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IDENTITY CRISIS IN THE WORKS OF M.MUKUNDAN WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
'ART ATTACK'

GIFTY ELZA VARGHESE

Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore

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ABSTRACT

The Question of Identity is the most controversial issue in Post- Colonial times. Identity becomes an issue only when there is a crisis. Because of cultural diversities the question of identity came into existence. Through the short story " Art Attack" of M.Mukundan, the central character 'Sivaraman' struggle to find a way to demonstrate his identity between the previous native heritage and the power of dominant culture existing there. Even though he failed in every walks of his life, he is trying to withstand an image of himself. This will be the central theme of this article.

Key words: Identity crisis, New Historicism, Cultural Hegemony

" Turning and Turning in the widening gyre

The Falcon can't hear the Falconer;

Things Fall Apart; Centre Can't Hold

Mere Anarchy is loosed upon the world."¹

The locale of Thomas Hardys 'Wessex', R K Narayans's 'Malgudi', O.V Vijayan's 'Dharmapuri', Gabriel Garcia Maquez 'Maconda', M.Mukundan also created a world of realistic often factious Mayyazhi or Mahe. In an interview with Dr. A Valsalan, Mukundan states that it was Mayyazhi that created Mukundan as a writer Mukundan. So through the world of Mahe, the writer delinate himself to the world of other.

Maniyambath Mukundan (Commonly known as M.Mukundan) was born at Mayyazhi as pioneering trend setter in the Malayalam literature , through his works he gave voice to Mayyazhi, hence he acquired the title 'Mayyazhiyude Kathakaran'.

Mahe was under the control of French imperial powers from April 2nd 1721onwards. With the help of French settlers , Mahe oppose the British Imperialism. Mayyazhi remained under French jurisdiction as a small French colony, an enclave within British India, during a long span that began in 1816. Based on Mukundan's short stories one can estimate the changes that happened in Mahe. Mukundans characters and his stories paved the ray of hope for existentialistic, modernistic, post modernistic realms.

1 Its a poem, " The Second Coming" by W.B. Yeats written in 1919, first printed in 1920. it summarises the situation of Ireland after the First World War and the beginning of the Irish War of Independence.

Mukundan himself states that whoever wants to know much about Mukundan and his life, it is better to read about his short stories. Mukundans stories and novels are iconic representation of 'New Historicism'². If one may read, one may get a firsthand knowledge about the culture and tradition of Mahe itself.

In the story 'Art Attack' it picturises the identity crisis of Sivaraman, the central character. From the first time itself, the readers may apprehend a multi dimensional approach to Sivaraman. Sivaraman walk very slowly through the darker side of the road towards his home. The main question here arouse will be why Sivaraman selects the darker side while he was going to his home ?. If the home gives him that much comfortable, then why he should walk so slowly?.

The title 'Art Attack' itself shows that it was an attack towards art. Using art to demolish art. The art critic Sivaraman cannot accept the changes that happens around him. He was a man who wish to live in his own traditional cultural beliefs. The others revolve around him were seeds of modernised ones. The aesthetic beauty that he enjoyed in his works were gradually diminishing. An apt example for this is when he enquired about the rejection of critical version of the portraits, the editor shouted him that if somebody wants to know about the portraits, they will go to art gallery and watch; its not needed to leave the space of our precious news paper. According to Antonio Gramsci, " The cultural hegemony exercised by the ruling class strives to suppress and overcome if not destroy, the 'embryonic conception'. so the ruling class always trying to suppress what the indigenous culture and people have their own.

Gradually the space for Sivaraman in the newspaper and from the job became declined. He cannot find out his own identity anywhere. Sivaraman psyche cannot alter the indigenous culture. According to K. N. Panikkar, " The indigenous culture, it is thus held, has been engaged in resisting the adverse effect of external intrusion and preserving its identity without any change".

Sivaraman's type writer shows his identity which bears his staunch traditional. The intrusion of computer and internet can't be accepted by him and his psyche yearning for a change. The art space of Sivaramans column is replaced by fashion show made his dream tangled. From there too he loses his identity as an art critic.

On the other hand, Lakshmy, his wife is not able to bear the realities of life.

That is why when the goondas taken away the fridge, she states that in order to correct the compressor and to refill the gas, she gave the fridge to shop. Moreover she compares their life with that of gas leaked fridge. The thing(Fridge) is there with a leakage of its most crucial part (compressor). This is the case of their identity too.

Sivaramans alter ego Giriraj once commented, that they the people of St.Stephan's are like civil servants. They are comfortable in any shoes. They have the capacity to manipulate and manage the given situation in their own way. Such an attitude is unimaginable for Sivaraman.

He firmly believes that every art forms have its own aesthetic and artistic validity. He is stubbornly opposing comparative framework and that will be the main reason for him to can't compare the pictures of Husain with that of Sura.

Moreover Sivaraman boldly states to his daughter Arathy that he is a traditional man with indigenous cultures and nativity. It is because of this he can't go to the foreign countries and make a settlement there. In order to states his indigenous culture he prepare an article on parithosh sen's " Retrosection" than that of the fashion show of small kids. Even though his manager Ravi Bhosan compel him to write article about the kids fashion show, he firmly stands for his own vision.

Later, Arathi his only daughter of Sivaraman shows the picture of Sivaraman in her Magazine, he became wondered because he cannot identify his face into it. Arathi is a student from fine arts college. She

2 New Historicism is a form of literary theory in order to understand intellectual history through literature and vice versa. It was developed by Stephen Greenblatt in 1990.

demonstrate the picture that she wishes to see. The total loss of Sivaraman can be traced here. He cannot place his identity anywhere. From the story it is clear that he doesn't have a home, a comfortable job and even a unique face too.

From the above pages one can draw out the conclusion that, through the short story "Art Attack", Mukundan tries to trace out the identity in every art form. Its the identity that had given ' the flesh and blood' to a particular substance. If the identity is lost, then everything will be lost. Through the cynosure Sivaraman, Mukundan tries to articulate the importance of identity in one's life. Even though they are considered as marginalised one's they always try to be a part of for front category. But in one way or the other they are suppressed by the colonial powers.

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