

ANTHROPOMORPHIC ELEMENTS IN SAJID MALIK'S *MUNNU*: A BOY FROM KASHMIR AND ART SPIEGELMAN'S *MAUS*

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Munnu: A Boy From Kashmir (2015) is a graphic novel which was authored by Sajid Malik based on his childhood. Art Spiegelman's *Maus* (1980) is also a significant graphic novel. In both the cases the readers get into the narration through a blend of images and words. It is through the employment of visual grammar the aesthetic pleasure is reached at. The central theme of these narratives is the tragedy in the holocaust and the partition of nations.

Through *Munnu*'s childhood the struggle of a promising cartoonist in the small town in Srinagar is picturalised. The novel illuminated the conflicted land of Kashmir. The entire family was disturbed; education was interrupted because the schools were closed and their neighbours were killed. *Munnu*'s life rarely worked out the way he wanted. Once the place was a mix of communities, later it was crumbled when the country was divided. *Munnu*'s father and brother were taken for identification parades and the informers pointed out terrorists. Speaking Kashmiri was considered as an offence. "The ceasefire line was renamed the line of control in 1972 and demarcated with a dotted line on the map: now India occupied Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir" (*Munnu* 208).

Anthropomorphism is a literary device having the form of personification. It is usually made use of in children's literature. Here the attribute of human emotions are entrusted upon animals or other non human things in order to create an everlasting impact. Anthropomorphic elements are not aimed at ridiculing either humans or animals. The application of anthropomorphism is beneficial to simplify the complex entities in the fictional work.

The author here portrayed Kashmiris as hanguls; the endangered species of red deer, to show the vulnerability of Kashmiris. They were represented as deer and others as humans. The Hangul- stands as a subtle symbol to signify the clash of the Kashmiri population which is endangered. It radiates the feeling of helplessness which is the fear of being preyed upon.

This in fact is a critique of oppression, cracking down and violence. On the other hand, it is a representation of a conflicted generation. Men and women had no complete peace there. The attempt was to erase the entire group: ethnicity, caste, and race.

Kashmiris were the haunted animals. The childhood of *Munnu* portrayed the experiential pattern, agony, terror, fear and tears of his countrymen. Their existence portrayed the cultural symbols as threatened and endangered. The anthropomorphic images portrayed here are representative of the social issues that prevailed there like curfew, harassment, lack of educational opportunities etc.

The recurrent conflicts adversely affect the natural beauty of the place. The natural habitats were destabilised as a result of deforestation. The violence over the voiceless highlights the racial and regional hierarchy of the place. It announces the dehumanisation which is part of history where the conflicts in Kashmir are involved.

Munnu becomes a political cartoonist, using art to criticise, express, expose, to seek revenge. The author brings his experience to *Munnu* in fruitful ways; a nuanced reflection of the politics of life under occupation, though the novel does take the side of the Kashmiris who deal with daily brutality and restriction. He represented the Kashmiris as deer because the Kashmiris, like the Jews in Spiegelman's *Maus*, were haunted animals. Sajad establishes the themes of terrifying nationalisms, haunting, embedded violence, loss and cultural crypts through words and images.

Spiegelman deliberately chose animals for his story; because he wanted that the reader should associate a few characteristics with certain animals. The way the author and his family's everyday routine revolve around the politically active land, gives a shuddering insight to the reader of how the

psyche of a seven- year- old boy gets moulded by the wails of the mothers who've lost their sons, and the bullet shots, fired as if competing for every tick of the clock.

Sajad in a heart-rending way comments on the recurrent killings of Kashmiris that lead to rise in demand for tombstones: “Old tombstone the Blend of diverse cultures for which Kashmir was once known, and the mastery of the artisans and stone – carvers of the valley . . . But due to the need for mass production, now marble tiles were framed in iron and erected on the graves” (210). He used anthropomorphism to represent people, where the Jews were mice headed to show the treatment by Nazis, Germans, cats and the Americans, dogs etc

During the crackdown parades where the men of the house had to appear before the army, so that informers might identify the terrorists. A realistic portrayal of the spectre of the routine pattern of raids and armed encounters conducted by the army to hunt down armed insurgents brings home, the bone-chilling horror of such operations in the conflict zones of the world. Regular crackdowns or the raiding of houses for any real or false trace of militants was a nightmare where the author's first - hand account sends a chill down the spine. The mere feeling of the men and young boys from every family taken for regular interrogation related to militant whereabouts where the next beat of your heart is decided by the honk blown by the informer sitting in the driver seat of the army jeep points to the length to which an occupying power goes. *Munnu* presents families torn under by the terrors coming into the house from the violence of the region. Sajad gives us stories of homes and families marked only by disappearances and deaths. The bawling school children, the grief- stricken families and the traumatised individuals in *Munnu* testify to the unpredictable nature of extreme violence that enters their lives. There are no grant picturesque views of hillsides, rivers and the quiet life.

Spiegelman's protagonist was interviewing his father, Vladek about the experiences in World War II and the holocaust. *Maus* takes place during two different periods in time. In the present, Spiegelman interacted with his father, Vladek. From the interactions, the story moves to the past as Vladek recounts his experience as a Jew in German occupied Poland. The second part of the story describes Vladek's life in the concentration camps. Jews are represented as mice, Germans as cats, Poles as pigs, Americans as dogs, British as fish and the Swedish as deer.

Art Spiegelman and Malik Sajad used these anthropomorphic imageries to represent different nationalities in their novels. The graphic elements are presented in both the cases in a sequential way where the readers actively participate in the construction of the narrative. Anthropomorphizing becomes an educational tool in this juncture. Since a very serious subject gets a very light treatment.

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