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MYTHICAL MODERNISM IN PATRICK WHITE'S 'THE SOLID MANDALA AND RIDERS IN THE CHARIOT

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Abstract:- Among the colonized countries and continents, Australia has the rarest geographical situation for being a separate continent not attached to any other continents like North America – South America, Africa, Asia and Europe. Australia having an enormous length and breadth cannot be treated as an Island. Australia has her own history of Bushmen culture and Abo (Aborigine) the continent had been under the rules of the Arabs, the British snatched its from Arabs, and at present like most of the developing countries. It is under the influence of America one common feature of Australia and India is that both have their own ancient traditions and neither of them have ruled influenced or dominated the other. It is a strange resemblance between India and Australia

Keywords: Mythical Modernism , Solid Mandala and Riders , colonized countries .

INTRODUCTION

The only Noble Prize winner from Australia is Patrick White whose works have established, the credential as an original unique and individual writer as well as a strong representative of Australia as a whole. Patrick White's significant works are 'Voss', 'The tree of Man', 'The Vivisector', 'Rider's in the Chariot', 'The Eye of the Storm', 'The Aunt's Story', 'The Twyborn Affair', 'A Fringe of Leaves' and 'The Solid Mandala'.

In his, *Flaws in the Glass – a self portrait*, Patrick White explains the influence as :

But corrupt I become secretly on prose , on the News of the world
and Truth , on Wuthering Heights, Ethel M. Dell and Elinor Glyn .
I was found with Lady Windermere's , Fan in many hand .
The offending volume was promptly locked in the kind of glass – faced
book case containing the books which are never read .
By way of compensation I was allowed A Crown of
Wild Olive and Sesame and Lilies .!

In *the Solid Mandala* the vision of the protagonist is twice divided between the twin brothers Arthur and Waldo Brown. Waldo hates life. Arthur is foolish and finds his vision in the Mandala consisting Adam and Tireseas who become one and give his strength to dominate other, even Waldo who is an intellectual.

There is always a sense of emptiness in the genuine author's works from the developing countries. Consequently, they are either lost in the memories of their original memories of the glorious past or the plight and predicament of the helpless present.

The present paper is limited to the novels that have Indian mythical names and its related symbolism.

Mandala, a Sanskrit word

Means circle or magic circle. Its symbolism embraces

all concentrically arranged figures, all circumferences
Having a center, and all radial or spherical arrangements²

There is common feature of the writers that they reflect the spirit of the present age at the backdrop of their past and then the comparison of the past and the present.

In doing it, Patrick White uses the principle of revolt that goes beyond social realism and tries to reflect the power of imagination, mental conviction and insights and their own concept of myths and spiritualism. White, in a new classical style, uses symbols of myths especially in *Rides in the Chariot* and *The Solid Mandala*. The chariot is an Indian symbol used in the epic *The Ramayana and Mahabharata*. However, *The chariot of Rama* is no more in his exile but in the War of Kurushetra the chariot of Arjuna (The middle of Pandwas) has a driver Lord Krishna himself. White had borrowed these two Indian mythical concept, for the very title of the present novels.

White uses the mandala symbolism to explain his metaphor that defines every living body is a symbol that is attached to the universe and God. In White's writings there are natural images of trees flowers, sun and Sea. He also uses the modern objects like tables, hats, glass, marbles: these natural and manmade images are fused together so as to form a link between 'The mythical' and 'The modern.' Though White had been chosen Indian mythical symbols 'Chariot and Mandal' his themes are related to contemporary Australian society. Even his novel *The Eye of the Storm* consists of two mandalic and symbolic images to show the confusion of cosmic drama and its link with the lives of his heroes from Australian society. They are 'Eye' and 'the storm'

Patrick White's once declares that his three best novels are *The Solid Mandala*, *The Aunt's Story* and *The Twyborn Affair*.
All three say something to Australian than what is sacred to
Australian literature.³

He further adds;

Strange to think 'The solid Mandala was ever considered
pornographic yet an Australian professor told a friend it was
the most pornographic novel he? She? had ever read one
wonders where he or she spent his or her literary life before
The solid Mandala appeared.⁴

Patrick White agrees with the influence of C.J. Jung and it is reflected in *The solid Mandala* it was also blamed for transitoriness. There is also a mythical reference related to fatality. While composing *The Solid Mandala* he thought of renovation of his house. He accepts the influence of Jung which he reflected in his *The Solid Mandala*. There is always a problem regarding faith and the belief in God. The problem he has raised is about Molali's belief in the eastern myths and orthodoxy.

The response of *The Solid Mandala* was mixed one the symbol of Mandala, the construction of home creation of garden and composition of a fiction had been the multiple problems of *The Solid Mandala* that deals with faith, creativity and imagination.

In his Nobel lecture White says,
possessions are values ...
memories, friendship, love have thin eyes ...
Christian love is in the end as ineffectual
and destructive as violence and hatred
still I think only love redeems.⁵

White's last work, *Rider in the Chariot* has its climax of crucifixion. Is it myth making rejuvenation or renewal or revival or transplant of myth? Is it the real problem for scholars.

The chariot is a fiery, dangerous and ominous and its four Riders symbolize the Mandala ultimately completing it. The love of God and Jewish faith are the main themes. White creates a sense of mystery related to the wheels of chariot, the table is round, the carpet is round and the wedding rings of Reha and Ruth Godbold are also round and Mandalic, They are the four characters sharing a common vision as well as a highly personal vision of *Rider's in the Chariot*. There is a great relationship between myth and culture, race and religion. One person, Himmelfarb thinks and sees God in table as well as the myth of having in everyone the sparks of divine fire. The woman Mary Hare always thinks of earth, identifies herself with the earth, ultimately in spite of her love, becomes a part of the earth, Ruth Godbold sees God's grace in the service of others whereas Dubbo thinks his paintings are his prayers to God.

A critic, Shaikh Samad says:
The Mandala is divided into a light and a dark half...

The ceremonies have great importance because it 'contains the at the center of figure of the highest religious significance; either Shiva himself, generally embracing the shakti or Buddha Amitabha, Avalokiteshvara, or one of the great teachers of Mahayana.'⁶

Patrick White's novel has four important characters, therefore it is in one way four novels in one and it is also the reasons of its length. There are seventeen chapters in seven unequal parts. The palace is the town of Sarasparilla. The time chosen is only the last few weeks in the lives of the three heroes. 1. Alf Dubbo, an Aboriginal artist 2. Mary Hare, an eccentric spinster 3. Mordecai Himmelfarb, an elderly Jewish refugee. Himmelfarb and Mary Hare die on Good Friday but Dubbo dies later. The fourth hero is Ruth Godbold, a washer woman. In early parts there is the past story of Mary Hare. In the next, three parts there are stories of the Dubbo and Godbold. Hare employs one woman a widow named Mrs. Jolley who is rejected by her family for being suspected for murderess of her husband. Mary Hare is nursed and brought back to life by Ruth Godbold. Jolley has a peer, Flack in evil, Gossip and slander.

Mary Hare tells her story to Jolley. Himmelfarb tells his story to Mary Hare. He was an English Professor in Germany and has lost his Jewish faith. In fear he had given his wife to the Nazis. He escapes from the Jew camp. He wants to go to Israel, but rejects and migrates to Australia. His story is the largest one.

The common theme of all four riders is burning by various aspects of love. Himmelfarb had rejected love. Mary Hare's affection for parents is stopped. For Dubbo love becomes only lust. It is only Ruth Godbold who is 'the rock of love'. She both enjoys and expresses it. Her husband is very unattractive and she has six daughters. They are all related to their mythical past. Mary Hare is Australian, Dubbo is Aborigine (Past Australian). Himmelfarb had been Jew. At last Ruth Godbold marries Himmelfarb. White had chosen his four heroes who are Australian as well as universal. The theme is of love and marriage, The chariot is a link between the pairs, women and men. Dubbo wants to paint a canvas after he watches the death of Himmelfarb. There is the event of mock-crucifixion by Blue the sun of Flack. Dubbo dies of T.B and Rosetree commits suicide in the end. Only Ruth Godbold is left with her six daughters in the end, She achieves a perfect vision of Riders in the Chariot.

The novel was blamed for the fantasy of the mock-crucifixion. There is a message that names and religion can not change the world and love is equal everywhere. The chariot is love and characters are the four riders.

Magill says:

Each represents an aspect of love
Miss Hare loves nature, Dubbo Painting,
Himmelfarb religion and Ruth Godbold Humanity.
These, says White are the cardinal points of man's
compassion and the greatest of these charity⁷

Whether it is The Solid Mandala or Riders in the Chariot, Patrick White has used different ideologies related to the past as well as to the present. He uses Nazism, Jew characters and the ancient and modern characters from Australia, the Bushmen, the Aborigines and the modern Australian characters and locale. The main problem lies with the complexity and the challenge of his choice of Indian mythical names such as chariot and mandala being well versed in Upanishada and Indian culture. White had chosen the mythical title in the modern Australian context. Hence the title of the present research paper is Mythical Modernism in Patrick White's 'The Solid Mandala and Riders in the Chariot.'

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