

A Socio-Psychological Exploration of Usman Ali's Play 'The Prisoners'

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Abstract

Language and literature works as a bridge in achieving certain goals by affecting the human being socially as well as psychologically. The current study aims at exploring socio-psychological disposition of the characters in Usman Ali's play *The Prisoners*. In order to unmask the external and internal trauma of contemporary society, socio-psychological approach is used in the current study. For this purpose, the researcher highlights socio-psychological disposition of the characters in the play by drawing attention to the trauma of characters, the prevailed corruption and systematic nepotism in the society. In the play, Rustam and Sohrab who love each other and want to spend their life together whereas the society is not willing to give them space and the crowd puts them into the prison and wants to kill them. Moreover, the whole play curbs by the revenge of the leader who indulges in property issue with Rustam to take vengeance and he drags him in prison. The findings of this research shed light on *The Prisoners* as a socio-psychological study of contemporary era as it throws light on the prevailing evils in the society leading to multiple psychological traumas.

Keywords: Socio-psycho analysis, contemporary era, social evils, trauma.

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INTRODUCTION

The play *The Prisoners* written by Usman Ali-Pakistani dramatist in 2018. He was born in 1978 in district Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab. He did MPhil from University of the Punjab. He accomplished his thesis on Derek Walcott entitled *The Function and process of Filtration* Derek Walcott. The dominated themes in his plays are social evils such violence, broken family system, poverty, moral decay, and lack of humanity in contemporary era. All his plays are the creation of his personal experiences. He is the author of 6 plays including *The Guilt* [1], *The Last Metaphor* [2], *The Odyssey* [3], *The Breath* [5], *The Flute* [6], and *The Prisoner* [4]. The prisoners [4] are one of his plays which delineates corrupt political system and biasness of the people in contemporary time. The story revolves around the two prisoners who are oppressed by the society. They are friends and involves in sacred love. A man who wants to get a home which possesses by Rustam but Rustam gifted it to Sohrab. The whole play is moderated by this issue. Due to his personal grudge with Rustam and Sorab. He makes a conspiracy against them in order to take revenge as the result they imprisoned. All people are against them and their leader is the same man who has an issue with Rustam. Both

Rustam and Sohrab are helpless and without acceptance, even the law is powerless in order to provide justice. The play explicitly shows the majority's methodologies. The theory which is going to be applied is borrowed by Freud's concept of Psychoanalysis. He was born in 1856s in Austrian. He was an Austrian neurologist and the philosopher of nature. Psychoanalysis, a method for treating mental illness and explains human behavior. The paper aims to analyze Socio-psychology analysis of the main characters. It focuses on how an individual behavior affected by society. This is real that one influenced by the group of people, but imagined and implied the presence of others alter an individual behavior and thought. Sigmund Freud [21] elucidates that childhood events have a great influence on adult lives and shaping human personality. Everything we do is motivated by inner unconscious forces. The study explores the research question as: how the contemporary time evils exploiting the human beings socially and psychologically? The main objective of the study is to mirror *The Prisoners* as a socio-psychological account of contemporary time. The researcher uses characters, setting and themes in order to glass the socio-psychological aspects of contemporary society.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nayebpour, K & Varghaiyan, N. [7] defines the significance of narration. He delineates that this technique is used in the novel *The Kite Runner* through two prospective one is to get relief from the past experiences which affect adult life as well to get relaxation at the end of the story. Yamin Liang [8] clearly analyzes the id, ego, and super-ego in the main character Elizabeth through a different perspective; as her search for love, her prejudice against Mr. Darcy and the changes in her behavior towards Mr. Wickham. Yamin Liang expertly discusses character's trauma through Sigmund Freud theory of personality.

Uwasomba [9] explores that *Crime and Punishment* is the fusion of four novels the psychological novel, the novel of detection, the novel of character and the philosophical. All these reasons behind the crime committed by the main character Raskolnikov. The idea which is assured in the paper is that crime is not the foremost thing but the cause behind the crime is important.

Fonagy, P & Target, M. [10] comments on cognitive science and psychoanalysis. He talks about change through technical invocation in the theory. In the paper, his consultations are about a clinical therapist in psychoanalysis and introduce a "new object" as a suggestion.

While doing psychoanalysis of Mohsin Hamid's novels *Moth Smoke* and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, describes the mentality of the heroes (Darashikoh in *Moth Smoke* and Changez in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*) both are obsessed with desires one is hooked with looking rich and other desire about living and working in America. He skillfully yelled at such a mentality of Pakistani people through this play [11].

Framework

The term Socio-Psychological discloses how a person's views, thoughts, and actions are motivated by actual or implied existence of others [12]. It focuses that society has a capacity to change an individual's mind, values and restrictions imposed on us either we obey or not. It also highlights that how a person's life is knitted within the society. Socio-psychological study is a combination of two words; sociology and psychology and both share some mutual interests as both focus on how individuals behave collectively in the society. Though, we are not exploring the fields in detail but the subject matter and methods of Social Psychology. The study of groups especially from small to large groups is the actual function of sociology whereas social-psychologists are keen on how gatherings act and how the individuals are impacted by the gathering in which they have a place how an individual contemplates others, is affected by them, and identifies with them [13]. Subsequently, while Social Psychologists are keen

on gatherings, they by and large need to determine what gatherings mean for singular people or now and again, what an individual can mean for a gathering. Accordingly, Sociology includes the comprehension of what goes on in standing of social collaboration. Berger [14] investigates the sociological issue isn't such a lot of why a few things turn out badly from the perspective of the specialists and the administration of the social scene, yet how the entire framework works in any case, what its presuppositions are, and by what means is it held together.

Human personality is the focus of study in Psychoanalysis which is also known as psychology of humans. Sigmund Freud, the author of the theory psychoanalysis describes the phenomena of mental illness and human behaviors. He believes that man's childhood experiences have a major contribution in his adult life as anxiety in present age rooted in the traumatic experiences of the past and the cause of psychosis is the alarming situation of one's past. Eagleton [15]. Therefore, Psychoanalysis is a type of literary criticism, which helps interpreting the literature by utilizing a portion of the methods of psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis itself is an approach which intends to fix mental disorder by examining the cooperation between the cognizant and oblivious components in the brain [16]. Hartman [17] explains Psychoanalysis as focus of the study is related to the exploration of human behavior and motivation.

DATA ANALYSIS

The researcher used the socio-psychological approach to reveals one's behavior with the interaction of the society and highlight the drawbacks of contemporary society. McDougall defines social psychology as: "Social psychology has to show how, given the native propensities and capacities of the individual human mind, all the complex mental life of societies is shaped by them and in turn reacts upon the course of their development and operation in the individual." Luther Lee Bernard [18].

Sigmund Freud describes human personality through three stages: Id, Ego, and Super-ego. In psychology, Id seeks pleasure and avoids sufferings. It is an irrational rejection of reality and free from rules and regulations. Id operates in the form of desires. Its major concern is the persecution of happiness and fulfillment of desires on an immediate basis. It is connected with existence and selfishness. Ego engages with reality and works like a bridge between Id and Super-ego. It helps the person to avoid neurosis resulting in the collapse between Id and Super-ego. Ego satisfies the desires of Id in a way which is socially and realistically applicable. It works as a shield to protect the mind from stress.

Super-ego deals with morality and it is socially suitable. It operates on the behalf of social rules and

ethics and it is based on ideas of our ancestors. It works like a rider who controls the horse named Id and its objectionable feelings like aggression and sex. Id, Ego, and Super-ego are essential ingredients of the character of society. In the play *The Prisoners*, two prisoners Rustam and Sohrab are imprisoned and the mob outside the police station besieges the prison. They want to kill Rustam and Sohrab because of their spiritual love which keeps them together. The police, inside the police station, is also oppressed by the crowd. The crowd stands for society and is against all forms of freedom.

The socio-psychological study illustrates that society has a capacity to control an individual's mind. In the first scene, the choral chants of the crowd disclose their desire to kill Rustam and Sorab. Hiay hiay hiay hiay Mandibhauddin police station Shames, Shames, Shames Mandibhauddin police station Shames, Shames, Shames We want RUSTAM and SORAB We want RUSTAM and SORAB Hiay, hiay, hiay, hiay [4].

In the society, the majority decides the truth. They have a fixed scale to measure morality and behaviors. The researcher portrays this issue through the crowd. Communal Id is represented in the way crowd labels Rustam and Sohrab sinners. Everyone follows the leader of the crowd who is a corrupt person. He wants Rustam's home as Rustam utters, "They wanted to buy the home SORAB lived in" (2018, p.83) but Rustam gifted it to Sohrab. The leader's hunger for revenge increases and resulted in their imprisonment as Sohrab says "He took revenge" [4]. The negativity of the society reveals through the crowd, who is ready for revenge and have no place for adoration and comprise. The researcher quoted the reference of the novel *Animal Farm* in which George Orwell knitted human beings with sheep who blindly follows their leader, Napoleon. Same is the case with the crowd in the play. It is apparent that super-ego of the crowd is less powerful as compared to the Id for the reason that they are unable to examine it on an ethical basis. The crowd is unfamiliar with the reason. In another perspective, it also indicates society's paleness in understanding and education.

As Rustam articulates "They do not allow two men to stand together" Rustam "They are blind to the Sufi tradition". (2018, p.117). This line indicates their narrow-mindedness. Society has no urge to search the solutions. It appears that it is waiting for some issue that's why it is unable to manage its ego and the same fact also highlights society's inner mindsets constructed for negotiation. The researcher labels the cruelty of the system in which there is no concept of forgiveness even after death. Rustam and Sohrab have a desire to be buried together after death as Sohrab says, "We want to be buried side by side" (2018, p.99) and when Sohrab says "holding RUSTAM's hand). They will not give us a grave". (2018, p.90) indecision in the characters spectacle their fears about rules designs by the so-called

society. The paper also deals with injustice rule by the crowd. As these lines dig out.

RUSTAM: They would not let us go to the court.

SOHRAB: How can they dare to stand against the court?

RUSTAM: They are the court. (2018, p.67)

Here the researcher criticizes law and order. Laws made for the betterment of humanity and because of the inability of an individual to secure itself. How can the crowd decide one's life? It shows the flaw of law. Court intentions of those who have power. Its worthiness shows for authority and triviality for poor and weak.

Then Beera who is the senior police officer is in the favor of the prisoners. Beera stands for honesty and loyalty. He has a desire to give justice to them. Beera's Id affirms when he speaks "Rustam and Sohrab deserve the trial of a court." (2018, p.97). But truthful nature faces difficulty in existence. Restrictions appear in the form of Veera who stands for cruel and unfairness system as his dialogue shows "Surrender RUSTAM and SORAB to them" (2018, p.97). Beera is the representation of an honest system and his Super-ego reveals when he utters "Took an oath to keep law and order" (2018, p.38). This line clear-cut description of his super-ego. It is powerful as compare to the other characters. It also prattles that a man who has good nature faces hurdles in animation. A society governed by evil and cruelty suppressing his super-ego. Veera is the opponent of Beera he disagrees with him at that time Beera's ego reveals in these lines "We are the police" The crowd id to kill Rustam and Sohrab. Their id becomes dominated to their super-ego. And it indicates that Id and super-ego are disturbed. As well as Rustam and Sohrab follows their desires. Their id is to live together till the grave. Their id is dominated to other instincts of their body. Therefore, people consider them criminals because they break the rules of the society. A person who revolts against the society he will be punished. They become rebel as like the rebel in D.J Enright poem *The Rebel* [20].

When everybody says, yes please,

The rebel says, No thank you

When everybody says, No thank you,

The rebel says, yes please (*The Rebel*)

In the poem, the poet designates the behavior of a rebel who acts against the norms and values of the society. He wants to get freedom from the fixed rules originated by the society. D.J Enright explains that the actions of a rebel spread colors on a blank convince of life but he restrains us not to become one of them. It seems that D.J Enright is aware of the people's set of beliefs and their behavior towards an individual who violates the rules. The researcher also showcases this issue in *The Prisoner*. Rustam and Sohrab.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researcher wants to interpret the socio-psychological trauma of the characters in the light of Sigmund's theory of personality. Smith and Mackie [19] explain how thoughts and beliefs help unfolding an individual's consciousness which lead us to explore how characters in the play are treated. The researcher critically inspects the work of Usman Ali and his contribution to the betterment of humanity. It also shows the drawbacks and cruelties of a system and how it governed by the preponderance. The paper is the compassionate study of law and order and social dogmas. The ability of social shows in all the characters' lives. The researcher makes an effort to show a trial of a class society and the role of a society which holds on an individual and have a capacity to change them. Society's compoment shows hostility because its super-ego and ego is less powerful as well revealing the inhumanity of man to man. The playwright tries to make a point that the world is pointless as it is full of discrimination, corruption and other practices of inequalities.

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