



REFLECTION OF MORAL DICHOTOMY IN SUNETRA GUPTA'S *MEMORIES OF RAIN*

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to comprehend the moral dichotomy of the central characters depicted in the novel Memories of Rain written by Dr. Sunetra Gupta. She is the writer of the modern era, voicing the muffled conflict confronted by their characters. The moral dichotomy brings out the real persona of the characters and enhances the understanding of the human psyche. The conflict, in any form, external or internal, heightens the intensity of the literature. By analyzing the conflicted minds of the central characters, the readers are brought closer to the mirror of their life. Human nature is occult to the world and to oneself. The close reading of the novel puts forth the varied reasons for the moral dichotomy.

Keywords: Conflict; human sentiments; morality; human psyche

INTRODUCTION

Characters portrayed by Dr. Sunetra Gupta speak volumes about the principle of right and wrong, conforming to the standards of behavior and characters based on the principles.¹ Dr. Sunetra Gupta made a successful attempt at bringing out the moral dichotomy of the central characters from *Memories of Rain*. Any kind of division between two entities can be defined as a dichotomy. This division can be of various things like psychological, economic,

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spiritual, philosophical, physical, etc. The word dichotomy is derived from the Greek language which means division into two parts. Though the concept is already used in the stories for a long time, scholars started using it in the 17th century. Dichotomies are an integral part of the stories. It would create conflict and help the stories to retain the reader's attention. The purpose of dichotomy is to create conflict between two forces. These forces can be in the form of external or internal. The characters try to overcome these forces.² Narratives in literature deal with themes like good versus evil, civilized versus uncivilized, real versus imaginary, etc. The dichotomy can be seen in the character itself who may experience inner conflict.³

Sunetra Gupta in *The Memories of Rain* sets up a perfect moral dichotomy between the selfish and indifferent nature of Anthony, who made Moni insecure, and Moni, who forsakes her family to settle in London with his love-Anthony. The two main characters in the novel are Anthony and Moni. Anthony's adulterous relationship with Anna. Anthony's dichotomy is evident as he doesn't want to lose either of the two. Moni's alienation and despair pile up when she discovers the relationship between Anthony and Anna. Both characters are facing a dichotomy. The narrative expounds that the forces for the dichotomy are not external. On the contrary, it is an internal one. Both of them face internal conflict, which makes the characters relatable and appealing. They discuss the human psyche in a more lucid manner.

The dichotomy faced by the central characters reveals inner conflict. Inner conflict refers to the state of mind, where the character is on the horns of a dilemma. They suffer the pangs of a baffled mind, as they fail to choose the righteous path and desired direction for the fulfillment of their life. The inner urge to wage a war against oneself is given a vent through suppressed inaction and ineffective deeds. No character is said to be great unless it overcomes this inner conflict and comes victorious by giving poetic justice to the self. The characters depicted by Dr. Sunetra Gupta are usually found pondering over the right path among the twisted roads built by themselves. The character portrayal is lifelike and appeals to the readers as they envisage themselves in the form of various characters.

Memories of Rain is a novel written by Dr. Sunetra Gupta in a deft manner. The novel takes the reader to the memory lane of the prominent characters: Moni and Anthony. The narrative technique adopted by the author spells bound the reader by weaving their hypnotic story which takes place during a single weekend. Moni is a student from Calcutta. She is fond of British Literature and Rabindranath Tagore's romantic poetry. One day her brother's friend, Anthony, enters the house and heart of Moni on a rainy day. Her dark aura confiscates his mind and heart stealthily. This Englishman takes her to London. The dowdy climate and the quiet murmur of London set the backdrop of the story. The flashback of her native land ruminates the conflict within.



The dichotomy accentuates the differences between Anthony and Moni. The passion they had shared on a rainy day dies away as time flies. The novel depicts the oscillation of Moni into past and present. Anthony's affair with Ana puts her into the dichotomy of inability to vent out her anger and her emotional connection with him. It impairs her decision to leave Anthony or to face his infidelity boldly. The dichotomy of choosing right and confronting wrong calls the reader to ponder over Moni's inner conflict. She decides to leave Anthony and return to India. This decision is not the outcome of her vehement approach, but a considerate musing over her husband's unfaithfulness. Moni's heart does not easily come to terms with his disloyalty. She plunges into the past happenings and the bond shared by them. Her mind lingers over the best time spent with Anthony and her marital bliss. She remembers the mutual infatuation and her strong pull toward Anthony. This musing over the past does not allow her to act in present.

Ten years ago.....(he) implored her to marry him, to come back with him to his home across the seas, where for the rest of their lives, if nothing else, they could lie in each other's arms, and she would sing to him. And suddenly, it had become clear to her that this was the disaster she must embrace.⁴

She is willing to confront Anthony over this deception but unable to act on it. It underlines the inner conflict faced by her. Moni can be seen facing the horns of a dilemma to leave Anthony or confront his deeds. She is not willful to take this decision happily or to liberate herself from her current sufferings. Her reluctance to leave Anthony and inability to voice her feelings speak volumes about her inner conflict. This kind of internal dichotomy is difficult to deal with. One can fight external forces but it becomes tough to face inner turmoil. Her emotional dependency has become the biggest deterrent in the firm decision is evident when she muses:

.....since she came to this land, has she ventured to take her destiny into her own hands, not a single decision, in these ten years, she has never made any arrangements other than for dinner parties, other than getting a babysitter, other than buying birthday presents, these ten years.⁵

The novel also brings out dichotomous behavior of Anthony. Sinners with a conscience are the most common dichotomies in the novels. The same trend is to be seen here in Sunetra Gupta's novel. Anthony is aware of the fact that his indifferent behavior may ruin Moni's life forever. But his love for Anna surges as a reincarnation of his romance. He contemplates the past life with Moni. But his strong pull toward Anna overpowers his marital duties. It does not mean that he wants to divorce Moni for Anna. Rather he anticipates that Moni



would understand his state of mind and manage things. He knows that his love for Anna is unacceptable to Moni, but that does not allow his other self to end the illicit relationship. He experiences a feeling where he neither negates his love for Moni nor his infatuation with Anna. This dichotomous stance is apparent when he contemplates:

*“divided between an excruciating guilt and in the insane desire to preserve the passion that having climaxed in that one painful kiss seems now to be melting away”.*⁶

Anthony’s thoughts and actions reveal inner conflict. His guilt-ridden and frivolous nature at one and the same time underlines the dichotomy of the character. It seems that he is struggling with himself to figure out the innermost desire.

Anthony tries to figure out the possibilities and eventualities as well. He thinks that Moni and his child can be accommodated at his mother’s place. But his heart lingers over his past behavior and compassion for Moni. He knew that his disloyalty would shatter Moni and would not liberate both. He has cared Moni and made her emotionally dependent. He was aware of the fact that his sudden revelation would break her. He thinks:

*...he has sheltered her within his palms as the bud he had plucked, untimely, intoxicated by its incomplete scent, he had treasured in this his glass house until he found that she would not bloom in her new surrounds, and if she had suffered for that, he had suffered more, as he had come to terms with the bitter truth that the unadulterated passion he had felt for her under tropical skies was not to last forever, that a deep intellectual void was eating away at his wonder,.....*⁷

Moni and Anthony knew their limitation. They also understood their capacity to fulfill their innermost desires. Their inaction makes it clear that the moral dichotomy of both characters makes them lifelike.

The moral dichotomy portrayed by Sunetra Gupta is appealing and relatable. The characters are shown facing their own contradictions and vagaries. The beauty of the narration makes it more conspicuous to the readers that the novel aptly voices human limitations. The dominant feature of the novel is a stream-of-consciousness technique, which brings out the dichotomy of the central characters. Sunetra Gupta deftly narrates the inability of the characters to take firm decisions in their respective lives.

Conclusion:



In a nutshell, *Memories of Rain* depict the central characters facing moral dichotomy. They are shackled to their self-beliefs and not ready to take quick decisions. They undergo the self-assessment of their actions which they shudder to take and find out the different ways to procrastinate the same. Sunetra Gupta allowed her characters to explore the possibilities and eventualities of the decisions. She tried to bring the character to their mirror image and skilfully communicated the dichotomy in a lucid manner. The decisions taken by Moni and Anthony are put to the test by themselves. Their past actions and experiences make them face the moral dichotomy. Their inaction underlines the inner conflict, making it more relatable. There is an external dichotomy expounded by pursuing the reader and letting them roam through their memory lane. The main characters are caught in their vortex of thought. They recount the reasons for their moral dichotomy. Though the justifications given by them sound incomprehensible, their stand was to give poetic justice to each other. Thus, it can be seen that the main characters face moral dichotomy and it empowers the novel to place a mirror on our own actions.

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