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ASPECTS OF CAMPUS NOVEL IN SATYAJIT SARNA'S *THE ANGEL'S SHARE*

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an endeavour to explore significant aspects of Campus Novel in Satyajit Sarna's maiden novel *The Angel's Share* (2012). The novel is about youth and ambition. The narrative is located in the campus of National Law School, Bangalore. Zorawar Chouhan who narrates the story is the pivotal character breathing two lives in one. An affluent Lawyer in a corporate Law Firm Lawrence & Kamraj Associates, he recollects his effervescent and vibrant Campus experiences on National Law School, Bangalore with his friends- Raghav, Kelker, Amlan, Kiran, Seshadri and Sasha, who had a charismatic impression on Zorawar's persona. The hustle and bustle of hostel life, cherished bonding between friends, playing football, indulging in fights, falling in and out of love and raucous mischief are thrashed out in detail. In this novel Campus life is portrayed through student's standpoint.

Keywords: Campus novel, Indian Campus Novels, Aspects of Campus Novel; Students, Teacher, Friendship and Love, Classes, Assignments Grades and Exams, Satirical Comedy, Career anxiety.

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Introduction

The great sociological changes in the society after World War Second result in the appearance of a new assortment of the genre of novel, Campus Novel. 'Campus' is conventionally a land on which a College or University and other institutional edifices are located. David Lodge states, 'The ideal type of a human community, where work and play, culture and nature, were in perfect harmony, where there was a space and light, and fine buildings set in pleasant grounds, and people were free to pursue excellence and self-fulfillment, each according to her (his) rhythm and inclination.' (Lodge, 249)

This small but recognizable sub-genre of contemporary fiction became popular in the 1950's with the emergence of *Lucky Jim* (1954) by Kingsley Amis. Chris Baldick delineates, 'Campus novel is a novel, usually comic or satirical, in which the action is set with in the enclosed world of university (or similar set of learning) and highlights the follies of academic life.' (Baldick, 30)

The Campus Novel formerly is an Anglo-American genre. Like many sub-genres of novel, Campus Novel is also originated and flourished in the West yet emerging as a very prominent sub-genre in Indian English Fiction. Today, considerable progress has been achieved in India in producing Campus Novels of premier traits.

Campuses, across the country have grown into a fertile soil for fiction. University graduates are stretching their imagination within the enclosed walls of Ivory Towers. IIT, IIM, JNU and law colleges have become the centre for attraction to these young alumni. Although the tradition began with R. K. Narayan's *Bachelor of Arts* (1937), a true picture of college days with study schedule, college debates and friendships in the life of the protagonist Chandran.

*The Long Long Days* (1960) by P. M. Nityanandan is acknowledged as the first Campus Novel. *Good Bye to Elsa* (1974) by Saros Cowasjee is a bildungsroman, a journey of the protagonist Tristan from student to assistant professor of History. *Atom and the Serpent* (1982) by Prema Nandakumar, which is considered as a proper Campus Novel by critics presents a picture of an Indian university where little true research is done and staff is always busy with internal wrangles and the scramble for funds and foreign assignments. Upmanyu Chatterjee's *English August* (1988) is a story of young, vibrant westernize Indian civil servant Agastya Sen. *The Narrator- A Novel* (1995) by Makarand Paranjape presents Rahul's emotional and psychological growth from youth to maturity in campus. *The Truth (Almost) About Bharat* (2000) by Kavery Nambisan is an adult fiction that revolves around a medical student Bharat.

The drift of Campus Novel as they are termed developed into a fashionable genre after the tremendous success of *Five Point Someone* (2004) by Chetan Bhagat. The novel has converted non-readers to neo-readers.

#### **Aspects of Campus Novel**

Premises comprise a significant function to play in Campus Novel. Though the location is enclosed yet the characters' life spins within or without it. It encompasses classroom, canteen, hostels and laboratory. Here students wrestle, tittle-tattle, plans for adventures and shattered emotionally sometimes. Satyajit Sarna delineates the premises of National Law School where he 'entered, seventeen, fresh from school, ready to be something new, grasping at the opportunity to invent myself.' (Sarna, 6) The idea of bucolic locale is dated back to Plato's Academy where the concept of imparting education in pastoral surroundings transpired. 'Our campus, on the outskirts of Bangalore, was surrounded by miles of eucalyptus forest. From where we lay, it looked like a never-ending velvet carpet, over which some careless god had spilt patches of light.' (Sarna, 2)

Students are also the most inevitable aspect of campus novels dealt astoundingly by Sarna. He paints the portrait of their desires, dreams, expectations, adventures, anxiety and dejection and aimlessness of present youth exquisitely. 'We live our lives, muddling along, meat to the grinder, grain to the mill.' (Sarna, 3)

In addition to that Students' angst for exams, repeats and grades are overwhelmingly articulated. Zorawar divulges that, 'once you've given one repeat, you'll give others, your grades will cement about a point and stick there. As the years pass, it gets harder to move that point...when we graduated, we all probably had the same grade point average as we had that first trimester.' (Sarna, 31)

It is but obvious that most of the Campus Novels are the works of lecturers, professors and students. Before writing a novel a novelist has to create a world of his own imagination, which at the same time has a sort of logical relation to the real world wherein he can weave the themes and events that interest him most. Showalter comments, 'one theory about the rise of the novel argues that it developed because readers like to read about their own world, and indeed about themselves.' (Showalter, 1)

The enclosed walls of Ivory Towers provide such an atmosphere ready-made being the microcosm of the larger world outside and ensue an extraordinary vehicle to scrutinize the degradation of social and cultural norms and mal-practices that are rampant within the Academy. Students are depicted as lost generation who depleted most of their time in booze, smoke and drugs. 'Drugs had become the one holy and true thing for us: the quest for the boundaries of the mind, for the other side of reality's coin, our one real adventure' (Sarna, 93). Zorawar comments, 'Nitrosuns are our new best friends. They're a sedative given to schizophrenics to calm them down.' (Sarna, 134)

Evaluation parameters like; exams, grades and viva and dehumanization of students are some of the concerns that are pored over by the author. Jennifer has to face this kind of dehumanization being the

Northeastern. Zorawar disdains, 'this is the most ridiculously refined kind of racism, I feel guiltier about the way things broke down with Jennifer because she was Northeasterner.' (Sarna, 79)

Sarna is also graduated from NLS, Bangalore which enables him to experience various aspects of Campus life and to write with such pragmatism '...we were permissive in strange ways, restrained in others, rational to an irrational extent, more driven and pressure-cooked than anywhere else, less removed from the world and yet more removed from its gaze. We were promised to the keys of kingdom, but were never even told what the kingdom was.' (Sarna, 5)

Teachers are also to be act as a prominent component of Campus Novel. They are portrayed as conventional and clichéd, not ready to change with the time. Writers of Campus Novels delineate teachers in most humorous way. For instance the Portrait of Ramnatha Reddy in the novel, 'who is oblivious to the class. In fact, he was oblivious to the twenty-first century' (Sarna, 114) is quite amusing. Students enjoy his class as retiring period and goes to the extent of taking nape, 'Amlan and Kelkar would have slipped out of their chairs and be asleep on the floor near the wall, using their bags as pillows.' (Sarna, 113)

And the most hilarious thing is that this is flawlessly tolerable to Ramnatha. The picture of Ms K. R. Joseph, a history teacher, a feminist, a Marxist and terror of the first and second years, is very demanding. Once she went to the extent of giving counsel to Ranjan ; 'why you'd go off-campus for sex. We have lovely disease-free girls right here' (Sarna, 70). After the tragic death of Sasha it is only Ms Joseph among all the faculty and administration who came to the accident site. Zorawar scoffs at, 'All the hypocrites and sweet-talkers, all those old men who crooned the words 'in loco parentis' to us- well, none of them showed up.' (Sarna, 179)

Friendship is portrayed with great diligence in the novel. The true bonding between Kiran, Raghav, Kelkar, Rathore, Sasha and Zorawar are offered with utmost splendor. They cram, make fun of teachers, take trips, brawl with the natives, smoke, booze and devour drugs together. Zorawar shares one of that brawls, 'that night, after everyone had been stitched up and iced off, and had made their statements to the cops, they all sat on terrace with a bottle of whisky and told war stories to each other...' (Sarna, 166-167)

It cannot be overlooked that Zorawar's friends have great imprints on his persona especially Sasha. He admits, 'I think of Sasha often, and I will think of him yet. But I have now drifted beyond what he could teach me. By the telling of this story, I now feel free of the need to keep him as my oracle.' (Sarna, 229)

Love affairs are also an indispensable aspect of Campus Novel and are dealt very proficiently by the writers. Some Campus love stories are winning where as some are ordained to collapse. Zorawar speaks about his love interest in the novel Jennifer, 'love is a long and slippery process. But sometimes you can identify the moment when someone becomes worth loving...Sitting there, my head in Sasha's lap, looking up at her frame, I was consumed with envy and lust and a feeling of slipping' (Sarna, 27). The novel puts on display a very candid handling of sex.

Another essential aspect of Campus Novels is that they are satirical comedy. As campus is a closed community, writers dig up an opportunity to scrutinize the mal-practices and aberrations within the campus. Zorawar confesses it is not the fervor for the profession which tempts the students to join NLS but '...some of us had lawyer dads and moms, and the rest of us were there because you sat for every exam and took what you could get. I was there because the idea of being a lawyer seemed brighter than no idea at all.' (Sarna, 4)

Rathore preaches his juniors to follow superior things in life, and it is quite amusing to note that the things which he presumes good are actually bad things, 'music, women, drugs, alcohol, all of which are good things' (Sarna, 14). Students boozing experience is also dealt in a humorous way, 'we ordered drinks and peanuts. Peanuts could be ordered as either Congress (salted and spilt into halves) or BJP (whole, but coated with a bright orange paste)' (Sarna, 73). Surya, where students congregate to booze is implicit as 'Second Home' (Sarna, 55).

Career angst is experienced by all the students during the final placement. Some get as per their aspirations but others fail to accomplish the desired outcome and thus throw themselves into the well of depression. As happened with Amlan and Jennifer in the novel. 'Amlan turned so bitter that he was impossible to talk to; ...he would dwell on his grades, look through the four years past, asking himself where the things

had gone wrong. He had fallen in love with the idea of his own depression. He sat in his room with the lights off and smoked endless packs of small bitter gold flakes.' (Sarna, 185)

Jennifer went into a worse depression; 'the prejudice that awaited her in the working world had sapped her confidence to the point where she would have broken down in an interview. She needed constant comforting...' (Sarna, 185)

Campus Novels truthfully reveals the ambitions, enthrallment and tumult experienced by the characters throughout their journey within the Ivory Towers. Academy is a place of, as John Updike opines, 'discontent, conflict, waste, sorrow, fear' (Updike, xiv). Zorawar at the end apprehends his true self and asserts, '...your life doesn't begin when you're born, or you become an adult, or when people trust you and depend on you, or you have a child...for a human being at least, your life only begins when you realize it means something.' (Sarna, 226)

The language brings into play in Campus Novels is colloquial and unconventional which involves campus slangs, abbreviations, acronyms and full forms that contribute for the delightful reading. Extinguishes all discrepancy it homogenizes its crowd. 'The language used by college students is highly expressive, oral and informal form of language that has a distinct subculture.' (Eble, 1989)

Sarna employs colloquial language which enables the youth to connect with the story. When Zorawar asks Sasha, 'tell me, Sasha, what do you dream about? ... I dream about journeys. What else does anyone dream of?' (Sarna, 216), another time Sasha asserts, 'Do you think you could be great?... I don't know, man, Zoju. I don't know. But I know that I don't want to die unknown.' (Sarna, 75)

As 'GMPT' stands for 'Ginsu Master of Positional Thinking' (Sarna, 35), 'CSODR' in *Sumthing of a Mocktale* is not 'Centre for Study of Obstacles in the Development of Regions,' but 'Centre for Suppression, Oppression, Depression and Repression.' (Das, 2), and 'DISCO' (Bhagat, 244) is referred to the discipline committee in *Five Point Someone*. Sasha plays with names of his friends, 'Mukeshwaran, Zojeshwarran, Tomeshwaran, Dickeshwaran, and Harreshwaran.' (Sarna, 19)

### **Conclusion**

Thus, the novel, *The Angel's Share* flings adequate luminosity on many aspects of Campus life like hostel life, bonding with friends and teachers, love interests, anxiety and depression for exams, grades and future, students' adventurous and lavish life neither controlled by parents or college authorities, degradation of cultural and social norms and values have been dealt exceptionally. The novel is put on paper through student's standpoint and reveals his interface with parents, teachers and fellow students, and his self realization and transformation into new living being. Simple narratives, colloquial language, social amalgamation, comic undertone and study pressure are the reasons that *The Angel's Share* is deemed as a Campus Novel.

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