah in fantasy. The bed in the hospital, where Atta Ullah is lying and experiencing two different sets of personalities, is in fact, the state of fantasy and reality. This is the place where fantasy and reality tend to merge. Manto exposes the two like this.

برہنہ شخص نے قہقہہ لگایا اور کہا: میں عطا اللہ ہوں۔۔۔ غور سے دیکھو۔ کیا تم اپنے آپ کو بھی نہیں پہچانتے؟ عطا اللہ نے اس ننگ دھڑنگ آدمی کی طرف دیکھا اور اس کی گردن جھک گئی۔۔۔ وہ خود ہی تھا، بغیر لباس کے۔۔۔ (منٹو ۲۰۱۰: ۳۸)

The naked man laughed. I am Atta Ullah. Look carefully, don't you even recognize yourself? Atta Ullah looked at the naked man and bent his head because he had seen himself. (Hasan, 2008, p.142).

One Atta Ullah initially and, thereafter, many Atta Ullahs' come in the story like self and "otherness". One Atta Ullah is portrayed as colonized, being sick, poor, marginalized and dependent while the 'other' mimics as God as powerful, resourceful and ruling colonizer. Manto represents his characters in this way to narrate the postcolonial effects through such type of characterization. One Atta Ullah is lying on bed and he sees another Atta Ullah standing stark naked. Then he sees many Atta Ullahs' on multiple sides outside. He perhaps considers that Atta Ullah has been split into many Atta Ullahs' and he sees for himself that if a mirror has broken into many pieces and every small piece is embossed with and reflecting Atta Ullah.

The central metaphor in this story of fantasy and reality is proclaiming the powers of God while mimicking like God and implementing it ambiguously in the state of fantasy. Many characters come into action in the state of chaos donning various roles wrapped in the state of fantasy and reality. The story lacks clear purpose of characters performing in a complex and ambiguous state of reality and fantasy.

Atta Ullah, a character of 'Angel' is forced to mimic God. All divine's orders and authorities which are associated with God appears to be used by Atta Ullah in the environment of fantasy. He tries to make mockery of the divine's sole authority. Badly affected by the socio-economic system and being very poor and a patient, Atta Ullah thinks that God has stopped doing His works and considers that, now, Atta Ullah has to perform all works on behalf of God. Provision of food, daily subsistence, and giving life and death are all commandments of God. Atta Ullah thinks that if God has forgotten to provide food to his hungry children, therefore, killing is the best available option. This is why, Atta Ullah is forced to use divine's orders and mimic God.

کریم نے اپنے باپ کا ہاتھ پکڑا اور کہا: ابا۔۔۔ اب کچھ کھانے کو دو۔
عطا اللہ کو بہت کوفت ہوئی: تم مرتے کیوں نہیں؟
کریم یہ سن کر سٹیٹا ساگیا: کیا ابا؟

تم مرتے کیوں نہیں۔ میرا مطلب ہے۔ اگر تم مرجاؤ گے تو نیند ہی آجائے گی تمہیں۔

کریم کی سمجھ میں نہ آیا کہ اس کا باپ کیا کہہ رہا ہے: مارتا تو اللہ میاں ہے ابا۔

اب عطا اللہ کی سمجھ میں نہ آیا کہ وہ کیا کہے: مارا کرتا تھا کبھی۔۔۔ اب اس نے یہ کام چھوڑ دیا ہے۔۔۔ چلو اٹھو۔

پلنگڑی پر کریم تھوڑا سا اٹھا تو عطا اللہ نے اسے اپنی گود میں لے لیا اور سوچنے لگا کہ وہ اللہ میاں کیسے بنے۔۔۔۔۔

اللہ میاں خدا جانے کہاں تھا۔ اور زینب بھی۔ معلوم نہیں وہ کہاں چلی گئی تھی۔

کہیں سے کچھ مانگنے گئی ہوگی۔ عطا اللہ ہنسنے لگا لیکن فوراً اسے خیال آیا کہ اسے اللہ میاں بننا تھا۔ سامنے موری کے پاس بہت سے پتھر پڑے تھے۔ ان پر وہ اگر کریم کو دے مارے تو۔۔۔ (منٹو ۲۰۱۰ : ۳۹)

Karim grabbed his father's hand. 'Father, now give me something to eat.'

Atta Ullah was annoyed. 'Why don't you die?' 'What father?' Karim asked.

'Why don't you die? I mean if you die, you will also go to sleep'.

Karim did not understand. 'But only God can make people die.'

'He used to, but He has stopped doing that now. Get up'.

Atta Ullah did not wait for him to get out of bed; he picked him up while trying to decide how best he can do God's work..... As to where God was, God alone knew. And where was Zainab? She must have gone out to beg for food. Atta Ullah laughed but became somber when he remembered that he was playing God.... There were large boulders on the ground. He thought of smashing Karim against them, but did not have the strength to do so. (Hasan, 2008, p.143)

A special point of this short story 'Angel' is that, whenever major character of story finds the 'Other', he pulls out stones on him or selects an injection of poison for him. While deciding the death for 'Other' he steps in the domain of God. He decides to kill his children with his own hands, which is a decision of God. Hungry child says to his father that He is the only God who kills. Ironically, father says that He used to kill earlier but not now. Falling in the quagmire of poverty and disease, dawning of this thought is a natural phenomenon that God has stopped working on human matters. The God has left mankind on themselves. This situation of authority and compliance resembles with the state of fantasy and reality. When Atta Ullah decides to kill his children, he uses God's orders in real essence. He uses these orders because he is prey of fantasy of God that He has stopped exercising His divine powers. Man can't use divine's orders like Him but can only mimic authority of God. This is the irony that since he is forced to mimic authority of God, therefore, he kills his children in fantasy only. Dr Nasir Abbas Nayyar says in this context that "All of his actions terminate in the state of imagination and reality, doing or not doing and between life and death." (Nayyar, 2016, p.265)

Manto has projected the mimicry of the character of God through Atta Ullah in a comprehensive manner in the short story 'Angel'. All the tasks of God are now required to be performed by Atta Ullah. Giving food to the creation and deciding about the fate of life and death like big jobs are seen

being performed by him. Even before his son Karim, he has killed his son Rahim due to hunger and starvation by breaking his neck. He now wants to kill his son, Karim, due to this reason that he cannot provide him food despite the fact that giving food is one of the Divine's tasks. Mimicking God, Atta Ullah wants to kill his children being victims of hunger and starvation.

The character of doctor is also hybridized in the story 'Angel'. The doctor is considered as an angel of healing and life, whereas in the story, he is hybridized and transformed into an angel of death.

دور بہت دور ایک فرشتہ کھڑا تھا۔ جب وہ آگے بڑھنے لگا تو چھوٹا ہو نے لگا تو چھوٹا
ہوتا گیا۔ عطا اللہ کی چارپائی کے پاس پہنچ کر وہ ڈاکٹر بن گیا۔ وہی ڈاکٹر جو اس کی بیوی سے ہر
وقت ہمدردی کا اظہار کیا کرتا تھا اور اسے بڑے پیار سے دلاسا دیتا تھا۔ (منٹو ۲۰۱۰ : ۲۷)

In the distance, stood an angel who began to move towards him but as he moved he appeared to shrink in size. When he approached Atta Ullah's bed, he turned into the doctor who used to be so solicitous of his life. (Hasan, 2001, p.203)

The doctor injects poison in Atta Ullah's arm, in connivance with her wife. Resultantly Atta Ullah dies. See how it is narrated by Manto in the story:

عطا اللہ چند لمحے خلامیں دیکھتا رہا۔ پھر اس نے زینب کو ہاتھ سے ایک طرف
بٹایا: تم ادھر ہو جاؤ۔ وہ آ رہا ہے۔ کون؟
وہی ڈاکٹر۔ وہی فرشتہ۔

فرشتہ آہستہ آہستہ اس کی چارپائی کے پاس آیا۔ اس کے ہاتھ میں زہر بھری سرنج
تھی۔ عطا اللہ مسکرایا، لے آئے!

فرشتے نے اثبات میں سر ہلایا: ہاں، لے آیا۔

عطا اللہ نے اپنا لرزاں بازو اس کی طرف بڑھایا: تو لگا دو۔

فرشتے نے سوئی اس کے بازو میں گھونپ دی۔

عطا اللہ مر گیا۔۔۔ (منٹو ۲۰۱۰ : ۴۲)

Atta Ullah gazed in the distance, then said, get aside he is coming. He pushed Zainab away. Who.

The same doctor.....the angel.

The angel approached his bed slowly. He was carrying a syringe full of poison. Atta Ullah smiled, you have it. Yes, I have it. The angel shook his head affirmatively. Atta Ullah extended a trembling arm towards him. Then

give it to me. The angel pushed the needle in. Atta Ullah died. (Hasan, 2008, p.145)

Manto has projected performing of two different roles simultaneously by a single character in this short story. Doctor is innocent, healing people and an angel of death at the same time. His role is life saving and life taking simultaneously. The dual performance of characters, is based in the backdrop of postcolonial thoughts of mimic men and mimicry which creates depth and new dimensions in the short story. The wife, in an effort to save life of the husband commits disloyalty showing that for every person there is his mimic man present notwithstanding who is real and the other. The ambivalence of loyalty of wife of Atta Ullah in the blurred moments of fantasy and reality is reflected like this:

کسی مرد کی آواز سنائی دی: تم غلط کہتی ہو۔ تم اس کو پسند نہیں آئیں اس لیے وہ چلا گیا۔

اس کی بیوی دیوانہ وار چلائی: بکواس کرتے ہو۔ ٹھیک ہے کہ میں دو بچوں کی ماں ہوں۔ میرا پہلا سارنگ روپ نہیں رہا۔ لیکن وہ مجھے قبول کر لیتا اگر تم بھانجی نہ مارتے۔ تم بہت ظالم ہو۔ بڑے کٹھور ہو۔ اس کی آواز گلے میں رندھنے لگی: میں کبھی تمہارے ساتھ نہ چلتی۔ میں کبھی ذلت میں نہ گرتی اگر میرا خاوند بیمار اور میرے دو بچے کئی دنوں کے بھوکے نہ ہوتے۔ تم نے کیوں یہ ظلم کیا؟۔۔۔ (منٹو ۲۰۱۰: ۴۰)

A man's voice replied. You are wrong. He did not fancy you that is why he left. His wife screamed in an insane voice. What are you talking about? It is true I am the mother of two children and my looks have faded, but had it not been for you, he would have found me acceptable.... I would never have humiliated myself like this if my husband was not sick and my children were no hungry. Why did you do this to me? (Hasan, 2008, p.144)

The technique and style of this short story is different from most of the short stories of Manto which makes it quite unique and prominent and brings Manto in the line of other such postcolonial writers. The language and narration, selection of words, duality of characters, the state of dream and realization, the technique of reality and fantasy highly differentiate this short story and creates novelty in it. Dr Nasir Abbas Nayyar while commenting on selection of new technique by Manto writes:

Every creative writer also revolt against himself. When some particular style, technique and subject become mode of identity of a creative writer then he does new experiments so that creative work which is stalled due to his peculiar identity should be prevented from it. Moreover, these experiments enable the writer to discover new world of literature. This short story of Manto may be regarded a revolt against Manto. (Nayyar, 2016, p.267-268)

Similarly, on the variety and the novelty of the theme and the subject of Manto's short story Farishta, Muhammad Asim Siddiqui writes: "There is rarely a mention of story like 'Farishta' and many such, which are neither about sex nor about the partition." (Siddiqui, 2012, p.17)

In short, 'Farishta' is the short story written in the state of dream and realization, and fantasy and reality on the blurred boundaries of merging. Atta Ullah mimics multiple personalities including all the powerful God, and other characters like doctor and his own wife mimic too, in the story. He finds ambivalence of personalities in them like 'Others'. In this short story doctor and wife of Atta Ullah have dual characters. 'Angel' is a unique short story of Manto having postcolonial elements according to Bhabha's concept of mimicry and ambivalence of fantasy and reality. It is one of the most popular, unique and famous short story amongst Manto's works.

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